

IMPORTANT NEWS

Seekho Aur Kamao scheme

Inside Story of the News:

- For the **benefit of six notified minority communities**, the Ministry of Minority Affairs implemented the "**Seekho Aur Kamao**" scheme (SAK), which aimed to **improve the skills of minority youth (14–45 years old)** in various modern/traditional skills depending on their qualification, current economic trends, and market potential, that could earn them suitable employment or make them suitably skilled to engage in self-employment.
- Moreover, beneficiaries who were **women received 33% of the overall amount**.
- The Ministry employed Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) to carry out the plan.
- Since the program's commencement, 4.68 lakh beneficiaries have received training under it; of these, 2.28 lakh have reportedly been placed in a variety of sectors, according to data on the SAK portal.
- The reporting of placement data in the scheme is a continuous process that is occasionally updated by the PIAs.
- It is ensured that the PIAs have accomplished the mandatory placement in accordance with the scheme guidelines prior to the final instalment of funds is released to the PIAs.
- The SAK programme has now merged into **the Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS)** integrated programme for minority groups, which focuses on skill development, minority women's entrepreneurship and leadership, and education support for school dropouts.

INS Androth

Inside Story of the News:

- Recently, the second of **eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)**, the **INS Androth**, was launched.
- Being built by M/s GRSE for Indian Navy, it was launched on 21 March '23 at M/s GRSE, Kolkata.
- The ship was given the name Androth to reflect the strategic maritime significance attached to the island of Androth, which is situated in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep about 170 nautical miles northwest of Kochi.

About ASW SWC Ships:

- On April 29, 2019, the MoD and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, inked a contract for the construction of eight ASW SWC ships.
- The Arnala class of ships are intended to carry out anti-submarine operations in coastal waters, Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), and Mine Laying activities, including subsurface

surveillance in coastal waters. They will replace the Indian Navy's current Abhay class ASW Corvettes.

- The ASW SWC ships are 77.6 m long, have a displacement of 900 tons with a maximum speed of 25 knots.
- Two ships of the same class being launched in the space of three months strengthens our commitment to in-house shipbuilding as part of the prime minister's vision for "Atmanirbhar Bharat."
- By December '23, the project's first ship is expected to be handed over to the Indian Navy.
- The ASW SWC ships would be made up of more than 80% indigenous material, guaranteeing that large-scale defence production is carried out by Indian manufacturing facilities, creating jobs and enhancing capability in the nation.

Exostoma Dhritiaie

Inside Story of the News:

- A group of researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) recently identified a brand-new catfish species.
- The new species was discovered in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district in Siking stream, a tributary of the Siang river.
- The new catfish species has been named '**Exostoma Dhritiaie**' after **Dhriti Banerjee**, the first woman director of the ZSI, as a mark of honour for her contributions to research on the fauna of the country.
- The local tribal people call the new species "**Ngorang**," which is a small fish that can be found in streams in these hills.
- The discovery is noteworthy since it might be considerably harder to locate new, smaller species than it is to find larger ones.
- The new species increases the variety of life in the area and may aid research into the ecology of the area.

Call Before u Dig (CBuD) app

Inside Story of the News:

- At a ceremony in Vigyan Bhawan, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi opened the country's new International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Area office and Innovation Centre.
- The 6G R&D Test Bed and the Bharat 6G Vision Paper were also launched by the Prime Minister.
- He also launched the '**Call before u Dig**' App.
- ITU is the United Nations' specialised agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- In March 2022, India and the ITU agreed to a Host Country Agreement for the opening of an Area Office.

- It will **benefit countries like India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Afghanistan, and Iran**, encouraging regional economic cooperation and improving international coordination.
- “Call Before u Dig” (CBuD) mobile application is an initiative of the Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications, Government of India.
- The app will reduce the instances of unnecessary digging and damage.
- The CBuD app will make it easier for excavation companies and the owners of underground utilities to coordinate so that utilities are not harmed during digging.
- It seeks to provide excavation companies with a point of contact so they may find out whether there are any subsurface utilities present before beginning excavation work.
- Utility owners can also learn about impending work at the site using the service.

Exercise Konkan 2023

Inside Story of the News:

- Along the coast of Konkan in the Arabian Sea, the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy's yearly bilateral maritime exercise, **Konkan 2023**, took place from March 20 to March 22.
- In order to improve interoperability and instil best practises, the **Type 23 guided missile frigate HMS Lancaster** and the **guided missile frigate INS Trishul** participated in this edition.
- The drills featured helicopter operations, anti-air and anti-submarine warfare training, Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), ship manoeuvres, and personnel exchanges.
- They covered all aspects of maritime operations, including air, surface, and sub-surface activities, and included gunnery shoots on surface inflatable target ‘Killer Tomato’.
- Personnel from both fleets received excellent training value from the exercise.
- It was conducted with a great degree of professionalism and zeal.
- The focus that troops showed on strengthening interoperability, preparedness for operations, and the capacity to undertake joint operations would significantly support the joint efforts of the IN and RN to enhance maritime security and uphold a rules-based order in the region.

Sagar Manthan dashboard

Inside Story of the News:

- Ayush Shri Sarbananda Sonowal and Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways virtually unveiled the MoPSW's **‘Sagar Manthan’ Real-time Performance Monitoring Dashboard**.
- It is a digital platform having all the integrated data related to the ministry and other subsidiaries.
- By enhancing well-coordinated real-time information, this dashboard will revolutionise how diverse departments operate.
- In less than 1.5 months, this platform was successfully developed entirely internally under the direction of Shri Sudhanshu Pant, IAS, Secretary, MoPSW.
- The dashboard is a positive development towards **Digital India vision** of India’s Prime Minister.

- On an organisation's overall success, it will have a considerable effect.
- The timely completion of projects, informed decision-making, greater efficiency, and effectiveness of projects can all be ensured through good project monitoring.
- Additionally, it encourages resource allocation, risk management, in-progress reporting, and real-time project tracking.
- In order to boost efficiency, this dashboard will eventually be further linked with data from CCTV cameras, live drone streaming, an AI-based algorithm to map actual progress, a digital twin feature built in, and a mobile app for simple access and utilisation by all stakeholders.
- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways is dedicated to assisting the expansion of the sector in India.
- The establishment of the "Sagar Manthan" dashboard is a development towards digitalisation and transparency in the maritime transport sector.
- **Features of 'SAGAR MANTHAN' dashboard:**
 - Data visualisation
 - Real-time monitoring
 - Improved communication
 - Data-driven decision making
 - Increased accountability

Gandhamardan Hills declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)

Inside Story of the News:

- Known as the "**ayurvedic paradise**," the **Gandhamardan Hill range** in Odisha has been named a "**biodiversity heritage site**."
- The Department of Forestry, Environment, and Climate Change declared the hill system that encompasses both Bargarh and Bolangir districts as a biological heritage site.
- 500 animal species, 1,200 plant species, and numerous variety of trees, shrubs, herbs, and medicinal plant species can all be found in Gandhamardan.
- The tag will help with the long-term preservation, management, and protection of the endemic and endangered species.
- This is the third such hill to receive the classification of a biological heritage site, following the Mahendragiri Hills in Gajapati and the Mandasaru Hills in the Kandhamal district.
- The designation was established in compliance with Section 37 of the Biodiversity Act and Rule 20(2) of the 2012 Odisha Biodiversity Regulations, according to an announcement from the state forest and environment department.
- The hill is known as a hub for medicinal herbs in addition to its two ancient landmarks, the **Nrusinghanath Temple** on the northern slope and the **Harishankar Temple** on the southern side.
- Each day, hundreds of pilgrims visit these temples, which are essential to maintaining the area's rich cultural heritage.

- Now that Gandhamardan has been designated a BHS, more tourists will probably visit the temples, and measures will be taken to protect the fauna in the hills.

Green Tug Transition Programme (GTTP)

Inside Story of the News:

- The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) declared during the inauguration of **India's first National Centre of Excellence in Green Port and Shipping (NCoEGPS)** in Gurugram, Haryana, that India aims to become a **"Global Hub for Green Ship" building by 2030** with the implementation of GTTP.
- The programme will begin with **"Green Hybrid Tugs,"** which will use **Green Hybrid Propulsion systems,** and will then adopt non-fossil fuel alternatives like **Methanol, Ammonia, Hydrogen.**
- By 2025, it is planned for the first Green Tugs to begin operating in all significant ports.
- By 2030, it's anticipated that at least half of all tugs will have been converted to green tugs, greatly reducing emissions as the nation moves towards attaining sustainable development.
- NCoEGPS is the result of a collaboration between the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Government of India and the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).
- It seeks to make shipping and ports more environmentally friendly.
- The centre represents a significant Ministry effort to carry out the **Mission LiFE programme** of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- With the NCoEGPS acting as the Nodal entity for the sector, the plan is afoot to make India as the 'Global hub for building Green Ships' by 2030.
- With these initiatives, the Centre hopes to significantly contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, which calls for the conservation and wise use of ocean-based resources as well as the management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems from pollution.
- The Centre will be involved in creating the legal framework and strategy for adopting alternative technologies for green shipping in India.
- The centre - situated within the TERI complex in Gurugram - will work towards satisfying the responsibilities under the Paris Agreement.
- In order to provide Ports, DG Shipping, CSL, and other institutions under the umbrella of MoPSW with the necessary support on Policy, Research, and Cooperation on Green Shipping sectors, NCoEGPS will serve as a technological extension of MoPSW.
- The Centre will house a number of technology branches to serve the port and shipping industry, and it will use scientific research to offer solutions to a range of issues that are encountered there.
- At the local, regional, national, and international levels, it will also conduct valuable education, applied research, and technology transfer.
- It will focus on topics including sustainable maritime operations, energy management, and emission management.

- Through creating state-of-the-art technology and application solutions, the NCoEGPS seeks to support "**Make in India**" in the fields of engineering, port, coastal, and inland water transportation.
- Additionally, it will attempt to find a fuel cell technology for long-distance shipping and create a regulatory framework for hydrogen transportation up to 700 bar pressure.
- It will also write in-depth project reports on a port with minimal energy consumption, an offshore platform for harnessing solar energy, and the generation, storage, and use of green hydrogen.

Government raises Securities Transaction Tax

Inside Story of the News:

- Trading in **Futures and Options (F&O)** on the stock and commodity exchanges in India will now be subject to **additional taxes** starting in April 2023.
- The **Securities Transaction Tax (STT)** has increased by 25 percent for the selling of futures contracts and by 23.52 percent for the sale of options.
- The move will mainly impact the volumes churned by High-Frequency Traders (HFT), i.e., the high-octane automated machines.
- More than 95% of India's equities market volume is made up of derivatives, where HFT machines are primarily responsible for market churn.

Finance Bill amendments:

- According to changes made to the **Finance Bill 2023**, the STT on the sale of options has increased from a previous applicable charge of ₹1,700 to ₹2,100 on a turnover of ₹1 crore.
- The STT on the sale of futures contracts has increased from the previous levy of ₹1,000 to ₹1,250 on ₹1 crore in turnover.
- The STT is based on the premium, not the strike price, when it comes to options.
- For FPIs, income from trading in derivatives is seen as a capital gain.
- This decision will raise the cost of operations for HFT foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) in India because STT is not deductible as a cost when calculating capital gains income.

Exception:

- This was an exception to the rule, as the government chose to introduce this increase as an amendment to the Finance Bill instead of making the announcement as part of the budget.
- By the end of March 2023, the government anticipated collecting more than ₹20,000 crore in STT from the stock exchanges, a 60 percent increase over the previous year.
- Nonetheless, the current tax increase may result in a windfall for the government.
- According to the budget records for this year, STT really collected ₹16,927 crore in 2020–21.
- STT was implemented in India in 2004 for various types of securities transactions.
- STT is applicable to all stock market transactions involving equity or equity derivatives like F&O.

Finance Bill 2023 - Key amendments and highlights

Inside Story of the News:

- The **Finance Bill 2023** was recently passed in the Lok Sabha without discussion.
- The Bill was enacted amid protests from the Opposition over the Adani controversy and gives effect to tax ideas for the fiscal year beginning on April 1.
- A total of **64 official amendments** were proposed in the Bill.
- One of these calls for the elimination of long-term tax benefits for specific categories of debt mutual funds, and another calls for the creation of the GST Appellate Tribunal.
- Some of the amendments in the Finance Bill 2023 are:
 - Mutual Funds (MFs) must report short-term capital gains if they have less than 35% of their AUM (Assets under management) in domestic equities.
 - GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City)-based offshore financial units will receive increased tax benefits. Offshore banking units will be eligible for a 100% income tax deduction for ten years.
 - Tax on royalties or technical fees received by foreign (non-resident) corporations has increased from 10% to 20%.
 - Tax on non-par savings insurance products won't change (Rs. 5 lakh cap remains).
 - Notwithstanding claims to the contrary ('Repayment of loans' from REITS to the investor to be taxed as 'income from other sources and NOT as capital gains'), the taxation of REITS/INVITS has not changed.
 - Residential housing has not changed. Reinvestment of capital profits is limited at Rs. 10 crore.
 - All credit card payments for international travel are subject to LRS. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should investigate credit card payments for international travel that are not subject to source-taxation.
 - To satisfy employee demands and uphold fiscal responsibility, a committee on the pension system will be established under the supervision of the finance secretary.
 - All Liberalized Remittance Schemes (LRS) must comply with Tax Collection at Source (TCS), even if they are conducted within India.
 - Since it is of the type of interest income, taxation is proposed at the appropriate rate on the income from debt mutual funds.
 - Marginal relief proposed to the tax that one pays should not be more than the income that exceeds 7 lakh (Rs. 100 in this case).
 - The Securities Transaction Tax on the selling of options increased from Rs. 1,700 to Rs. 2,100 on a turnover of Rs. 1 crore.
- **20 additional sections** were added to the Bill after amendments.
- The Finance Bill will now be sent to the **Rajya Sabha**.

Laser Powder Bed Fusion (L-PBF) or Selective Laser Melting (SLM) technique

Inside Story of the News:

- In order **to create a copper-and-steel bimetallic composite with high thermal and electrical conductivity** for engineering applications, such as heat exchangers, hydraulic pump parts, cooling staves, guide plates, and hot-work tooling applications, researchers at the International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI) have developed a **novel bi-metallic joining process**.
- High-performing and multifunctional structures and components are in high demand in the world of technical advancements. The creation of bimetallic structures has drawn a lot of focus in order to meet this demand.
- These structures are highly adaptable for a variety of uses because they offer a special combination of individual material properties.
- Engineering uses in which the thermal conductivity and strength of the components are crucial have a lot to gain from this research.
- A copper and steel-based bimetallic composite exhibits excellent mechanical, electrical, and thermal conductivity as well as exceptional corrosion resistance.
- However, due to the disparities in their melting temperatures, thermal conductivity, and thermal expansion characteristics, welding copper and steel together can be difficult.
- Due to this, it has become challenging to connect bimetallic structures made of copper and stainless steel without flaws.
- Using a method known as **laser powder bed fusion (L-PBF) or selective laser melting (SLM) technique** of metal 3D printing, researchers at the International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI), an autonomous R&D centre of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, have created a novel bi-metallic joining process to address this challenge.
- This method uses metal powder melting to deposit layers, resulting in a tiny melt pool of stainless-steel powder and rapid cooling that prevents the melt from mixing with the copper surface.
- The degree of intermixing of both copper and steel is affected by the laser beam's contact with metal during the L-PBF process.
- The production of the interfacial microstructure and bonding process have been successfully established by the researchers, who have also looked into the causes of strong interfacial bonds.
- Researchers were convinced of the strong copper-steel bimetallic bond at the interface by tensile behaviour studies.
- The minimal mixing of the copper- and steel-rich regions across the interface was seen in the micrographs produced by the high magnification imaging facility.
- With a gradient decline in hardness away from the contact on the copper alloy side, the diffusion of Fe, Cr, and Ni elements from the steel to the copper side strengthened copper close to the interface.
- By providing adaptable and robust bimetallic structures with improved qualities, the laser powder bed fusion (L-PBF) approach for bi-metallic joining of stainless steel and copper alloy has the potential to transform the engineering sector.

Aravalli Green Wall Project launched

Inside Story of the News:

- According to Shri Bhupender Yadav, the Union Minister for Environment, Forestry, and Climate Change, India is taking steps to resurrect the Aravallis under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- These include a ban on single-use plastics, water conservation efforts, and the protection of natural resources.
- At a celebration for the International Day of Forests held in Tikli Village in Haryana, Shri Yadav unveiled the **Aravalli Green Wall Project**, a significant initiative to green the 5 kilometre buffer area around the Aravalli Hill Range in four states.
- At the event, Shri Yadav released the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education's FAQ on agro-forestry as well as the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Through Forestry Interventions.
- The Union Minister also participated in a plantation drive.
- The Aravalli Green Wall Project will boost the region's soil fertility, water accessibility, and climate resilience in addition to increasing the green cover and biodiversity of the Aravalli through afforestation, reforestation, and water body restoration.
- The project will help the local communities by giving it employment options, income-generating opportunities, and ecological services.
- The Union Minister reiterated the government's commitment to achieving the national goal of adding 2.5 billion tonnes of carbon sink by 2030 and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Haryana Forest Department and other stakeholders for their cooperation and support in putting the project into action.
- The general soil moisture regime, productivity, and drought resistance will all be improved with the rejuvenation of water bodies and the catchment of nearby streams.

About the project:

- The Union Environment Ministry's goal of establishing green corridors throughout the nation to fight desertification and land degradation includes the Aravalli Green Wall Project.
- The Aravalli hills cover **more than 6 million hectares of land in the states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Delhi**, which are included in the project.
- In scrubland, wasteland, and degraded forest land, natural tree and shrub species will be planted, and surface water bodies like ponds, lakes, and streams will be revitalised and restored.
- To improve the livelihoods of the surrounding populations, the initiative will also concentrate on agroforestry and pasture development.
- Starting with five waterbodies in each district of the Aravalli landscape, the project's initial phase will see the rejuvenation of 75 waterbodies.
- Large-scale plantation initiatives and water resource preservation in the Aravalli region are also part of the project.
- The project will cover degraded land in Gurugram, Faridabad, Bhiwani, Mahendergarh and in Rewari districts of Haryana.

- Society for Geoinformatics and Sustainable Development, a non-profit organisation, and IMGurgaon, a nongovernmental organisation, are being enlisted to rally people for Shramdaan in order to revive water bodies in Bandhwadi and Ghata Bundh, respectively.

Vedic Heritage portal

Inside Story of the News:

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah, on 23rd March, inaugurated the **Vedic Heritage portal** in New Delhi.
- The portal aims to communicate message enshrined in the Vedas.
- It will be beneficial for common people to have a basic knowledge of the Vedas.
- The portal will serve as a one-stop solution for those looking for any information pertaining to **the Vedic legacy**.
- Four Vedas' audio-visual recordings have been uploaded online at the Vedic Heritage portal.
- Around 18 thousand mantras from the four Vedas, totalling more than 550 hours, are contained in the portal.

Water and Heritage Shield

Inside Story of the News:

- The **International Committee On Monuments and Sites International Science Committee (ICOMOS ISC)** presented the coveted "**Water and Heritage Shield**" to **Arizona's Black Mesa Trust (BMT)** on March 25, 2023.
- The award honours BMT's efforts to educate the public about the value of water and indigenous holy places around the world, such as the Hopi's **Sípàapu**.

About Sípàapu:

- The Hopi, Navajo, and Zuni tribes place a great deal of significance on the Sípàapu, a rocky dome constructed of limestone with a spring on the Little Colorado river.
- The Hopi, in particular, have a special reverence for the environment and think that having to adapt to life in a high desert will help them advance spiritually.
- The Sípàapu is where the Hopi believe their ancestors first entered this world after leaving another.
- Unfortunately, mining and dams pose serious risks to the Sípàapu as well as many other revered locations.
- In order to transfer the coal from the Black Mesa Plateau to the Mohave Generating Station in adjacent Nevada, Peabody Energy, a coal mining company, built a coal slurry pipeline, putting the Sípàapu and the area at even greater risk.

BMT's role:

- BMT has been crucial in educating the public about the value of the Sîpàapu and the necessity to preserve it.
- The "Water and Heritage Shield" award recognises BMT's work to save indigenous holy places, cultural and historical recollections, and the right to water.

About ICOMOS ISC:

- An international non-governmental organisation called ICOMOS ISC is devoted to the preservation of the world's monuments and sites.
- The organisation's mission is to support heritage site conservation and to foster education and research in this area.
- The ICOMOS ISC honours organisations for their work in preserving historic places all across the world in a number of ways, including the "Water and Heritage Shield" award.

BARC B1201

Inside Story of the News:

- The nation's top manufacturer and exporter of alumina and aluminium, National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), a Navratna CPSE under the Ministry of Mines of the Government of India, has successfully developed a **Bauxite Certified Reference Material (CRM)** known as **BARC B1201** in partnership with the **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)**.
- This CRM is the fifth in the world and the first of its sort in India.
- BARC B1201 was formally launched at NALCO Research and Technology Centre, Bhubaneswar, on 24th March 2023.

What is a CRM?

- A CRM is a sample of a substance that has undergone examination and certification for composition, purity, and other crucial features.
- It serves as a benchmark for the comparison of additional samples of the same substance, guaranteeing that the outcomes from other laboratories are comparable.

ISRO launches LVM3-M3/OneWeb India-2 mission

Inside Story of the News:

- The **LVM3-M3/OneWeb India-2 mission** was successfully launched, according to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- All **36 satellites** were placed into their respective orbits.
- The Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, served as the launch site for the mission.
- With the commercial arm of ISRO, NewSpace India Ltd., Network Access Associates Ltd. of the United Kingdom (OneWeb Group Company) has agreed to launch 72 satellites into Low-Earth Orbit (LEO).

- ISRO had launched the first set of 36 satellites of OneWeb on October 23, 2022.
- That was the first time the two organisations had worked together on a satellite deployment.
- The 43.5-metre-tall rocket, located roughly 135 kilometres from Chennai, was launched at 9 am after a 24.5-hour countdown from the second launch pad.
- OneWeb is a global communication network powered from the space, enabling connectivity for governments and businesses.
- A significant investor in the OneWeb consortium, which is working to put together a constellation of low earth orbiting satellites, is Bharti Enterprises.
- OneWeb claims that this Sunday's launch, which would be the third this year and the 18th overall, would complete the first generation of the LEO (Low Earth Orbit) constellation.
- For ISRO this is the second launch in 2023 after the successful launch of SSLV-D2/EOS07 mission in February.
- The 36 first-generation satellites, each weighing 5,805 kg, were launched into a 450 km circular orbit with an inclination of roughly 87.4 degrees, according to ISRO.
- LVM3, formerly known as the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle MkIII (GSLVMkIII), has completed its sixth mission.
- It had five consecutive missions including the Chandrayaan-2.

CRISP (Comprehensive Rubber Information System Platform) app

Inside Story of the News:

- The Rubber Board has released the **mobile app** CRISP to **educate growers about the production of rubber and to offer online solutions**.
- The Digital University of Kerala and the Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII) have worked together to build **CRISP (Comprehensive Rubber Information System Platform)**.
- Farmers will now be able to access RRII's advice through CRISP for improving production and productivity, lowering cultivation costs, maintaining soil fertility, taking steps to prevent disease, etc.
- These facilities are currently available to farmers through conventional extension techniques.
- Numerous of these suggestions can be provided directly to the farmers and are location specific. They can also be linked to geo-information systems.
- The e-library of RRII was launched by Rubber Board Executive Director K.N. Raghavan.
- The book "Status report- Molecular and physiological markers for genetic improvement of natural rubber" was published by Saji Gopinath, Vice Chancellor of the Digital University of Kerala.
- The ongoing rubber cultivation trials in Gujarat were described by Lalit Mahatma, Associate Director of Research at Navsari Agricultural University.

LaQshya Programme

Inside Story of the News:

- **LaQshya** is a quality improvement programme that strives to **guarantee the quality of care in the labour room and maternity OT** during the intrapartum and immediately following the birth.
- It is directed towards all Government Medical College Hospitals, District Hospitals, and comparable healthcare facilities, as well as high caseload CHCs and designated FRUs.
- Around the nation, high caseload tertiary care facilities, including Government Medical College hospitals and district hospitals, have approved a total of 283 obstetric high dependency units (HDU)/ Intensive care units (ICU).
- The LaQshya programme conducts the sensitisation/orientation of all the targeted facilities (which comprise 2660 Labour Rooms and 1989 Maternity Operation Theatres) for certification and LaQshya certification.
- A facility-level goal under LaQshya is to attain a surgical site infection rate in maternity OT of 5% or less, or at the very least a reduction of 30% from the baseline.
- The impartial empanelled NQAS assessors check for conformity with the aforementioned condition at the time of LaQshya certification.

European GI tag for Himachal's Kangra tea

Inside Story of the News:

- The distinctive **Kangra tea** from India, which is cultivated in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, has received **protected geographical indicator (PGI) designation from the European Commission (EC)**.
- On March 22, the EC announced that PGI will be granted; it would take effect on April 11, 2023.
- The granting of PGI for Kangra tea comes at a time when the EC has been dragging its feet on granting a similar status to Basmati rice.
- The European Union (EU) wants India and Pakistan to engage negotiations so that the latter's Basmati rice can also receive proper recognition. India has applied for the GI classification in 2018. Islamabad, however, is far off from meeting the requirements.
- Kangra tea, grown since the middle of the 19th century, is renowned for its distinctive flavour.
- It is available as black and green teas.
- The Tea Board states that Kangra tea is farmed between 900 and 1,400 metres above sea level, with an average annual rainfall of 270 to 350 cm.

Unique Characteristics:

- Nothing less than the magnificent Dhauladhar mountain range could have served as the backdrop for Kangra, the "Valley of Gods."
- A deliciously unique cup of excellent tea is made by combining the weather, the distinctive terrain and soil conditions, and the coolness of the snow-covered mountains in the Kangra region.
- Particularly the first flush has a distinct fruitiness in the aroma and flavour.
- Kangra tea's history begins in 1849, when Dr. Jameson, the Botanical Tea Gardens' then-superintendent, declared the area excellent for tea growth.

- Kangra green and black teas are very rare due to it being one of India's smallest tea producing regions.
- While the black tea has a sweet lingering after-taste, the green tea has a subtle woody aroma.
- The demand for Kangra tea has been rising gradually, and a large portion of it is purchased by locals and shipped via Peshawar to Kabul and Central Asia.
- In India, Kangra tea received the Geographical Indication (GI) designation in 2005.
- The Tea Board claims that Kangra tea has more body and spirits and a gentler flavour than Darjeeling tea.