PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation)
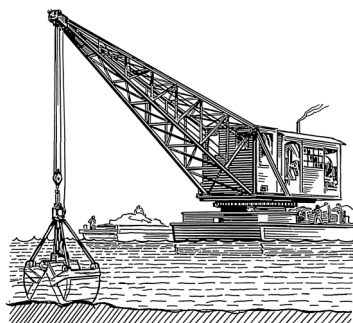

- PM chairs 36th PRAGATI Meeting
- It is a platform which enables the Prime Minister to discuss the issues with the concerned Central and State officials with full information and latest visuals of the ground-level situation.
- It was launched in 2015 and has been designed by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) team with the help of National Informatics Center (NIC).
- It is a three-tier system (PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States).

The three objectives of PRAGATI are:

1. Grievance Redressal
2. Programme Implementation
3. Project Monitoring

- The PRAGATI platform uniquely bundles three latest technologies: Digital data management, video-conferencing and geo-spatial technology.
- It promotes cooperative federalism as it brings on one platform the Secretaries of Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States.
- However, the direct interaction of the PM with the state secretaries without involving the political executives of the states is undermining the State political executive.
- It is also said that this is leading to a concentration of power in the extra-constitutional office of PMO.
- It is a robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.
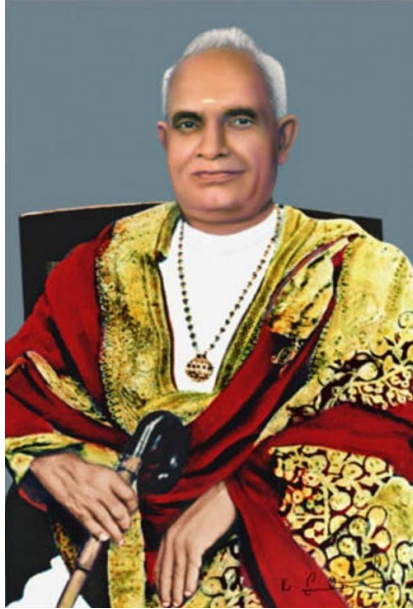- It is an innovative project in e-governance and good governance

World-Class Dredgers will be made in India soon

- Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL), Dredging Corporation of India and IHC Holland have joined hands to make world-class dredgers at CSL
- India, which signed an MoU with the Netherlands for building large dredgers here, will be looking at serving markets in South-East Asia, West East and Africa.

- At least 50 per cent of the value of the first dredger, which is expected to cost ₹800 crore, will be made in India.
- The dredger is being built in India by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) in tie-up with IHC Holland BV. The first dredger will involve Dredging Corporation of India (DCI), CSL and IHC Holland.

Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai

- Mannathu Padmanabhan (2 January 1878 – 25 February 1970) was an Indian social reformer and freedom fighter from the south-western state of Kerala.
- He is recognised as the founder of the Nair Service Society (NSS), which claims to represent the Nair community that constitutes 12.10%
- On 31 October 1914, with the help of a few others, he established the Nair Service Society. His main ambition was to uplift the status of the Nair community.
- He fought for social equality, the first phase being the Vaikom Satyagraha, demanding the public roads near the temple at Vaikom be opened to low caste Hindus. He took part in the Vaikom(1924) and Guruvayoor(1931) temple-entry Satyagrahas; the anti-untouchability agitations.
- He opened his family temple for everyone, irrespective of caste distinction.
- He became a member of the Indian National Congress in 1946 and took part in the agitation against Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's administration in Travancore.
- As the first president of Travancore Devaswom Board he revitalised many temples which had almost ceased to function. On May 25, 1947 Padmanabhan delivered his famous Muthukulam Speech at Muthukulam, Alappuzha.
- He was arrested for Indian Freedom Movement on 14 June 1947.
- In 1949, Padmanabhan became a member of the Travancore Legislative Assembly.
- In 1959, he along with Christian Churches led a united opposition against the State Communist Ministry, which became known as the Vimochana Samaram (liberation struggle).

FATF to decide today on Pakistan's grey list status

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is set to decide today whether or not Pakistan has made considerable efforts to counter terror financing, and take a call on whether the country will continue to remain in the grey list.
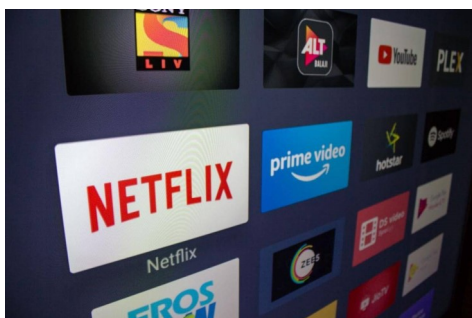
- It is highly unlikely that Islamabad will get a breather from the sword hanging on its head as European nations believe the country has not fully implemented the points in the plan of action laid down by the watchdog.

- Pakistan has been on the 'grey list' since June 2018 and Imran Khan administration was given an ultimatum in February 2020 to complete the 27 action plans by June last year.

- However, Islamabad is struggling to shield terror perpetrators and at the same time also implement the FATF action plan.

India kicks off BRICS chairship with inaugural three-day long Sherpas' meeting

- Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said Secretary (CPV & OIA) chaired the meeting and introduced our themes, priorities, and calendar for for BRICS 2021.

- He said, India looks forward to continuing productive discussions with our BRICS partners over the next two days.

- On February 19, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar launched India's BRICS 2021 website at the BRICS Secretariat at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan.

- Chinese President Xi Jinping may visit India later this year for BRICS summit.

- Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said BRICS had become an influential grouping and Beijing supported New Delhi's efforts as host.

- Wang told a regular press conference that China attaches great importance to the BRICS mechanism.

- He said, Chinese side supports the Indian side in hosting the meeting and is willing to work with India and other BRICS countries in expanding cooperation on economy, politics and people-to-people exchanges.

Self- Regulation Code Adopted by OTT Services

- India's 17 largest streaming services recently launched a self-regulation toolkit, under the aegis of the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), pre-empting government plans to bring out a code for all over-the-top (OTT) services.

- The toolkit is a step forward from the Universal Self-Regulation Code IAMAI had launched in September 2020, The Universal Regulation Code was rejected by the government.

- Provisions of the Self Regulation Code

- The code applies to any online curated content providers who work in India, and is developed by them.

- Its members agree to take up "reasonable efforts in good faith" to implement its principles.

- The code requires signatories to invest in parental controls and content descriptors that provide viewers with information on mature content.

- The code argues that since OTT platforms are on-demand, they constitute private exhibitions that don't fall under laws that apply for theatrical releases and TV broadcasts.

- It also argues that this content is subject to "user-initiated access controls", presumably passwords and parental controls.

Priya Ramani Case

- (based on "The right to her testimony" which was published in The Indian Express)

- Recently, the Delhi High court in MJ Akbar vs Priya Ramani case gave an empowering judgment that can act as a landmark in India's #MeToo movement and women's rights.

- The court acquitted journalist Priya Ramani in a criminal defamation case brought against her by former Union minister and editor M J Akbar.

- In this context, the court held that the right of reputation cannot be protected at the cost of the right of life and dignity of a woman. Further, the judgment highlighted many other points that can treat the asymmetry of patriarchal power in society.

Highlights of the Judgement:

- Pronouncing the judgement the court observed:

- Women cannot be punished for raising their voice against sexual abuse. They cannot be punished on the pretext of criminal complaint of defamation.

- Women have the right to put their grievances at any platform of their choice and even after decades

- Right of reputation cannot be protected at the cost of the right to life and dignity for women, as guaranteed in the Constitution under Article 21, and the right of equality before law and equal protection of law, as guaranteed under Article 14.

- The court said that the defence of "truth in public interest" had been accepted. Priya Ramani's disclosure was in the interest of anti-sexual harassment at workplace.

- It also rejected Mr. Akbar's argument that he was a man of stellar reputation.

- Sexual abuse takes away dignity and self-confidence.

- This attack by the victim on the character of the accused is self-defence after mental trauma suffered regarding shame over crime against her.

Defamation:

- Defamation is an oral or written statement that hurts someone's reputation.

- It is the act of communicating false statements about a person that injure the reputation of that person when observed through the eyes of an ordinary man.

- Any false and unprivileged statement published or spoken deliberately, intentionally, knowingly with the intention to damage someone's reputation is defamation

- A person's reputation is treated as his property and such damage are punishable by law.

- Written defamation, printed or typed material or images is called libel and spoken defamation is called slander.

- Reputation is an integral and important part of the dignity of the individual and Right to reputation is inherent right guaranteed by Article 21 and it is also called as natural rights.

Article 19 and Defamation as Reasonable restrictions:

- Rights of freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) of Constitution of India is not absolute and has imposed reasonable restrictions

- Article 19(2) has imposed reasonable exemption to freedom of speech and expression granted under Article 19(1) (a).

These restrictions can be placed on the grounds of:

1) the security of state,

2) friendly relations with foreign states,

3) public order, decency, morality,

4) contempt of court,

Defamation.

Civil and Criminal Defamation:

- The law of defamation is premised on a person's right to a reputation. In India, Defamation can be viewed as a civil offence as well as criminal offence.

Civil Defamation:

- In civil law, defamation is punishable under the Law of Torts by imposing punishment in the form of damages to be awarded to the claimant.

- In civil defamation, a victim can move high court or subordinate courts for seeking damages in the form of monetary compensation from accused.

- The statements made need to be false and it must be made without the consent of the alleged defamed person.

- Monetary compensation can be claimed from the defendant for defamation.

- There are certain requirements for a successful defamation suit.

Criminal Defamation:

- Section 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) provides an opportunity to the victim to file a criminal case for defamation against the accused.

- Section 500 of the Code punishes defamation if it does not fall within the above said exceptions

- Punishment for the guilty person for criminal defamation is simple imprisonment which may extend to two years or fine or both.

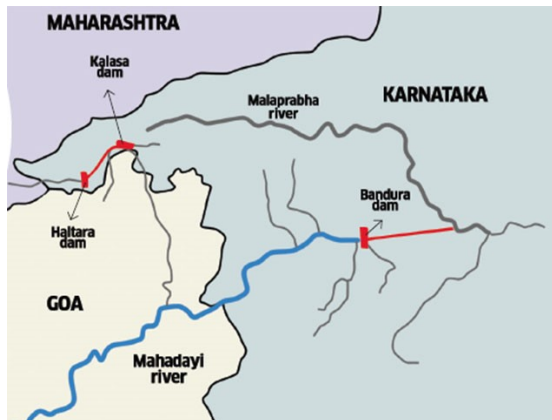- Under the criminal law, it is a bailable, non-cognizable and compoundable offence

Cyber Insurance Policy

- A committee set up by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has recommended the introduction of a cyber insurance policy.

- In October 2020, the IRDAI had set up a committee for cyber liability insurance under P Umesh.

- Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been rising incidences of cyberattacks and a growing number of high-profile data violations.

- According to the committee report, the number of internet users in India is currently estimated at 700 million.

- India was ranked as the second-largest online market worldwide in 2019, coming second only to China.

- The number of internet users is estimated to increase in both urban as well as rural regions. This number is increasing rapidly so also is the number of users of online banking.

- A cyber insurance policy, also referred to as cyber risk insurance or cyber liability insurance coverage (CLIC), is designed to help an organization mitigate risk exposure by offsetting costs involved with recovery after a cyber-related security breach or similar event.

- Although there is no standard for underwriting these policies, the following are common reimbursable expenses:

- Investigation: A forensics investigation is necessary to determine what occurred, how to repair damage and how to prevent the same type of breach from occurring in the future.

- Business losses: A cyber insurance policy may include similar items that are covered by an errors & omissions policy (errors due to negligence and other reasons), as well as monetary losses experienced by network downtime, business interruption, data loss recovery and costs involved in managing a crisis, which may involve repairing reputation damage.

- Privacy and notification: This includes required data breach notifications to customers and other affected parties, which are mandated by law in many jurisdictions, and credit monitoring for customers whose information was or may have been breached.

Mahadayi project

- The Supreme Court on Thursday granted an interim relief to the Karnataka government, allowing it to implement the final order of the Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal (MWDT), which has been challenged by Goa and Maharashtra.

Mahadayi :

- The west-flowing river

- originates in Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (Western Ghats), Belagavi Karnataka.

- Called as Mandovi in Goa.

- Joined by a number of streams to form the Mandovi which is one of two major rivers (the other one is Zuari river) that flows through Goa.

- Mahadayi project involves building across Kalasa and Banduri, two tributaries of the Mahadayi river to divert 7.56 TMC of water to the Malaprabha river, which supplies the drinking water needs of the said 4 districts, i.e., Dharwad, Belagavi Bagalkot and Gadag.

Nine African nations on track to join solar 'gigawatt club'

- Of the 37 countries that are part of the solar 'gigawatt club', only two — South Africa and Egypt — are from Africa.

- Nations with installed capacity to produce 1 GW of solar power form the 'gigawatt club', an unofficial tag.

- The nine countries that are developing their solar infrastructure are Algeria, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Namibia, Ethiopia, Morocco and Botswana, the report said.

- Nearly half the world's population without access to electricity (591 million) is in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the International Energy Association.

- Natural gas accounts for 98 per cent of the energy mix in Algeria but the country aims to generate up to 22 gigawatts of green energy by 2030. Of this, 13.6 GW will be solar, according to government sources.

- In Zimbabwe, where over 91 per cent people do not have access to electricity, solar will be key to ensuring access to affordable energy.

- Ethiopia and Botswana are expected to gain from a more traditional approach of international tenders and should reap the benefits of this approach through bottom-low tariffs, according to the report.

- On the contrary, the governments in Zambia, DRC and Angola have awarded private developers direct contracts for significant capacities without going through a tender.

- Morocco has been appreciated in the report for its transparent and efficient tender and development process over the years.

- Egypt accounts for 23 per cent of the leading solar power projects in the Middle East and North Africa region.

- The nation will continue to build on the success of both government-led projects such as Benban solar park and decentralised projects, said AFSIA in the report.

- The 1.8 GW Benban solar park developed by state-owned New and Renewable Energy Authority (NREA) at Aswan governorate was named the biggest solar photovoltaic park in the world in October 2019.

- The solar boom is driven by the new and more flexible technologies brought to market along with drastic cost reductions of both solar panels and storage solutions, said John Van Zuylen, CEO, AFSIA.

- Hydrogen is another game changer in the solar future of Africa. The continent is ideally positioned thanks to its excellent irradiation to play a pivotal role in the global solar-based green hydrogen market.

- Africa is likely to emerge as a global hub for production and export of green hydrogen.

- While large-scale solar projects have dominated the sector over the past few years, the commercial and industrial sector is booming and could represent 30-40 per cent of all solar capacities in the coming years, said AFSIA.

Christmas Island

- Christmas Island, officially Territory of Christmas Island, island in the Indian Ocean, about 224 miles (360 km) south of the island of Java and 870 miles (1,400 km) northwest of Australia, that is administered as an external territory of Australia.

- The island is the summit of an oceanic mountain whose highest point on the island is Murray Hill, rising to 1,184 feet (361 metres) in the western part of the island.

- The main settlement and chief port is at Flying Fish Cove on the northeastern part of the island.

- The island has the greatest land area of any coral atoll in the world, about 388 square kilometres (150 square miles); its lagoon is roughly the same size.

- The atoll is about 150 km (93 mi) in perimeter, while the lagoon shoreline extends for over 48 km (30 mi).Kiritimati comprises over 70% of the total land area of Kiribati, a country encompassing 33 Pacific atolls and islands.
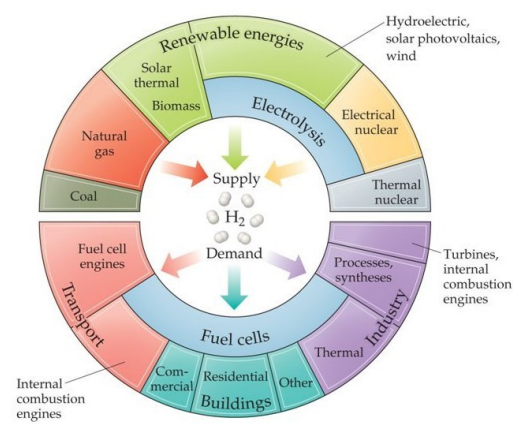
How Mars may have lost its atmosphere

- Scientists from the Center of Excellence in Space Sciences India and Department of Physical Sciences, IISER Kolkata, have demonstrated the complex interplay of processes that resulted in the Sun's strong plasma winds eroding away Mars's atmosphere.

- Mars, which is now 4.6 billion years old, is believed to have once hosted an intrinsic magnetosphere due to a dynamo in its interior

- The present-day Mars is a barren land, only having a thin and dry atmosphere made mostly of carbon dioxide. Any evidence of surface life on Mars has not yet been found.

- Without an intrinsic magnetosphere, the solar wind magnetic field first drapes around and then slips past Mars, carrying bits of atmosphere away, eroding the Martian atmosphere eventually.

- The work of the IISER Kolkata scientists confirm the long held belief that planetary magnetospheres play a crucial role in the ability of planets to sustain their atmospheres and thus remain habitable like Earth.

- like Mars, planets that lose their magnetic field eventually become inhospitable with loss of their atmosphere.

- Their simulations have profound implications for planetary habitability and the search for habitable exoplanets which many future initiatives like NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, ISRO's ExoWorlds mission, and ground based mega-projects like the Thirty Meter Telescope – which India is a partner of — plan to focus on.

- The work at CESSI was supported by the Ministry of Human Resource Development

Hydrogen Economy

The Hydrogen Economy

- Hydrogen is a promising energy carrier and has the potential to address various energy sector challenges and technically from the application point of view, substituting conventional fuels.

- Its use can reduce CO2 related emissions significantly and decarbonise the entire value chain, enabling reduced emissions and climate change threats.

- Hydrogen can also bridge the gap between supply and demand, in both a centralized or decentralized manner, thereby enhancing the overall energy system flexibility.

- Hydrogen can be used to meet both seasonal and daily supply-demand mismatch in the case of renewables. In rural India, where there is no access to the grid, the use of hydrogen can provide energy services.

- In 1970, the term 'hydrogen economy' was coined by John Bockris. He mentioned that a hydrogen economy can replace the current hydrocarbon-based economy, leading to a cleaner environment.

- The hydrogen economy is an envisioned future where hydrogen is used as fuel for vehicles, energy storage and long-distance transport of energy.

- The different pathways to use hydrogen economy includes hydrogen production, storage, transport and utilization.

- At present, the current global demand for hydrogen is 70 million metric tons, most of which is being produced from fossil fuels-- 76% from natural gas and 23% from coal and remaining from the electrolysis of water-- consumes 6% of the global natural gas and 2% of the global coal.

- This results in CO2 emissions of around 830Mt/year out of which only 130Mt/year is being captured and used in the fertilizer industry.

- Much of the hydrogen produced is used for oil refining (33%), ammonia (27%), methanol production (11%), steel production via DRI (3%) and others.

- In India, hydrogen is being commercially produced in the fertilizer industry, petroleum refining and chemical industries and also as a by-product in chlorine alkali industries. A limited amount of hydrogen is also produced by electrolysis.

- Hydrogen is a zero-carbon fuel and is considered an alternative to fuel and a key source of clean energy.

- It can be produced from renewable sources of energy such as solar and wind.

- At present, there are a number of ways to produce hydrogen, but the most common method is natural gas reforming and electrolysis.

- ndia's goal of attaining 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022 and to decarbonise by 2050 got an impetus in the Union Budget 2021-22.

- The Budget allocated Rs. 1,500 crores for renewable-energy development and Hydrogen Energy Mission.

- In October 2020, Delhi became the first Indian city to operate Hydrogen-enriched CNG (H-CNG) buses in a six-month pilot project.

- Companies such as Indian Oil Corporation and NTPC Ltd are working towards this technology. IOC has patented the technology for producing H-CNG-- 18% hydrogen in CNG, directly from natural gas without restoring to conventional blending.

- It is also planning to set up a dedicated unit to produce hydrogen to run buses at its Research and Development Centre in Faridabad.

- On the other hand, state-run NTPC Ltd is planning to start a premium hydrogen fuel bus service on the Delhi-Jaipur route (the first intercity service on the aforementioned technology).

- It is also considering to set up a green hydrogen production facility in Andhra Pradesh.