Lokpal of India celebrates 1st Foundation Day on 16th January

The event marked the **establishment of the Lokpal on this day in 2014,** following the enactment of the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.**
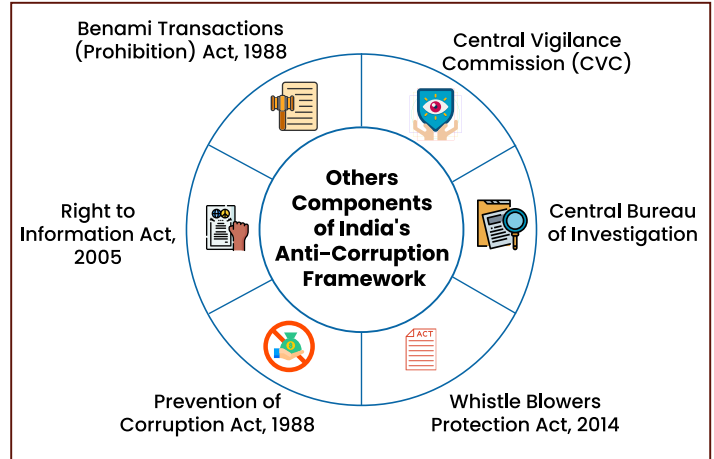
About Lokpal and Lokayukta

- The concept originated from the **Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) report (1966).**
- The act of 2013 provided **Lokpal (ombudsman) at Union level and Lokayukta at state level** to ensure accountability and curb **corruption in public offices.**
  - The concept of **ombudsman** originated in Sweden in 19th century.

Key Provisions Related to Lokpal

- **Composition and Members:** Appointed by the President of India.
  - **Chairperson** (Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge, or an eminent person),
  - Up to 8 **members (50% judicial; 50% from SC/ST/OBC/minorities/women).**
- **Selection Committee:** Includes PM (Chairman), Lok Sabha Speaker, Opposition Leader, CJI/ Judge of the Supreme Court, and an eminent jurist.
- **Tenure:** 5 years or until 70 years of age.
- **Jurisdiction:** Lokpal covers the Prime Minister (with safeguards), Ministers, MPs, Group A/B/C/D officers, and officials of central government-funded entities.
  - **Investigates** corruption complaints, including those referred by CVC or whistleblowers.
- **Prosecution Wing:** Lokpal can set up its prosecution wing.
- **Timeline for cases:** Preliminary inquiry: **90 days;** Investigation: **6 months** (extendable).

Key Challenges/Issues with Lokpal: Seven-Year Limit (complaints older than seven years are not entertained), delayed appointments, rejected nearly 90% of complaints over the past 5 years as they were not in the correct format, etc.
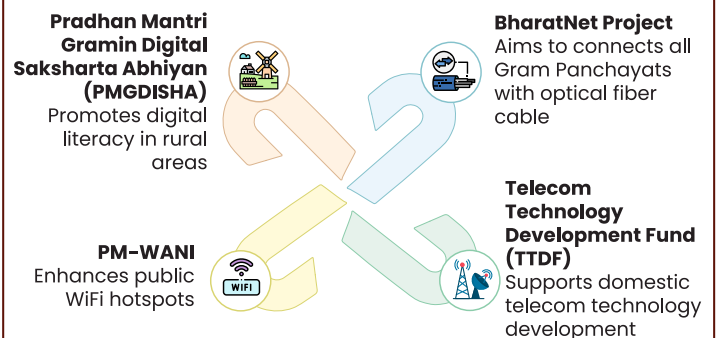

Others Components of India's Anti-Corruption Framework
- Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988
- Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)
- Central Bureau of Investigation
- Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014
- Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988
- Right to Information Act, 2005

National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0 unveiled by Ministry of Communications

NBM 2.0 and **Sanchar Saathi Mobile App** have been launched to enhance telecom accessibility, security, and empowerment across India.

About National Broadband Mission 2.0

- Build on the success of NBM 1.0.
  - NBM 1.0 was launched in 2019 as a part of the **National Digital Communications Policy, 2018.**
    - Under NBM 1.0, telecom towers increased up to 8.17 lakh and broadband subscribers up to 941 million.
- **Objective:** Aims to accelerate digital infrastructure growth, bridge the digital divide, and provide affordable broadband access to all.
- It **envisions** to
  - Extend **Optical Fiber Cable (OFC)** connectivity to 2.70 lakh villages by 2030, with 95% uptime, up from around 50,000 villages.
  - Provide broadband to **90% of anchor institutions** (schools, PHCs, Anganwadi Centers, Panchayat offices) by 2030.
  - Achieve a minimum **fixed broadband download** speed of 100 Mbps.
  - Facilitate the **rollout of 5G networks** and prepare for future 6G networks.
  - Leveraging **Optical Ground Wire (OPGW)** from the power sector to boost connectivity, especially during disasters, wars, and emergencies.

Other Initiatives for enhancing Telecom Accessibility in India

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) Promotes digital literacy in rural areas

BharatNet Project Aims to connects all Gram Panchayats with optical fiber cable

PM-WANI Enhances public WiFi hotspots

Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) Supports domestic telecom technology development

Singapore President Visits India on 60 Years of India-Singapore Bilateral Relations

The Presidents of India & Singapore jointly unveiled a **logo to mark the 60th anniversary** of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

India-Singapore Relations

- **Diplomatic Relations:** India was one of the first countries to recognize Singapore's independence & establish **diplomatic relations in 1965.**
  - ⊖ **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement** was signed in 2005. In 2015 relations were upgraded to a Strategic Partnership which further elevated to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** in 2024.

- **Trade:** Singapore is **India's 6th largest trade partner** (2023-24) with a share of 3.2 % of India's overall trade. It is **India's largest trade partner in ASEAN** (India is net importer).

- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Both are members of forums like **East Asia Summit,** Commonwealth, **IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association),** and IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium).

- **Defence Cooperation:** India and Singapore host' military exercises ie. Exercise **Agni Warrior** (Army) & **SIMBEX** (Navy).

- **Indian Diaspora:** Indian origin people constitute **9% of Singapore's population.**
  - ⊖ **Tamil** is one of the four **official languages** of Singapore.

Significance of Singapore for India

Countering China	Foreign Direct Investment	Act East Policy	Geographical Location
Access to Changi Naval Base aids India in countering China's influence.	Singapore is leading source of FDI ($11.77 billion) in India FY 2023–24.	Singapore supports India's diplomatic and economic engagement in East Asia.	Singapore's strategic location at the crossroads of the East- West shipping route is one of the world's most important trade routes.

Rubber Board unveiled 2 new initiatives to promote Rubber production

The initiatives **iSNR (Indian Sustainable Natural Rubber)** and **INR Konnect** were **unveiled on the occasion of the of the platinum jubilee** celebrations **of the Rubber Act, 1947.**

- The **Act of 1947** provided for the establishment of the **Rubber Board** (works under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**) to ensure **overall development of the rubber industry in the country.**

About Initiatives

- **iSNR (Indian Sustainable Natural Rubber):** Aims at aligning Indian rubber production with the stringent **European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)** standards.
  - ⊖ A key feature of **iSNR** is its **traceability certification (certifies rubber's origin)**

- **INR Konnect** (web-based platform): Designed to connect growers of untapped rubber holdings with interested adopters to maximise plantation productivity.

About Rubber Crop
- **Hevea brasiliensis (Rubber Tree)** native of the **Amazon river basin.**
  - ⊖ **Introduced to tropical Asia** and **Africa by the British.**
  - ⊖ **Rubber is obtained** in the form of **latex** from **tree.**
- **Conditions required for Plantation**
  - ⊖ **Climate:** Tropical climate with **annual rainfall of 200 – 300 cm** is suited for cultivation.
    - ◆ Temperature should be ranged from 25 to 34°C with 80 % relative humidity.
  - ⊖ **Soil:** It requires **deep and lateritic fertile soil,** deficient in phosphorus.

Other key Initiatives for Rubber
- National Rubber Policy 2019, Sustainable & Inclusive Development of Natural Rubber Sector' Scheme, Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development (INROAD) project etc.

Status of India's Rubber Sector

- **Position:** India is the **third largest producer** and **fourth largest consumer of natural rubber.**
  - ⊖ **Thailand** is the world's leading **Rubber producer** followed by **Indonesia.**

- **Top Producing State:** Kerala produces over 90% of India's natural rubber
  - ⊖ It is also produced in the state such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya.

- **Key challenges faced:** 20-25% of India's rubber plantations remains untapped, Climatic variations (e.g. torrential rains), concerns on EUDR implementation, etc.

Yala Glacier in Himalayas Projected to vanish by 2040s

The Yala glacier (Nepal) **retreated by 680m** and witnessed significant **reduction in area (36%)** between 1974 and 2021.

- It is the **only glacier in entire Himalayas** to be included in the **Global Glacier Casualty List** (GGCL) which highlights accelerating **impact of climate change on Himalayan glaciers/cryospeher.**
  - The **cryosphere** is the **frozen part of the Earth,** including snow, ice, and frozen ground.
- The **GGCL project** was launched in 2024 by Rice University, University of Iceland, Iceland Glaciological Society, World Glacier Monitoring Service, & UNESCO.

About Glacier Retreat

- Glacier retreat is the process by which **glaciers shrink in size & mass** due to melting, evaporation, and other causes.
- **Glaciers Already Lost: Pico Humboldt Glacier,** Venezuela (2024), **Sarenne Glacier,** France (2023).
  - **Dagu glacier** in **China** is expected to **disappear by 2030.**

Impact of Melting Glaciers/Cryosphere

- **Disruption of Ecosystem & livelihoods:** Glaciers and ice sheets hold approximately 70% of the world's freshwater, essential for ecosystems & human life.
  - **e.g., 240 million people in the Hindu Kush Himalaya** rely on the cryosphere for survival.
- **Increased Risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs):** Rapid glacier melting creates **unstable glacial lakes** that can breach, causing **catastrophic floods.**
- **Climate Feedback Loop:** Melting glaciers **reduce Earth's reflectivity (albedo),** absorbing more heat & accelerating global warming.

Initiatives to Protect Cryosphere
Global
- **UN Initiatives**
  - **2025** designated as **International Year of Glaciers' Preservation.**
  - **March 21** to be observed annually as **World Day for Glaciers.**
- **Other Initiatives:** Himalayan Adaptation Network by IUCN & **Living Himalayas Initiative** by WWF.
India's Initiatives:
- **National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem,**
- **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS):** Monitors glacier-related events and issues GLOF alerts.
- Missions to Arctic (e.g., **IndARC,** 2014) & Antarctic.

Revised Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) Policy for 2024-25

The revised policy announced by **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution** aims to enhance food security & bolstering ethanol production.

- **It set Rice Reserve Price** (₹2,250 per quintal) for s**ale to State Governments, Corporations, & Community Kitchens,** without e-auctions.
- The policy set reserve prices at ₹2,250 per quintal (slashed by ₹550) of rice to **ethanol distilleries to aid ethanol production.**

What is Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic)?

- **About:** Under this scheme, **Food Corporation of India** (FCI) **sells surplus food grains** (wheat & rice) from the **central pool** in open market via **e-auction at pre-determined prices.**
- **Aim:** It helps to **control market prices** and **curbs inflation.**
- **Eligibility:** Processors / Atta Chalki / Flour Millers of Wheat Products. (Traders / Bulk Buyers are not allowed through e-auction.)
  - Usually, **states** are also **allowed to procure** food grains **without participating in auctions.**

About Food Corporation of India (FCI)
- **Genesis:** It is a **statutory body** established under the **Food Act corporations 1964.**
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- **Key Objectives:**
  - **Effective price support** operations for safeguarding the **interests of the farmers.**
  - **Distribution of foodgrains** throughout the country for **public distribution system.**
  - Maintaining satisfactory level of **operational and buffer stocks** of foodgrains to ensure National Food Security.

Also In News

National Sports Award

Recently, President of India presented National Sports Award 2024.
6 Categories of National Sports Awards
- **Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award (1991-92):** Awarded for **outstanding performances in sports spanning over a period of 4 years.**
- **Arjuna Award** (1961): Awarded **for consistent good performance over a period of 4 years.**
- **Dronacharya Award** (1985): It **is highest sports honour for coaches.**
- **Major Dhyan Chand Award (2002):** India's highest honour for lifetime achievements in sports.
- **Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar (2009):** Awarded to **organisations /corporates (private & public)** & individuals for playing a role in area of sports promotion & development **over last 3 years.**
- **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy (1956-57):** Given to an **institution/ university** for top performance in inter-university tournaments **over last 1 year.**

Kuka revolt (1872)

Recently, tribute has been paid to the martyrs of the **Kuka Movement.**
About Kuka Movement
- The Kuka Movement was the **first major reaction in Punjab against the British political order** established after 1849.
- It was a **crucial phase of the Namdhari Movement,** founded by **Satguru Ram Singh** in 1857, at Bhaini Sahib.
  - The Namdharis, also known as "Kukas" due to their high-pitched recitation of Gurbani called "Kook" in Punjabi, were urged by Ram Singh to **boycott all British goods and services.**
  - He organized the Kukas and **provided military training to young men.**
- The movement **raised awareness of subjugation, promoted civil disobedience,** and encouraged **wearing hand-spun white attire** as a symbol of resistance.

World Employment and Social Outlook, 2025

International Labour Organization (ILO) has recently released its **World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025 report.**

Key findings

- Global unemployment remains at 5% in 2024, with economic growth slowing and challenges persisting.
  - The slowing global economy is making it more difficult for labor markets to fully recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Key Challenges for Labour Market:** Geopolitical tensions, the rising costs of climate change and unresolved debt issues

About ILO

- It is the **only tripartite UN agency,** since 1919, which brings together governments, employers, and workers from 187 member states to set **labor standards, create policies,** and promote decent work for all.
- **HQ:** Geneva, Switzerland.

Neuromorphic Device

Indian Scientists have developed a Neuromorphic device.

About Neuromorphic Device'

- **Neuromorphic devices** give ideas about how the **human body senses** and responds to **pain.**
- It is inspired by the **habituation** process of human body.
  - In our bodies, special sensors called nociceptors detect pain and help us respond to harmful situations.
  - Over time, with repeated exposure, one can actually feel pain less intensely through a process called **habituation.**
- **Benefit:** Make wearable tech smarter, and improve human-machine interactions.

Karnali Hydropower Project

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) has finalized a **Joint Venture Agreement** for the development of the **Upper Karnali Hydro-electric Project in Nepal.**

- **Karnali River** originates **from Macha-khabab of Tibet** and flows through Nepal and **meets the Ghaghara River in India.**

About Karnali Hydropower Project

- It is a Run-of-River (RoR) type project that will **export power** from Nepal to India and Bangladesh.
  - A run of the river project is a type of hydropower plant that **uses the natural flow of a river to generate electricity.**
  - There is no need of large dam and reservoir in it.

Kokborok Language

Tripura is conducting **language mapping** for development of '**Kokborok' language'.**

About Kokborok Language

- The word "Kokborok" comes from "**Kok,**" meaning "**verbal,**" and "**Borok,**" meaning "people" or "human."
- It is the mother tongue of communities namely **Debbarma (Tripuri) Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Kalai, Rupini, Murasing, Uchoi** etc.
- It is recognised as one of the **State language** of, **Tripura.**
- It is part of the Sino-Tibetan language family.

Nord Stream pipeline

Recently, a UNEP study found the 2022 Nord Stream pipeline explosions caused the largest human-induced methane release on record.

About Nord Stream Pipeline

- Nord Stream is a major **natural** gas pipeline running under the **Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany.**
- The Nord Stream twin pipeline system through the **Baltic Sea** runs from **Vyborg, Russia to Lubmin** near Greifswald, **Germany.**
- **Significance:**
  - Ensures **energy security** for Europe, especially **Germany.**
  - Provides a **direct, reliable gas supply** from Russia, bypassing transit countries.

Ratnagiri

Recently, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) **found ancient Buddhist artefacts** in excavations at Odisha's Ratnagiri.

- ASI found **artefacts like Buddha head and inscribed Buddhist relics etc.**

About Ratnagiri

- This site has been **linked to Buddhism since Emperor Ashoka's invasion of Kalinga** (ancient Odisha).
- Ratnagiri is considered to have **rivaled Nalanda as a center for Buddhist learning,** particularly in Mahayana & Tantrayana (Vajrayana) Buddhism.
  - Together with other Buddhist sites – **Lalitagiri** and **Udayagiri, Ratnagiri** completes the **set of Diamond Triangle** of Buddhist centers in Odisha.

Place in News — Colombia (Capital: Bogotá)

At least 30 people have been killed in clashes between rival left-wing groups near Colombia's tense border with Venezuela.

Political Features

- **Known as Gateway of South America** because it lies in northwestern part of continent where South America connects with Central and North America.
- **Land boundaries:** Venezuela and Brazil (east); Panama (north); Peru and Ecuador (south).
- **Maritime Boundaries:** Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean

Geographical Features

- **Two major physical regions:** the Andes and the broad lowlands
- **Major Rivers:** Amazon, Orinoco etc.
- **Highest point:** Pico Cristobal Colon

AHMEDABAD   BENGALURU   BHOPAL   CHANDIGARH   DELHI   GUWAHATI   HYDERABAD   JAIPUR   JODHPUR   LUCKNOW   PRAYAGRAJ   PUNE   RANCHI