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ACS Dibrugarh

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GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

1. Forging leadership with India's youth power

Context: The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue is an innovative one, launched with the vision of engaging India's youth in the developmental journey of the nation. The programme seeks to harness the collective energy, creativity and leadership potential of young minds to contribute towards realising a Viksit Bharat, i.e., a Developed India. This event replaces the National Youth Festival in 2025. It focuses on increased youth participation in India's national development initiatives. This four-stage competition invites youth to engage in idea generation. It includes a quiz writing submissions state presentations and a national championship.

Key points

- **Overview:** Every year, January 12 is celebrated across the length and breadth of India as 'National Youth Festival', a day which is also the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

- **Data on youth in India:** India has one of the largest youth populations in the world, with over 600 million people under the age of 25, representing about 50% of the country's total population.
    - *Population* - In 2011, the youth population in India was 333.4 million, which was a 77 million increase from the previous census. The youth population is expected to decrease from 371.4 million in 2021 to 345.5 million by 2036.
    - *Education* - The unemployment rate is higher for those with higher levels of education. In 2022, the unemployment rate was 18.4% for those with secondary education or higher and 29.1% for graduates.
    - *Employment* - In 2022-23, 42.1% of India's youth (15-29 years old) were part of the labour force. The share was 61.6% for young men and 19.7% for young women.
    - *Skill level* - According to the Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC-Education), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Education Commission, more than 50% of Indian youth are not on track to have the education and skills necessary for employment by 2030.
    - *Gender* - In 2011, 52.7% of adolescents were male, and 47.3% were female.
- **Some initiatives for youth empowerment:** *Skill India Mission* - Launched in 2015, this initiative focuses on providing youth with skill development opportunities across various sectors to make them more employable. It includes schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) to provide training and certification in various skills.

  Digital India - Aimed at increasing digital literacy and access to technology, this initiative ensures that youth across India, including in rural areas, have access to digital tools, broadband connectivity, and online educational resources.
- **Challenges:** *Unemployment and Underemployment* - A significant number of youths, especially graduates, face difficulties in finding quality employment due to skill mismatches and limited job opportunities in key sectors.

  Gender Inequality - Despite progress, women and girls in India still face barriers to education, employment, and leadership roles, limiting their ability to contribute equally to national development.

  Skill gap - The skill gap is a major issue, with a mismatch between educational outcomes and industry needs, leaving many youths unemployable. Practical training and soft skills like communication and problem-solving are often lacking, further limiting job readiness.
- **Way forward:** *Skill Development and Vocational Training* - Expand skill development programs to align with industry needs and provide hands-on training in high-demand sectors such as technology, healthcare, and renewable energy.

  Improvement of Educational Quality - Implement reforms to ensure that education systems focus on critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills, not just rote learning.

  Gender Equality Initiatives - Strengthen policies to promote gender equality in education, employment, and leadership positions. Create safe and inclusive spaces for women and girls, ensuring equal access to opportunities in all sectors.
- **Conclusion:** The reimagining of the National Youth Festival into the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue marks a significant step towards empowering India's youth to actively contribute to the nation's development. By promoting political engagement, encouraging merit-based involvement, and creating a platform for innovation and leadership, this initiative aligns with the Prime Minister's vision of a developed India.

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

2. ONOS boost to academia

Context: The Government of India announced the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative to support the growing needs of the research community. The scheme aims to provide open access to renowned national and international journals, research articles, and publications for academic professionals, research scholars, students, and other stakeholders. The initiative promises significant advantages for academic institutions, including colleges, universities, research organisations, institutes of national importance, and other centres of higher studies.

Key points

- **Overview:** The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative is a landmark step aimed at democratizing access to global scholarly knowledge in India. It aligns with the broader goals of NEP 2020 and ViksitBharat@2047.
- **Phase I (2025–2027):** Establish the framework, provide access to research materials, and negotiate Article Processing Charges (APCs) for Indian researchers.
- **Democratization of Knowledge:** Provides equitable access to international research resources across tier-2 and tier-3 cities, addressing regional disparities in research opportunities.
- **Boosts Research Quality:** Access to high-quality journals enhances research capabilities, enabling Indian researchers to contribute to cutting-edge global innovations.
- **Fosters Collaboration:** Integration with global research communities promotes interdisciplinary and international collaborations, elevating India's global research footprint.
- **Support for National Development:** Enhances India's R&D ecosystem, supporting innovation in critical areas like STEM, medicine, and social sciences, which are pivotal for economic growth and self-reliance.
- **Improved Academic Infrastructure:** Complements initiatives like the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), creating a more robust research infrastructure.
- **Challenges:** *Administrative Complexity* - Coordinating access for 6,300 institutions with diverse needs may pose significant logistical and administrative challenges.
  Digital Divide - Effective utilization of digital resources may be hindered by infrastructure gaps in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, such as unreliable internet connectivity or lack of digital literacy.
  Sustainability - Long-term funding for such a large-scale initiative requires careful planning to ensure it remains viable without compromising quality.
  Dependency on Global Publishers - Heavily relying on foreign publishers may limit India's leverage in negotiations and could lead to higher costs over time.
- **Way Ahead:** *Strengthen Infrastructure* - Improve digital connectivity and provide training in digital resource usage for institutions in remote areas.
  Phase Expansion - Gradually expand ONOS to include more journals, databases, and even regional or Indian language resources to broaden access.
  Promote Open Access - Encourage Indian researchers to utilize Open Access (OA) platforms and build national repositories for sharing research outputs freely.
  Enhance Negotiation Leverage - Collaborate with other nations to negotiate better terms with publishers, including lower APCs and subscription costs.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

3. Behind LA fires: heat, no rain, Santa ana

Context: The Los Angeles wildfires of 2025 have caused widespread devastation, claimed seven lives and destroyed over 10,000 structures. At least 10 people have killed in the wildfires that continued to rage in Southern California on Friday, powered by Santa Ana winds that gusted to 112 kmph in same places. The fires have destroyed acres of land, entire streets, and thousands of buildings in the Los Angeles area, forcing the evacuation of more than 200,000 residents.

Key points

- **Wildfires:** Wildfires are uncontrolled fires that spread rapidly across forests, grasslands, or urban areas, fuelled by dry vegetation and wind. While they are natural occurrences in ecosystems, human activities and climate change have amplified their frequency and severity.
- **Geographic Conditions Aiding Wildfires:** *Dry Climate* - Prolonged droughts in California create arid conditions, drying vegetation and making it highly flammable.
  Santa Ana Winds - Strong, hot winds spread embers and intensify the flames, rapidly increasing the fire's reach. These winds blow when high pressure builds over the great basin, the area between the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada.
  Vegetation Density - Dense forests and dry shrubs act as natural fuel, accelerating the wildfire's intensity.
  Topography - Hilly terrains funnel winds, helping fires move faster uphill and spreading flames over larger areas.
  Lack of Rainfall - Extended dry spells reduce soil moisture and weaken vegetation, making them more prone to ignition.
- **Causes of Wildfires:** *Climate Change* - Rising global temperatures and increased droughts have made conditions ripe for frequent fires.
  Agricultural Burns - Poorly managed burns meant for clearing fields can spread uncontrollably, causing wildfires.
- **Consequences of Wildfires:** *Human and Economic Losses* - Wildfires cause loss of lives, displace communities, and lead to financial losses exceeding billions of dollars.
  Environmental Impact - Destroy ecosystems, habitats, and vegetation, disrupting biodiversity and soil health.
  Air Quality Deterioration - Smoke and particulate matter from wildfires pollute the air, causing respiratory and cardiovascular issues.
  Water Contamination - Ash and debris from fires contaminate water sources, impacting drinking water and aquatic life.
- **Measures to Mitigate Wildfires:** *Improved Fire Management* - Use advanced firefighting tools like drones, fire-retardant chemicals, and satellite monitoring for early detection and response.
  Vegetation Control - Remove dry vegetation, implement controlled burns, and maintain firebreaks to limit the spread of wildfires.
  Public Awareness - Educate communities on fire prevention, evacuation plans, and the risks of activities like campfires during dry seasons.
- **Conclusion:** Wildfires are a growing challenge due to climate change and urbanization. Addressing their causes, improving response strategies, and investing in long-term climate solutions are essential to minimize their devastating impacts on humanity and ecosystems.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

4. India's journey so far on the AI military bandwagon

Context: As the world has begun utilising and developing artificial intelligence (AI) for military purposes amidst debates of ethical concerns, India also appears to have hopped on the bandwagon. Last year saw a defence Budget of ₹6.21 lakh crore ($75 billion), with an emphasis on modernising and upgrading India's military. India has begun to make strides towards integrating AI systems with their military and using them across various systems. Products such as the Indrajaal autonomous drone security system have been developed.

Key points

- **Overview:** India has attracted investments from numerous foreign tech giants for its AI ecosystem for instance, Microsoft approximately $3 billion to building data centres in Telangana.
- **Ai in Defence:** A total of 140 AI-based surveillance systems have been deployed for this purpose. These systems include high-resolution cameras, sensors, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) feeds, and radar feeds.
- **Game-Changer in Various Fields:** AI is seen as a game-changer in logistics, information operations, and intelligence collection.
    - *AI-Powered Drones* - AI-equipped drones excel in day and night reconnaissance missions, capturing images and extracting data from remote locations. They also detect enemy drones, offering cost-effective threat mitigation.
    - *Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)* - LAWS autonomously detect, select, and engage hostile targets, multiplying force effectiveness while requiring minimal personnel.
    - *Autonomous Combat Vehicles and Robots* - These technologies enhance soldier protection and performance, aiding in monitoring casualty evacuation,
- **Positioning in Intelligent Warfare:** India aims to position itself at the forefront of intelligent warfare strategies, recognizing the importance of AI in various military applications, including border control, comprehensive surveillance, and AI-equipped drones for reconnaissance missions.
- **Concerns related:** *Budget Constraints* - According to the Delhi Policy Group, a security think tank, the Indian military allocates approximately US$50 million annually for AI spending. China invests more than 30 times as much in AI technology.
  Misidentification of Targets - AI systems may make mistakes in identifying targets, potentially leading to unintended attacks on non-combatants or friendly forces, resulting in unacceptable collateral damage. Ex- U.S. drone surveillance footage has misidentified civilians as terrorist targets in the August 2021 strike in Afghanistan.
- **Way Forward:** *Human Accountability* - Defining the extent of human involvement and responsibility in AI-driven military operations is crucial. Clear lines of accountability need to be established for any mishaps or wrongdoing.
  Set-up Processes and Practices - Establish processes and practices that facilitate collaboration with research labs, academia, startups, and the private sector.
- **Conclusion:** Deploying AI in defence, the Indian Army has integrated 140 AI-based surveillance systems along its borders with Pakistan and China, utilizing high-resolution cameras, sensors, UAV feeds, and radar feeds. These systems analyse data to detect intrusions, classify targets, and bolster border security, showcasing AI's transformative role in real-time monitoring, military simulators, and intelligence surveillance.