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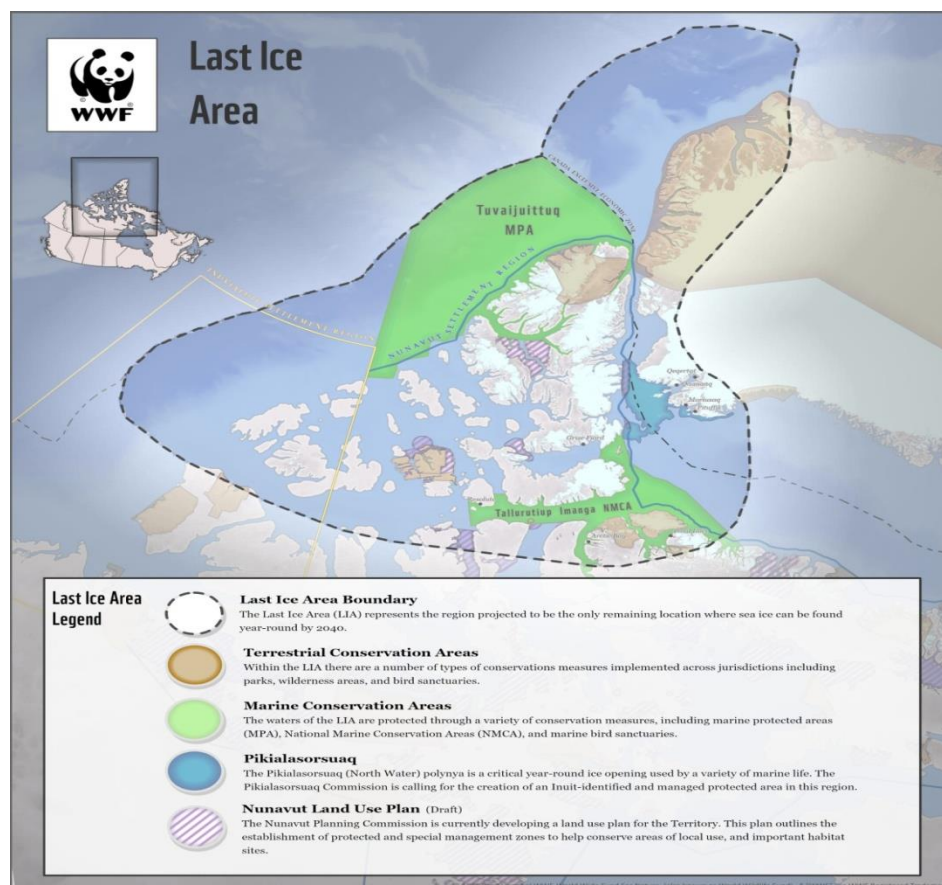
1. Arctic's 'Last Ice Area'

(Topic- GS Paper I – Geography, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, a part of the Arctic's ice called "Last Ice Area", located north of Greenland, has melted before expected.
- Scientists had believed this area was strong enough to withstand global warming.
- In August 2020, the scientists noted that the area where the Last Ice Area (LIA) is located experienced a record low concentration of sea ice.

About the Last Ice Area



- In an article published in 2015, the National Geographic noted that while climate projections forecast the total disappearance of summer ice in the Arctic by the year 2040.

- It is the only place that would be able to withstand a warming climate would be this area of ice called the “Last Ice Area”.
- The **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** notes that climate change is shrinking the extent of Arctic summer sea ice, which is not only important for animals but also the local Inuit communities.

Significance of the area

- The area is important because it was thought to be able to help ice-dependent species as ice in the surrounding areas melted away.
- The area is used by polar bears to hunt for seals who use ice to build dens for their offspring.
- **Walruses** too, use the surface of the ice for foraging.
- **The walrus is a large flippered marine mammal with a discontinuous distribution about the North Pole in the Arctic Ocean and subarctic seas of the Northern Hemisphere.**

Reasons for change

- Through satellite images, researchers noted that the sea ice concentration was at a record low of 50 percent, as of August 14, 2020.
- The team also explored the reasons for the record low concentration of sea ice.
- They say that about 80 percent of thinning can be attributed to weather-related factors such as winds that break up and move the ice around.
- The remaining 20 percent can be attributed to longer-term thinning of the ice due to global warming.

About the World Wide Fund for Nature

- It is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961 that works in the field of wilderness preservation and the reduction of human impact on the environment.
- It's headquartered at Gland, Switzerland.
- Its mission is to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth.

2. NIPUN Bharat

(Topic- GS Paper II- Government Policies, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- The Department of School Education and Literacy has recently launched National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat).

More on the news

- Center has also changed the deadline of National Educational policy 2020, to 2026-27 which was previously **2025** due to COVID-19.

About NIPUN Bharat

- NIPUN Bharat will be implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Education.
- It is a five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at the national- state- district- block- school level in all states and UTs, under the aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha.

Vision

- The vision of NIPUN Bharat Mission is to create an enabling environment to ensure universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy, so that every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.
- NIPUN Bharat is likely to emphasise goal setting and accountability for State governments, and provide guidelines for teacher training, assessment and the creation of printed resources

Funding

- It is funded through the Samagra Shiksha scheme.

About Samagra Shiksha

- It is a **centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
- It is an integrated scheme for school education extending from pre-school to class XII to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
- It subsumes the three Schemes of
 - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
 - Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
 - Teacher Education (TE).
- The scheme treats school education holistically as a continuum from Pre-school to Class 12.
- The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving the quality of school education by focussing on the two T's – Teacher and Technology.

- The Scheme will help improve the transition rates across the various levels of school education and aid in promoting universal access to children to complete school education.
- **It also helps to achieve to fulfill the following SDG goal**
 - The Goal SDG-4.1 states that “By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
 - Further the SDG 4.5 states that “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of Education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”.

The major objectives of the Scheme are

- a. provision of quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of students;
- b. Bridging Social and Gender Gaps in School Education;
- c. Ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education;
- d. Ensuring minimum standards in schooling provisions;
- e. Promoting Vocationalisation of education;
- f. Support States in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009;
- g. Strengthening and up-gradation of SCERTs/State Institutes of Education and DIET as nodal agencies for teacher training.

Related Information

Initiatives to boost Education Sector

PM e-VIDYA

- It is a comprehensive initiative which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education.
- This will enable multi-mode access to education, and includes:
 - DIKSHA (one nation-one digital platform)
 - TV (one class-one channel) where one dedicated channel per grade for each of the classes 1 to 12.
 - It will provide access to quality educational material.
 - SWAYAM online courses in MOOCS format for school and higher education.
 - IITPAL for IIT JEE/NEET preparation.
 - Air through Community radio and CBSE Shiksha Vani podcast.
 - Study material for the differently abled developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/ YouTube.

Manodarpan

- It is an initiative launched under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- It is aimed to provide psychosocial support to students, family members and teachers for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19.
- The platform includes a national toll free helpline for students of schools, universities and colleges, which will be manned by a pool of experienced counsellors, psychologists and mental health professionals.

Significance

- It would act as an element of strengthening human capital and increasing productivity for the education sector in the wake of covid-19.

3. Child Soldier Recruiter List

(Topic- GS Paper II- IR, issues related to vulnerable section, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- The United States of America has recently added Pakistan and 14 other countries to a Child Soldier Recruiter List.

About the Child Soldier Recruiter List

- The US Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA) requires the publication in the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report a list of foreign governments that have recruited or used child soldiers during the previous year (April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021).
- It identifies foreign governments having government-supported armed groups that recruit or use child soldiers, a designation that could result in restrictions on certain security assistance and commercial licensing of military equipment.
- The countries which have been added to the annual TIP list of the US State Department this year are: Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen.

Definition of a Child soldier

- The recruitment or use of children below the age of 15 as soldiers is prohibited by both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions, and is considered a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Optional Protocol

- The Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child further prohibits kids under the age 18 from being compulsorily recruited into state or non-state armed forces or directly engaging in hostilities.
- The United States is a party to the Optional Protocol.

About Convention on the Rights of the Child

- It is a treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and entered into force on September 2, 1990.
- It recognises a child as every human being under 18 years old.
- It sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.
- It includes rights such as Right to Education, Right to Rest and Leisure, Right to Protection from Mental or Physical Abuse including Rape and Sexual Exploitation.
- **Currently, 193 countries have ratified the CRC which is the world's most widely ratified human rights treaty.**
- It further prohibits the state parties from recruiting children under 15 into the armed forces.

Note:

- The CRC requires states to refrain from using children under 15 in direct hostilities; the Optional Protocol rises this age to 18.

What are prohibited for countries in the list?

The following types of security assistance are prohibited for countries that are in the list:

1. Licenses for direct commercial sales of military equipment
2. Foreign military financing for the purchase of defense articles and services, as well as design and construction services
3. International military education and training
4. Excess defense articles
5. Peacekeeping operations

4. Istanbul Convention on violence against women

(Topic- GS Paper II- IR, issues related to vulnerable section, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Turkey's controversial exit from Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women has received severe criticism from various quarters and has led to protests across the country.

About Istanbul Convention on violence against women

- It is also known as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- It is a human rights treaty of the Council of Europe against violence against women and domestic violence which was opened for signature on 11 May 2011, in Istanbul, Turkey.
- Turkey became the first country to ratify the Istanbul convention and, on March 8, 2012, it incorporated the Istanbul Convention into domestic law**
- The convention aims to prevent and prosecute all forms of violence against women, promote gender equality and ensure protection and rehabilitation of women who are victims of violence.

Reasons for Turkey's withdrawal

- Even though the official gazette did not include the reason for Turkey's withdrawal, some officials of Erdogan's nationalist party claimed that the convention demeans traditional family structure, promotes divorces and encourages acceptance of LGBTQ in the society.
- Turkey's Communication Directorate released a statement saying, "The Istanbul Convention, originally intended to promote women's rights, was hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality – which is incompatible with Turkey's social and family values which is the main cause for withdrawal.

Problem of violence against women in Turkey

- Violence against women and honour killings are persistent in Turkey.
- The country ranks 133 out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap report 2021.**
- According to UN women data, 38 per cent of women in Turkey face violence from a partner in their lifetime.
- The Turkish government does not maintain any official records on femicides.

5. Heat dome

(Topic- GS Paper I – Geography, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Pacific Northwest and some parts of Canada recorded temperatures around 46 degrees, causing a "historic" heat wave.
- This is a result of a phenomenon referred to as a "heat dome".

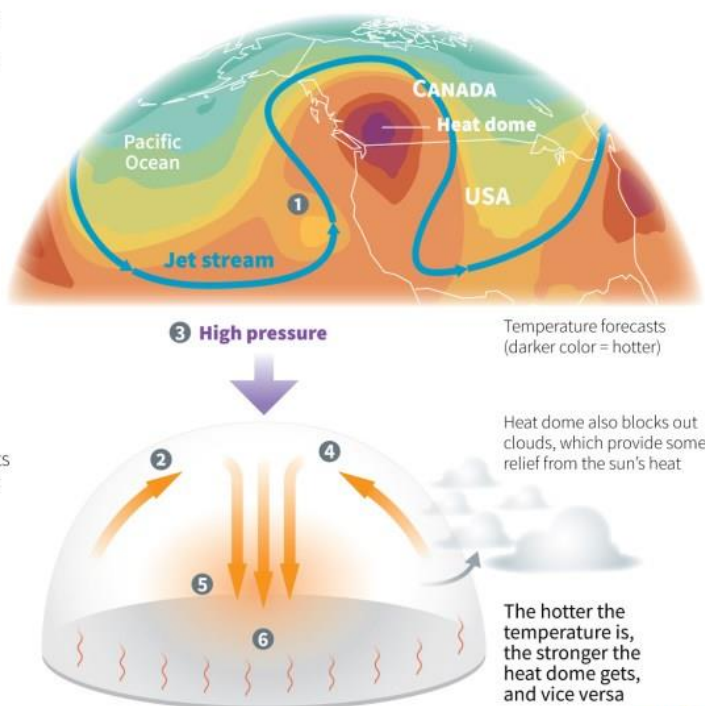
About heat dome

The 'heat dome'

Occurs when the atmosphere traps hot ocean air like a lid or cap

- 1 In summer, the **jet stream** (which moves the air) shifts northward
- 2 Hot and stagnant air expands upwards
- 3 Strong and **high-pressure** atmospheric conditions combine with influences from La Nina act like a dome or cap
- 4 In a process known as **convection**, hot air attempts to escape but high pressure pushes it back down
- 5 Under the dome, the air sinks and **compresses**, releasing more heat
- 6 As winds move the hot air east, the jet stream traps the air where it sinks, resulting in **heat waves**

Source: NOAA/US/Canada medias, experts



AFP

- According to the US-based National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a heat dome is created when strong high-pressure atmospheric conditions combine with weather patterns like La Niña, creating vast areas of sweltering heat that get trapped under the high-pressure "dome".

Reasons for this Heat Dome

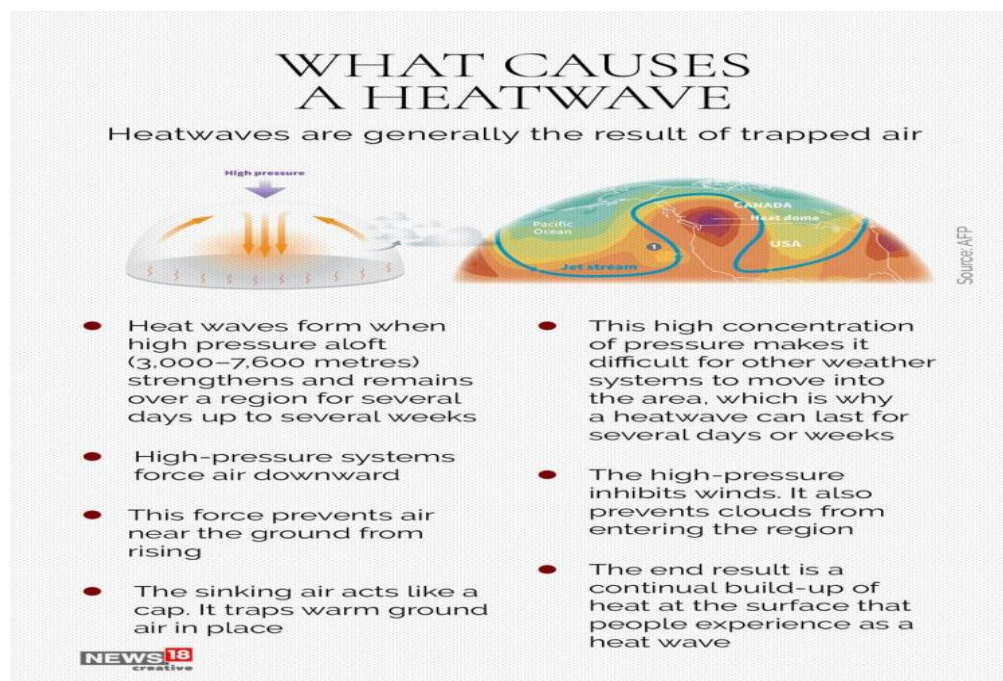
- A team of scientists funded by the NOAA MAPP Program found that the main cause of this heat dome is a strong change (or gradient) in ocean temperatures from west to east in the tropical Pacific Ocean during the preceding winter.

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About Heat waves



- It is a period of unusually hot weather that lasts for more than two days.
- Heat waves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July.
- Heat waves can occur with or without high humidity and have the potential to cover a large area, “exposing a high number of people to hazardous heat.”

6. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

(Topic- GS Paper III – Defence, Source- PIB)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the 7th edition of the biennial Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) was hosted by the French Navy at Réunion Island.
- It is a biennial event which was conceived by the Indian Navy in 2008.

About Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

- It is a voluntary and inclusive initiative that brings together navies of Indian Ocean Region littoral states to increase maritime co-operation and enhance regional security.
- A co-operative forum for discussion on regional maritime issues, it also serves to develop an effective response mechanism against natural disasters.

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- The IONS initiative has grown significantly and presently enjoys wide acceptance across the Indian Ocean Region.
- In the past few years, three IONS Working Groups (IWG) have been progressing work in the fields of Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR), Maritime Security & Information Sharing and Inter-operability.

Chairmanship

- The chairmanship of IONS has been held by India (2008-10), UAE (2010-12), South Africa (2012-14), Australia (2014-16), Bangladesh (2016-18) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (2018-21).
- France has assumed the Chairmanship on 29 Jun 21 for a two-year tenure.

7. Project Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought (BOLD)

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- AIR)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has announced a Project BOLD in order to boost tribals' lives and livelihoods at the tribal village Nichla Mandwa in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

About Project BOLD

- It is a unique initiative of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
- Under the project, 5000 saplings of special bamboo species i.e. Bambusa Tulda and Bambusa Polymorpha have been planted over 16 acres approx. of vacant arid Gram Panchayat land.

Significance

- It seeks to create bamboo-based green patches in arid and semi-arid land zones.
- It is aligned with Prime Minister Modi call of restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- The green patches of bamboo in Gujarat, Leh-Ladakh region and Rajasthan will help in reducing the land degradation percentage of the country.
- **India is a signatory to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).**

About Land Degradation

- It is a process in which the value of the biophysical environment is affected by a combination of human-induced processes acting upon the land.

- Land degradation is caused by multiple forces, including extreme weather conditions, particularly drought.

Global Efforts to Check Land Degradation

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- The Delhi Declaration of 2019, signed by 14th CoP of the UNCCD, called for better access and stewardship over land.
- The Bonn Challenge
- Great Green Wall Initiative
- Drought Initiative
- Land Degradation Neutrality programme

India's Efforts to Check Land Degradation:

- The National Action Programme for combating desertification in 2001.
- Integrated Watershed Management Programme (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana)
- National Mission for Green India
- National Afforestation Programme
- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
- Soil Health Card Scheme
- Soil Conservation in the Catchment of River Valley Project
- Command Area Development and Water Management programme