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**National and International News**

<p><b>BRICS Plus Grouping</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trump warns of 100% tariffs on BRICS countries if the dollar is undermined.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The term 'BRIC' was coined by <b>Jim O'Neill</b>, a Goldman Sachs economist, to describe the emerging economies of <b>Brazil, Russia, India, and China</b>.</li> <li>• According to Jim O'Neill, these emerging economies were poised to dominate the global economy by 2050.</li> <li>• The BRIC nations held their <b>first informal meeting on the sidelines of the G8 Outreach Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia</b>.</li> <li>• <b>South Africa was invited to join the group</b>. This led to the rebranding of the institution from <b>BRIC to BRICS</b>.</li> <li>• <b>New Development Bank (NDB)</b> was officially launched with an initial capital of <b>\$100 billion</b>, to provide development finance.</li> <li>• <b>BRICS was expanded to BRICS+</b> with the admission of six new member states– <b>Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, Argentina, and the United Arab Emirates</b>.</li> <li>• The expanded BRICS comprises major emerging economies that collectively represent approximately <b>41% of the world's population and around 28% of global GDP</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goods and Services Tax (GST)</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite the absence of the festival rush, net GST revenues have increased by 11.1%.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Goods and Services Tax is a <b>form of Indirect Tax levied on most of the goods and services sold in India for domestic consumption</b>.</li> <li>• It is based on the <b>principle of Value Added Tax (VAT)</b> and is applicable throughout India.</li> <li>• It is <b>paid by consumers, but it is remitted to the government</b> by the businesses selling the goods and services.</li> <li>• It has <b>subsumed and replaced various indirect taxes</b> that were previously levied by the central and state governments.</li> <li>• After the passage of the <b>Constitution (101st Amendment) Act</b>, the following acts were passed by the Parliament to define the legal framework for Goods and</li> </ul>



	<p>Services Tax.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017</li> <li>○ Integrated Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017</li> <li>○ Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act, 2017</li> <li>○ Union Territory Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Also, <b>each state passed their own State Goods and Services Tax Act.</b></li> <li>● These acts, together, <b>provide the legal framework for Goods and Services Tax.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Over the past two decades, nearly 3,500 projects, including 217 bridges, have been successfully completed in Jammu and Kashmir under the centrally sponsored Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Launched on:</b> 25 December, 2000.</li> <li>● <b>Objective:</b> To provide connectivity, by way of an all-weather road to unconnected habitations.</li> <li>● <b>Eligibility:</b> Unconnected habitations of designated population size (500+ in plain areas and 250+ in North-Eastern States, Himalayan States, Deserts and Tribal Areas as per 2001 census) in the core network for uplifting the socio-economic condition of the rural population.</li> <li>● <b>Funding Pattern:</b> The <b>Union Government bears 90% of the project cost</b> in respect of projects sanctioned under the scheme in <b>North-Eastern and Himalayan States, whereas for other states the Union Government bears 60% of the cost.</b></li> <li>● <b>PMGSY - Phase I</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PMGSY - Phase I was launched in December, 2000 as a 100 % centrally sponsored scheme.</li> <li>○ Under the scheme, 1,35,436 habitations were targeted for providing road connectivity and 3.68 lakh km. for upgradation of existing rural roads in order to ensure full farm to market connectivity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>PMGSY - Phase II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Government of India subsequently launched PMGSY-II in 2013 for upgradation of 50,000 Kms of existing rural road network to improve its overall efficiency.</li> <li>○ While the ongoing PMGSY - I continued, under PMGSY phase II, the roads already built for village connectivity were to be upgraded to enhance rural infrastructure.</li> <li>○ The cost was shared between the centre and the states/UTs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PMGSY - Phase III</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Under the PMGSY-III Scheme, it is proposed to consolidate 1,25,000 Km road length in the States. The duration of the scheme is 2019-20 to 2024-25.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>New HIV Cases Down in India by 44% since 2010</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India's efforts have kept the HIV epidemic at low levels, with new infections in 2023 nearly 44% lower than in 2010, and AIDS-related deaths decreasing by 79%, as stated by Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda on <b>World AIDS Day</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>AIDS, or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</b>, is a chronic disease that occurs when the <b>Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) damages the body's immune system.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>HIV is a virus that targets and weakens the body's immune system.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>● If untreated, it can lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a life-threatening condition where the immune system fails.</li> <li>● People living with AIDS <b>are vulnerable to opportunistic infections and certain cancers.</b></li> <li>● <b>Transmission</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Sexually transmitted</b> : through contact with infected body fluids during sexual activity.</li> <li>○ <b>Blood contact:</b> including through sharing contaminated needles, and illicit injection drug use.</li> <li>○ <b>Mother to child:</b> during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Government Initiatives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>National AIDS Control Programme:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The National AIDS and STD Control Programme (2021-2026), fully funded by the Indian government, is in its fifth phase.</li> <li>■ It was launched in 1992 to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and STDs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b>HIV Testing and Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ India offers free HIV and syphilis testing to all pregnant women, conducting over 30 million free HIV tests annually.</li> <li>■ More than 1.7 million people are receiving free ART through public healthcare systems.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b>Youth-targeted Initiatives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Initiatives like Red Ribbon Clubs and awareness campaigns such as the RED</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<p>RUN Marathon, both of which play a crucial role in spreading awareness and combating HIV/AIDS.</p>
<p><b>Cyclone Fengal</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cyclone Fengal made landfall near Puducherry on November 30, bringing heavy rainfall and gusty winds to Tamil Nadu's coastal belt, including Chennai and Puducherry. This is the second cyclone to impact India's east coast in two months after Cyclone Dana.</li> <li>● The cyclone made landfall between Mahabalipuram and Karaikal with wind speeds of 70-80 km/hr, gusting to 90 km/hr.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A cyclone is a <b>large-scale system of air that rotates around the centre of a low-pressure area</b>. It is usually accompanied by <b>violent storms and bad weather</b>.</li> <li>● A cyclone is characterised by <b>inward spiralling winds that rotate anticlockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere</b>.</li> <li>● <b>Characteristics of a Tropical Cyclone:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The centre of a cyclone is <b>very calm and clear with very low air pressure</b>. The average speed is <b>120 kmph</b>.</li> <li>○ They have <b>closed isobars</b> which leads to greater velocity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Isobars are imaginary lines on a weather map that connect locations with equal atmospheric pressure.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● They develop <b>over oceans and sea only</b>.</li> <li>● They move from <b>east to west under the influence of trade winds</b>.</li> <li>● <b>What does landfall of a cyclone mean?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Landfall is the <b>event of a tropical cyclone coming onto land after being over water</b>.</li> <li>○ As per the IMD, a tropical cyclone is said to <b>have made a landfall when the center of the storm – or its eye – moves over the coast</b>.</li> <li>○ During landfall, <b>the outer bands of the storm may have already reached the coast, bringing strong winds, heavy rain, and storm surge</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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