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2 February 2024

National & International News

<p>Committee on Population Growth and Demographic Changes</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the formation of a high-power committee. Committee's focus: Address challenges arising from "fast population growth and demographic changes." <p>Key Points:</p> <p>Mandate of the Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee tasked with making comprehensive recommendations aligned with the goal of Viksit Bharat (developed India). <p>Lack of Reliable Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee's announcement follows the indefinite postponement of the Census, leading to a lack of reliable data on population growth. Despite limited statistics, security concerns in border areas are being highlighted based on perceived demographic changes.
<p>Budget Allocation for MGNREGS (Financial Year 2024-25)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ₹86,000 crore was allocated for MGNREGS in the financial year 2024-25. Represents a ₹26,000 crore increase compared to the 2023-24 Budget estimates. Despite the increase, the net gain for the rural employment scheme may be zero or negative. <p>Insufficient Allocation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet the employment needs, activists argue that ₹3 lakh crore is essential. The allocated budget of ₹86,000 crore is significantly short, considering outstanding dues and additional work requirements. Raises concerns about jeopardizing the guaranteed right to work under MGNREGS and constitutes a violation of this fundamental entitlement.
<p>Boosting Research and Innovation in India</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's interim Budget speech announces a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore. The funds will be available at minimal or nil interest rates. Aimed at encouraging private sector investment in research and development in sunrise sectors.



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National Research Foundation Bill

- DST allocates ₹2,000 crore in 2024-25 towards the National Research Foundation.

About:

- The bill aims to establish the **National Research Foundation (NRF)** to seed, grow, and promote Research and Development (R&D) across India's educational and research institutions.
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National Quantum Mission

- The National Quantum Mission, a much talked about scheme of the DST, has for the first time been provisioned **₹2,819 crore**.

About:

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, approved the **National Quantum Mission (NQM)** on **19th April 2023**.
- The Mission objectives include developing intermediate-scale quantum computers with 50-1000 physical qubits in 8 years in various platforms like superconducting and photonic technology.

World Wetlands Day 2024

**World
Wetlands Day**
2 February 2024



**Wetlands and
Human Wellbeing**

Context:

- World Wetlands Day is observed annually on **February 2** to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and their conservation.
- This day marks the anniversary of adopting the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, an international treaty aimed at conserving and sustainably using wetlands worldwide.
- **India** is also part of the Ramsar Convention and is one of the most active players in the group.
- Recently, the number of wetlands in India grew from **75 to 80**.

Theme:

The theme for World Wetlands Day changes each year to focus on different aspects of wetland conservation and management. Likewise, the theme of World Wetlands Day 2024 is '**Wetlands and human wellbeing**'.



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Daily Current Affairs Encyclopedia

Investment in Rail Infrastructure

- ₹2.55 lakh crore allocated for 2024-25, reflecting a 5.8% increase from the previous year's ₹2.41 lakh crore.

Economic Corridor Programs

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Centre will implement **three major economic corridor programmes** — **energy, mineral, and cement corridor**, also being referred to as Energy Economic Corridor; port connectivity corridor aka Rail Sagar; and high-traffic density corridors, aka Amrit Chaturbhuj.

Key Points:

- **The National High-Speed Rail Corridor's bullet train project** receives a substantial increase in allocation, rising from ₹19,592 crore to ₹25,000 crore.
- Budget allocation for investment in public sector units and joint ventures decreased from ₹34,353 crore in 2023-24 to ₹31,107 crore in 2024-25.
- Overhauling 40,000 coaches over the next five years for an improved passenger experience, costing ₹15,200 crores.
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