19 December 2023
National and International News

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International Migrants Day

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- International Migrants Day is celebrated on **18 December.**
- On this International Migrants Day, IOM **aims to position migration as one of the solutions to global challenges,** such as adapting to the impacts of climate change or providing better economic opportunities for communities.
- The theme for the 2023 is **"Act today for a better tomorrow for all: Improving the health of migrants to unleash the power of migration"**

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Data on Foreign tourist visits

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Context
- There has been a significant **increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting India in 2023** with a footfall of **7.24 million** till October compared with **6.44 million** for the corresponding period in 2022.
- This is an **increase of 55.6%**
- The numbers though are still below the pre-pandemic levels.
- In 2018 and 2019, India saw **10.56 million and 10.93 million foreign tourist arrivals**, respectively, which dipped to 2.74 million in 2020 and further to 1.52 million in 2021, majorly due to the COVID-induced lockdown.

Schemes for Financial assistance
- **Swadesh Darshan 2** is the flagship scheme of the **Ministry of Tourism** which provides financial assistance to the State governments and Union Territories and Central agencies for the development of tourism infrastructure at various destinations.
- The **Prasad (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive) scheme** focuses on developing and identifying pilgrimage sites across India to promote religious tourism.
- It aims **to integrate pilgrimage destinations i**n a prioritised, planned and sustainable manner to provide a complete religious tourism experience.
- The growth of domestic tourism hugely depends on pilgrimage tourism.

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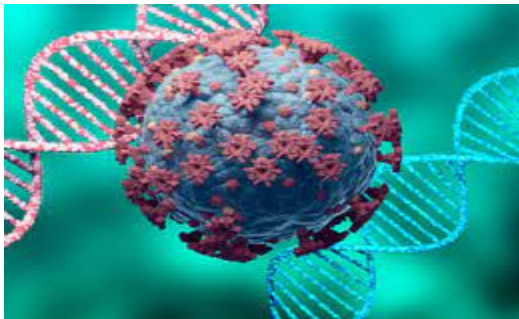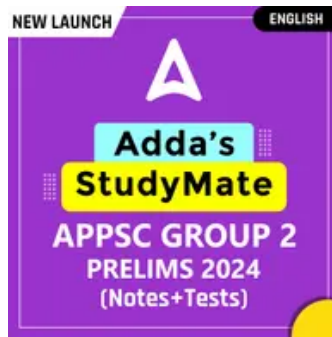| First winter Arctic expedition	**Context**
	• The **Raman Research Institute (RRI)** is participating in the **first winter Indian expedition to the Arctic region.** • The institute researchers would examine the characterisation of the radio frequency environment in the **Svalbard region of the Arctic in Norway.** • The survey will **help astronomers assess the suitability of this uniquely located region** for carrying out precision astronomy measurements. **Key points** • India has been running its own research station, **Himadri, in Svalbard since 2008.** • The winter expedition is a bid to maintain a year-long presence at the station. • The month-long scientific expedition is being funded by the **Earth Sciences Ministry.** • The **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Goa,** is the nodal agency spearheading the expedition
JN.1 variant	**Context**
	• The Union Health Ministry has asked all States to maintain a constant vigilance over the COVID-19 situation in the country in view of the upcoming festive season and the recent surge in cases in some parts of the country. • The alert comes following the detection of the country's first case of the new **JN.1 variant of COVID-19 in Kerala.**
E-bus penetration in India	**Context**
	• **CRISIL report** on E-bus penetration in India was released recently • The share of electric buses in new bus sales across **India is expected to double to 8% next fiscal from 4% in the last fiscal.** • It is driven by the central government's focus on decarbonising the public transport sector and favourable **total cost of ownership (TCO)** for an e-bus vis-à-vis buses run on other fuels **Key points** • Efforts were underway to deploy e-buses via

	tenders already awarded under the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles, or FAME,** scheme and the **National Electric Bus Programme (NEBP)** ● Growth in e-buses is also supported by favourable ownership economics ● TCO for e-bus is estimated to be **15-20% lower than ICE and CNG bus,** over an estimated life span of 15 years with breakeven in 6-7 years.
Generative AI	**Context** ● A report prepared by the global accounting/consulting firm, EY highlighted that by fully capitalising Gen AI technology and its applications across sectors, the country **can potentially add $359-438 billion in FY2029-30** alone, reflecting a 5.9% to 7.2% increase over and above baseline GDP. ● Generative AI (Gen AI) has the potential to add a cumulative **$1.2-1.5 trillion to India's GDP over seven years to 2030** ● Approximately **69% of the overall impact is expected** to be derived from sectors such as business, services, financial services, retail and healthcare.
Fifth Fazza Dubai Para Badminton International 2023	**Context** ● **Mansi Joshi and Thulasimathi Murugesan** emerged champions in women's doubles ● Tokyo Paralympics champion Pramod Bhagat got two silver medals

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