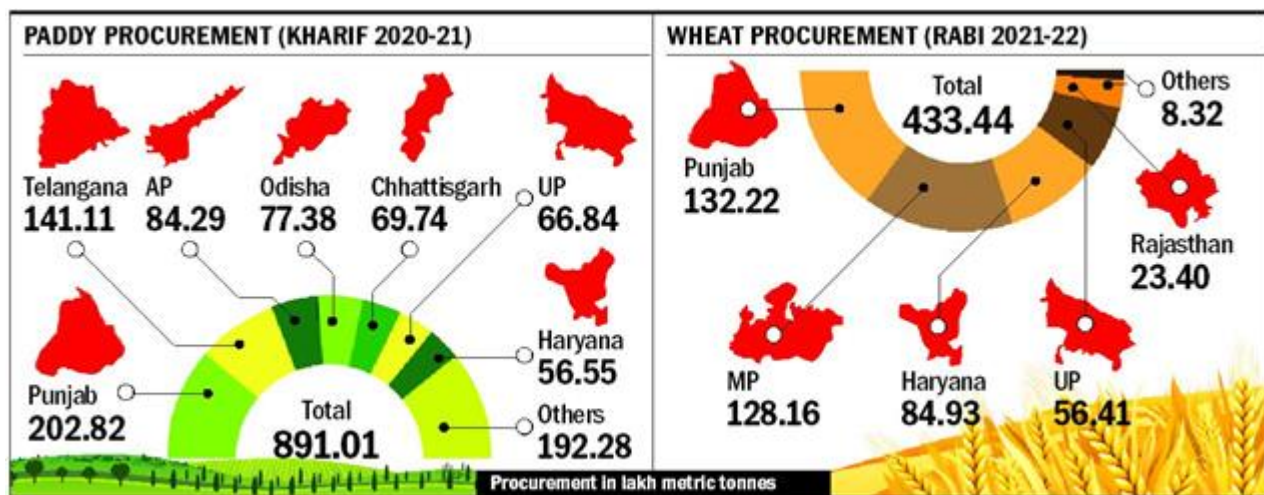


Punjab plans crop diversification scheme

(GS Paper 3, Agriculture)

Why in news?

- To curb depletion in ground water levels and reduce power usage, the Punjab government is firming up a plan on crop diversification.



Key Highlights:

- Under it, around a million hectare (MH) or a **third of water-intensive paddy grown areas** in the state would be gradually shifted to alternative crops such as cotton, maize, oilseeds and pulses, over the next five years.
- The state government will also provide incentives to farmers for shifting around 10% of wheat area to alternative crops such as oilseeds and pulses.
- The crop diversification would entail financial incentives to farmers, procurement of crops by state agencies under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) operations and processing facilities. Annually, around 0.1-0.2 MH paddy sown will be shifted to alternate crops.

Over-exploitation of ground water resources:

- The paddy cultivation has led to over-exploitation of ground water resources in the state, the Punjab Economic Survey (2020-21) had stated 'cultivation of rice would need the use of submersible pumps which are expensive, and unlikely to be suitable for marginal and small landholding farmers'.
- The crop diversification in Punjab has been virtually a non-starter as because of the open-ended rice and wheat procurement system followed by Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies, farmers are reluctant to adopt less water intensive crops because of lack of procurement or marketing avenues.

Contribution of Punjab in central pool:

- In the current procurement season (October-September) for 2021-22, Punjab has contributed more than 12.5 million tonne (MT) or 20% of total rice procurement of 56.81 MT to the central pool managed by FCI.
- In the ongoing rabi procurement drive for wheat (2022-23), Punjab has contributed more than 51% of the 18.77 MT of wheat purchased from farmers so far.

Initiatives by Punjab government:

- The Punjab government, from the current kharif season (2022-23), is promoting **direct seeding of rice (DSR)** which consumes less water, improves percolation and reduces dependence on farm labour.
- The state government is also encouraging farmers to take up **short duration varieties of rice** (which matures in 125 days instead of conventional varieties that take 135-145 days) such as PAU 126, 127 and 128 so that transplantation could be done using monsoon rains in July.

Sub-scheme of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana:

- According to a statement by agriculture ministry in Parliament in April, crop diversification programme initiated in 2013-14 as a sub-scheme under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana in the Green revolution states such as

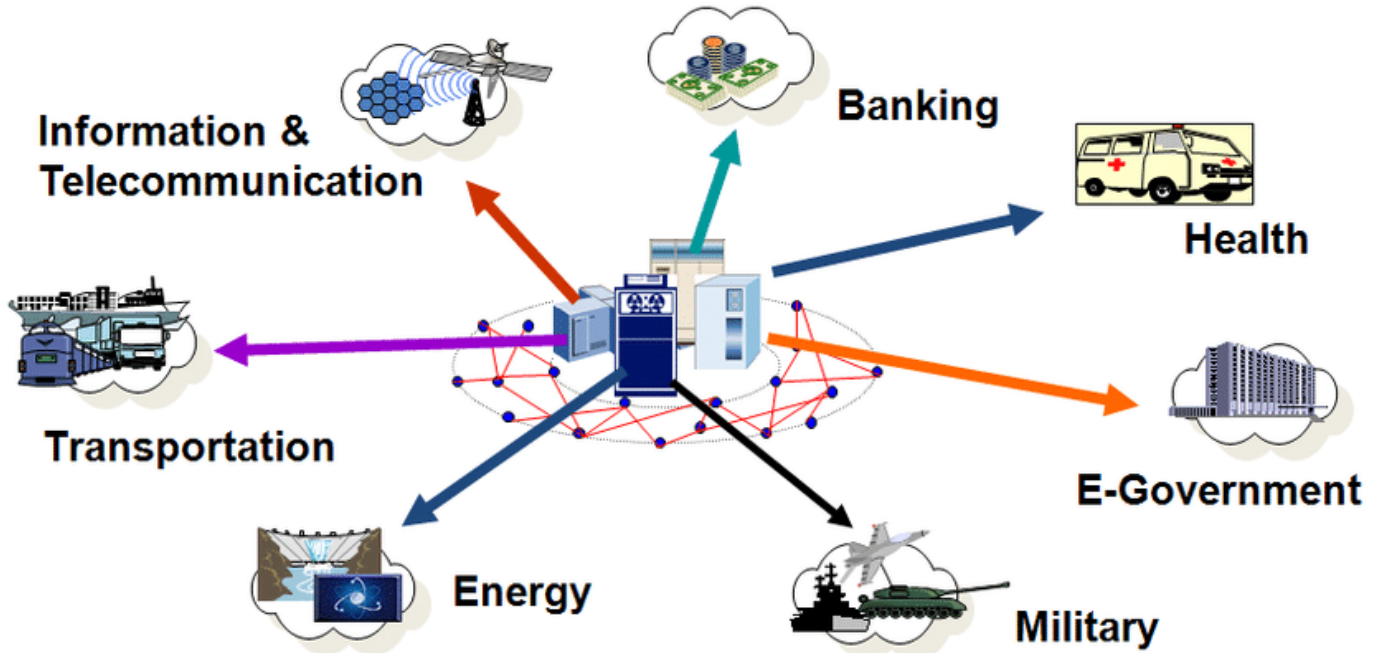
Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, has brought only 0.63 MH under the demonstration of alternative crop at farmers' field.

ICICI, HDFC, NPCI's are 'critical information infrastructure'

(GS Paper 3, Economy)

Why in news?

- Recently, Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), has declared the IT resources of ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and UPI managing entity NPCI as 'critical information infrastructure'.
- It means that **implying any harm to them can have an impact on national security** and any unauthorised person accessing these resources may be jailed for up to 10 years.



IT resources of ICICI Bank:

- The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), declared the IT resources of ICICI Bank as critical infrastructure under **Section 70 of the IT Act, 2000**.
- The central government hereby declares the computer resources relating to the **Core Banking Solution, Real Time Gross Settlement and National Electronic Fund Transfer** comprising Structured Financial Messaging Server, being critical information infrastructure of the ICICI Bank, and the computer resources of its associated dependencies to be protected systems for the purpose of the said Act.

IT resources of HDFC bank & NPCI:

- In a similar worded two other notifications, Meity declared IT resources of HDFC bank and UPI managing entity National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) as critical infrastructure.
- The notification authorises access of IT resources of the notified entities by their designated employees, authorised team members of contractual managed service providers or third-party vendors who have been authorised by them for need-based access and any consultant, regulator, government official, auditor and stakeholder authorised by the entities on case-to-case basis.

What is 'critical information infrastructure'?

- As per the Act, 'critical information infrastructure' means a computer resource, the incapacitation or destruction of which, shall have debilitating impact on national security, economy, public health or safety.

- Any person who secures access or attempts to secure access to a protected system in contravention of the provisions shall be punished with imprisonment of a term which may extend to 10 years and shall also be liable for a fine.

Way Forward:

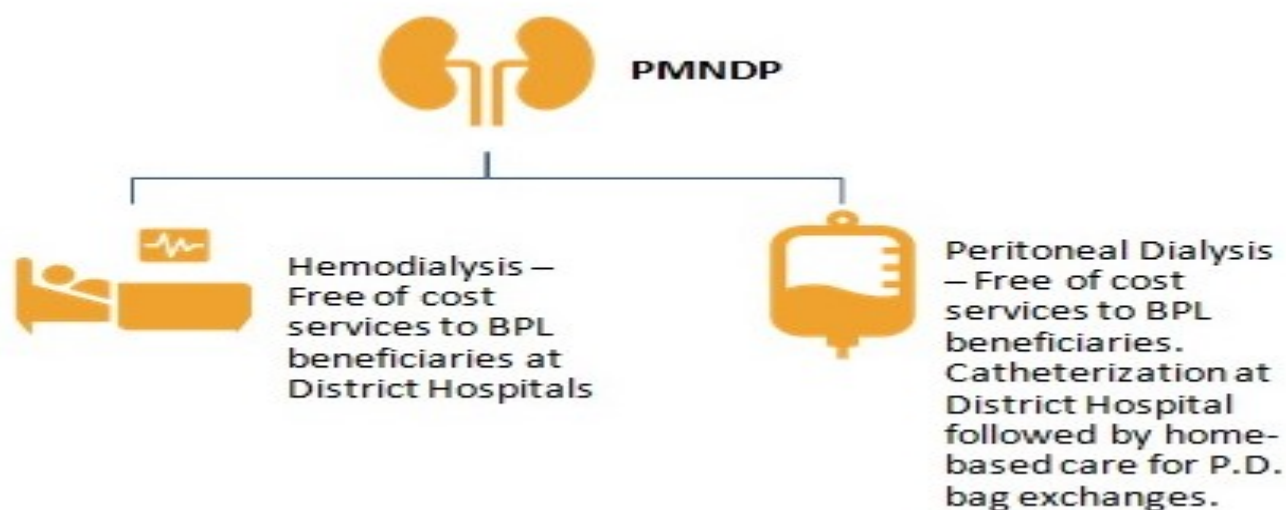
- Looking at the recent sophisticated cyber-attacks, it is high time all the banks and financial institutions get themselves notified as a protected system.

PM National Dialysis Programme (PM-NDP)

(GS Paper 3, Health)

Why in news?

- Recently, the Union Health Ministry directed States and Union Territories to focus towards **expanding coverage of the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme (PM-NDP)** to all districts in all states and UTs.
- To expand the coverage of Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme (PMNDP) across the country, States were asked to **cover all districts by Haemodialysis programme** and also promote **Peritoneal dialysis programme** alongside as it is less restrictive for the patients and requires less technical demand from institutions.



Key Guidelines:

- It focused on expanding 100 per cent coverage of the National Dialysis Programme.
- The States were also advised **extensive use of the PMNDP portal**, an API-based IT platform for capturing details of all beneficiaries availing of free dialysis services under PMNDP.
- To prevent duplication and ensure transparency, efficiency and inter-operability, States were asked to ID ensure registration using a 14-digit unique ABHA ID.
- They were also requested to share APIs and integrate it with the PMNDP portal if using separate portals, for holistic coverage.

New species of bamboo-dwelling bat found in Meghalaya

(GS Paper 3, Environment)

Why in news?

- Recently, scientists have discovered a new species of bamboo-dwelling bat in **Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya**.

Details:

- The species, found near the forested patch of Nongkhylllem Wildlife Sanctuary, has been named *Glischropus meghalayanus*.
- The present discovery is the first report of a thick-thumbed bat not only from India but also from South Asia.

Characteristics:

- Thick-thumbed bats of the genus *Glischropus* are currently composed of four recognised species from Southeast Asia.
- The newly discovered species is small in size and has a dark brown colour with sulphur yellow belly.
- Two recently collected *Glischropus* specimens from Meghalaya in northeastern India extend the known distribution range of the genus westward into South Asia by ca. (approximately) 1,000 km.
- Morphological examination of these specimens and comparison with all known species in this genus revealed marked differences in colouration, dental characters and bacular traits.



Another species of Bamboo-dwelling bats

- From the same forested patches outside the Nongkhylllem Wildlife Sanctuary, they found another species of disk-footed bat *Eudiscopus denticulus* which was a new record in India.
- **Bamboo-dwelling bats** are a particular kind of bats living in the internodes of bamboos with specialised morphological characters that help them to adopt to the life inside a bamboo.

Fact:

- With this new discovery, the total number of bat species known from India stands at 131.
- Meghalaya, a State with a small geographical area, harbours the highest bat diversity in the country with 67 species, which is about 51% of total bat species in the country.

Amrit Sarovar mission could boost infrastructure projects

(GS Paper 3, Infrastructure)

Why in news?

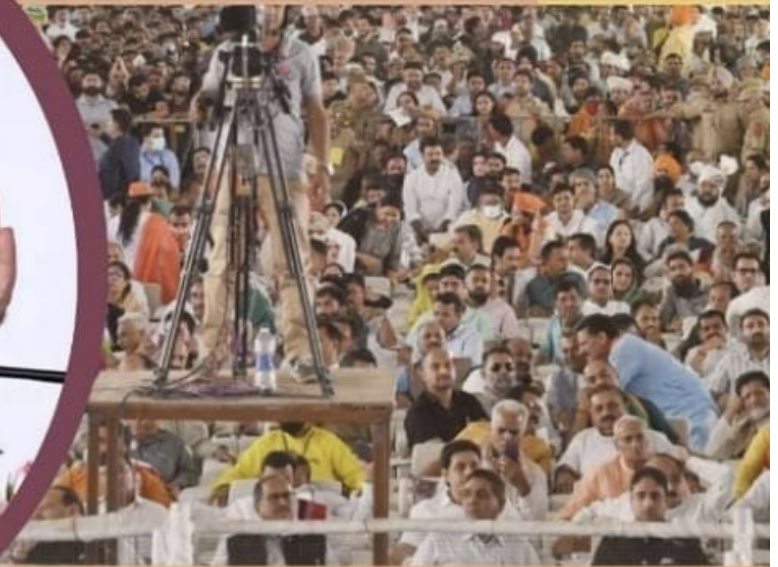
- In a move that could expedite the implementation of railways and highways projects across the country, the Union government has asked the **Ministry of Railways and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** to **use the soil/silt excavated from ponds/tanks in all districts** across the country under the Amrit Sarovar mission for their infrastructure projects.



Amrit Sarovar Mission:

- The water conservation mission launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 24, 2022, aims at developing and rejuvenating 75 water bodies in each district in all States as part of the celebrations of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'.
- **At least 50,000 water bodies are expected to be rejuvenated** across the country during the nationwide programme that would culminate on August 15, 2023.
- The Centre announced that the national flag would be hoisted at all the Amrit Sarovar sites on that day.

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI LAUNCHES AMRIT SAROVAR - AN INITIATIVE AIMED AT DEVELOPING AND REJUVENATING 75 WATER BODIES IN EACH DISTRICT OF THE COUNTRY



All these 75 sarovars will come up in every district by 15 August in 2023. These sarovars should be lined with trees named after the martyrs and freedom fighters:
PM Narendra Modi

Boost to infrastructure projects:

- Since the project would involve excavation of several thousands of tonnes of earth in the form of soil or silt, the Ministry of Rural Development has told the Ministry of Railways and the NHAI to map its infrastructure projects with the Amrit Sarovar sites in all States and Union Territories.

- The authorities were told to use the soil and silt excavated from the sites for the construction of ongoing projects.

Nodal officers:

- General Managers of all Zonal Railways were told to nominate the **Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) as the nodal officer** who would identify the nearest sites of Amrit Sarovar to ongoing railway projects, study the suitability of the desilted soil and silt and submit a feasibility report at the earliest.
- Many railway projects were held up due to the delay in getting the required quantity of burrow earth from the local authorities. Though the issue was flagged at the appropriate level, the timely availability of earth remained a challenge.

Road projects:

- The Amrit Sarovar mission will cater to the requirements of projects being implemented by the NHAI.
- In Tamil Nadu, the issue of allowing contractors to lift burrow earth became so intense that in February 2022, the NHAI threatened to cancel the road widening work of East Coast Road between Mamallapuram and Puducherry. However, the issue was resolved after the State government assured to resolve the issue.
- The soil and silt excavated from the 75 waterbodies from each district of Tamil Nadu might be made available to road contractors for implementing road projects.