WHAT IS THE RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS WING (R&AW)?

A 55-year-old man posing as an officer of intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) was recently arrested after the suspect was caught intimidating locals.

- It was established in 1968 to **handle India's international intelligence affairs**.

- At present, R&AW is under the aegis of the **Prime Minister's Office.**

- **Working mechanism**: It collects military, economic, scientific, and political intelligence through covert and overt operations.

- The agency is also charged with **monitoring terrorist elements and smuggling** rings that transport weapons and ammunition into India.

- **Formation:**
  - Until 1968, the **Intelligence Bureau (IB)** was responsible for India's internal intelligence and also handled external intelligence.
  - However, after the **1962 China-India war** and the Indo-Pakistani war in 1965, India established a separate and distinct external intelligence organization–the R&AW.
  - Since its inception, RAW is credited with providing intelligence support to many significant operations on foreign soil.

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)?

The President of Sri Lanka recently defended the International Monetary Fund bailout in his re-election campaign.

- It is a United Nations (UN) specialized agency, founded at the **Bretton Woods Conference in 1944.**

- It was established in the aftermath of the **Great Depression of the 1930s**.

- The main objectives of the IMF include **supporting global monetary cooperation**, **securing financial stability**, facilitating international trade, promoting high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reducing poverty.

- Through its economic surveillance, the IMF **keeps track of the economic health** of its member countries, alerting them to risks on the horizon and providing policy advice.

- It also **lends to countries with balance-of-payments difficulties**, and provides technical assistance and training to help countries improve economic management.

- IMF funds are often **conditional on recipients** making reforms to increase their growth potential and financial stability.

- It is currently composed of **190 member countries.**

- The IMF is **headquartered in Washington, DC.**

- **Structure:**

  o At the top of its organizational structure is the **Board of Governors**, consisting of one governor (usually the minister of finance or the governor of the central bank) and one alternate **governor from each member country.**

  o All powers of the IMF are vested in the Board of Governors.

  o The day-to-day work of the IMF is overseen by its **24-member Executive Board,** which represents the entire membership and is supported by IMF staff.

  o The **Managing Director is the head of the IMF staff** and Chair of the Executive Board and is assisted by four Deputy Managing Directors. The managing director is usually a European.

  o The IMF has 18 departments that carry out its country, policy, analytical, and technical work.

- **Each member contributes** a sum of money called a **quota subscription**.

  o Quotas are **reviewed every five years** and **are based on each country's wealth** and economic performance—the richer the country, the larger its quota, making the **S.,** with the world's largest economy, the **largest contributor.**

- o The **quotas form a pool of loanable funds** and determine how much money each member can borrow and how much voting power it will have.

- **Voting Powers:**
  - o **Quotas** of member countries are a key **determinant of the voting power** in IMF decisions.
  - o Votes comprise **one vote per 100,000 special drawing rights (SDR) of quota plus basic votes.**
  - o **SDRs** are an **international type of monetary reserve currency created by** the **IMF** as a supplement to the existing money reserves of member countries.

WHAT IS PAYMENT PASSKEY SERVICE?

Mastercard, a global technology in the payments industry announced the worldwide launch of its new Payment Passkey Service.

- It uses **device-based biometric authentication** methods such as fingerprints or facial scans.
- It will provide customers with **a non-OTP-based solution** for transaction management.

- **Working**
  - o Passkeys **work using algorithms** to encrypt data so users can verify their identity fast and securely.
  - o When users first sign into an account, their device creates a pair of keys: one that is public and shared with the **website to validate the passkey**, and one that is private on your device to unlock the passkey to access your account.
  - o And it **can work across devices** from the same operating system: If you set up a passkey for an app or website on your phone, it can work if you log in from your laptop or tablet.

- **Advantage:** By replacing traditional passwords and OTPs, the Mastercard Payment Passkey Service makes transactions not only faster, but also more **secure against fraud and scams.**

- Passkeys can be used for payments. Payment passkeys offer a more secure and easier way for cardholders to authenticate themselves during **e-commerce transactions** on web or merchant apps.

PROJECT NAMAN

Recently, the Indian Army launched the first phase of Project NAMAN.

- It is designed to provide **dedicated support** and services to **Defence Pensioners, Veterans and their families.**

- It is centered around the **implementation of the SPARSH** (System for Pension Administration Raksha), digital pension system, which streamlines pension related processes for Defence Pensioners, addressing the critical need for accessible facilitation points for Veterans and Next of Kin (NOK) across the country.

- It involves the establishment of **reception and facilitation centres**, enabled through a **tripartite Memorandum of Understanding** (MoU) between the Indian Army's Directorate of Indian Army Veterans Common Service Centre (CSC) e-Governance India Limited, and HDFC Bank Limited signed last year in September 2023.

- These **Common Service Centres** are dedicated to Army Veterans, Pensioners, War Widows, and NOKs, offering SPARSH-enabled pension services, **Government to Citizen** (G2C) services, and **Business to Consumer** (B2C) services, all at a single, convenient location.

- In the first phase of Project NAMAN, **14 CSCs have been established** at key locations across India, including New Delhi, Jalandhar, Leh, Dehradun, Lucknow, Jodhpur, Bengdubi, Gorakhpur, Jhansi, Secunderabad, Saugor, Guntur, Ahmedabad and Bangalore.

- This initiative not only delivers essential care and support to esteemed veterans but also **extends services** to the entire resident population of military stations and surrounding localities.
- Each CSC is managed by a **Village Level Entrepreneur** (VLE), selected from among the veterans or NOKs by the respective Local Military Authorities (LMAs).
- These VLEs are onboarded by CSC e-Governance India Limited and receive comprehensive training to deliver the required services.
- **Financial assistance:** HDFC Bank also supports the VLEs with a monthly monetary grant of ₹ 20,000 for the first 12 months, assisting in the stabilisation and sustainability of the centres.

ORGANIC FARMING IN INDIA

- Organic farming is an agricultural practice that **relies on natural processes and inputs to cultivate crops and rear livestock**, avoiding the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and growth regulators.
- It emphasizes sustainability, environmental health, and the conservation of biodiversity.

Benefits of Organic Farming:

- **Enhanced Soil Fertility:**
- **Pest and Disease Control:**
- **Water Conservation:**
- **Reduced Greenhouse Gas Emissions:**
- **Improved Farmer Livelihoods:**
- **Health Benefits:**
- **Economic Advantages:**

Government Initiatives & Policies:

- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):**

- o Launched in 2015, PKVY is a flagship program aimed at promoting organic farming in clusters to ensure uniformity and quality.
- o The scheme encourages farmers to adopt traditional agricultural practices, reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER):**
  - o Launched in 2015, this scheme focuses on the organic agriculture potential of the North Eastern region, aiming to make it a hub for organic produce.
- **Jaivik Kheti Portal:**
  - o Launched in 2018, the portal is a dedicated online platform to facilitate organic farming practices and marketing.
- **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP):**
  - o Launched in 2001, NPOP aims at establishing standards for organic products, certifying organic products, and promoting their export.
- **Organic Certification:**
  - o **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)**: A locally-focused quality assurance system for organic products, which is farmer-friendly and less costly.
  - o **National Certification System for Organic Products (NCSOP)**: A more formal certification system to ensure that products labelled as organic meet the required standards.

Challenges Faced:
- **Certification Costs:**
- **Lack of Awareness and Training:**
- **Market Access:**
- **Supply Chain Issues:**
- **Transition Period:**

A GAME PLAN FOR INDIA'S SUCCESS AS 2036 OLYMPIC HOST

Context

- **In his recent Independence Day address, the Prime Minister expressed India's ambitious dream** to host the **2036 Olympic Games.**
- This **announcement marks a significant moment in the nation's sporting history,** as India has never hosted the Olympics before and has historically underperformed in the global athletic arena.
- **Whether India can successfully secure its Olympic bid** will depend on **building consensus both within the country and on the global stage.**

The Challenges of Hosting the Olympics

- **Infrastructure Requirements**
  - The **most immediate challenge lies in developing and upgrading the infrastructure** necessary to host an event of this magnitude.
  - **This includes constructing or refurbishing sports venues**, ensuring they meet Olympic standards.
- **Financial Investment**
  - The financial burden of hosting the Olympics is immense.
  - The **costs associated with constructing new facilities, upgrading existing ones, and ensuring the city is prepared** to host millions of visitors **can run into billions of dollars.**
- **Logistical and Operational Complexities**
  - The logistics of hosting the Olympics involve coordinating thousands of moving parts.
  - This **includes scheduling and managing events, ensuring the timely arrival and departure of athletes and officials,** and coordinating with international sports federations and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- **Cultural and Social Integration**

- o Culturally, **hosting the Olympics requires the host city to present itself on a global stage,** showcasing its heritage, values, and identity. **This is both an opportunity and a challenge**.
- **Global Expectations and Diplomatic Relations**
  - o Finally, **the Olympics are not just a sporting event; they are a diplomatic opportunity.**
  - o The **host city and country are placed under the global spotlight**, and the success of the Games can influence international perceptions and relations.

Way Forward

- **Building a National Consensus for the Olympic Bid**
  - o India's bid to host the 2036 Olympics will **require a collaborative and cooperative approach among various stakeholders,** including state governments, sports associations, and the central government.
- **Present a Compelling Case Before International Olympic Committee (IOC)**
  - o **India should highlight its existing sports infrastructure, particularly in states like Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Odisha,** which already have facilities that meet Olympic standards.

Conclusion

- **India's aspiration to host the 2036 Olympic Games is a bold and audacious vision** that reflects the country's growing confidence and ambition on the global stage.
- While the challenges of hosting such a prestigious event are immense, **India has made significant strides in improving its sports infrastructure and developing its athletic talent.**
- **The success of India's Olympic bid** will depend on **building a national consensus, leveraging existing infrastructure, and presenting a compelling case to the IOC.**

CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK
School of Research Based Learning & Competition
Current Affairs - 31 August 2024

CROSS & CLIMB
MAKING THE ELIGIBLE ENTITLED

CROSS & CLIMB
MAKING THE ELIGIBLE ENTITLED

INTERNATIONAL WHALE SHARK DAY

International Whale shark day is observed every year on August 30 across the globe.

- It is the **largest fish in the world** and the largest fish known to have lived on this planet.
- They are one of only three species of filter feeding sharks.
- **Distribution:** They can be found in **all temperate and tropical oceans** around the world, except the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Appearance**
  - They are dark gray on top and light underneath, with a series of light spots or stripes covering the dark parts of their bodies. This helps to **camouflage** them as they swim.
  - Unlike most shark species, its mouth is located at the front of the head(terminal) instead of the underside of the rostrum (subterminal).
  - They are **filter feeders** and can neither bite nor chew. They can process more than 6,000 litres of water an hour through their gills.
  - Inside the mouth are specialized flaps called **velums**. These stop the backflow of water as the whale shark closes its mouth, preventing the loss of food.

  Food Habit: They feed on **plankton** and travel large distances to find enough food to sustain their huge size, and to reproduce.
- They also eat small and large fish and mollusks, including sardines, anchovies, mackerels, squid, and even small tuna and albacore.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN:** Endangered
  - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I
- **Threats:** A global study indicates that over the past 75 years, the world's whale shark population has decreased by 50%.