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1. El Nino

- Prelims - El Nino
- Mains - GS 1 - Geography

Why in the news?

- A new study published in the Science journal showed that heavy downpours of over 50% are more likely in India during the El Nino period.

El Nino

- **What is it?**: El Niño (meaning “the little boy” in Spanish) is a **climate pattern that describes the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern Pacific Ocean.**
- **Causes:**
 - During an El Niño event, the **Sea Surface Temperatures (SST)** in the equatorial Pacific Ocean off the northern coast of South America became at least 0.5 degrees Celsius warmer than the long-term average.
 - During El Niño, a **warm ocean current replaces the cold Humboldt current on the Peruvian coast.**
 - The El Niño event is not a regular cycle, they are not predictable and occur irregularly at two- to seven-year intervals.
- **Effects**
 - El Niño can affect weather worldwide - Generally resulting in warmer temperatures and less rainfall than normal in many regions of the world, including India.
 - El Niño results in the rise of sea surface temperatures.
 - It also weakens the trade winds of the affected region.
 - In India and Australia, it can affect monsoon rainfall and bring about drought conditions. This affects crop productivity largely.
 - It has been also observed at certain times, that El Niño may not bring drought but cause heavy rainfall due to the influence of factors like positive **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD).**



2. EPFO Passbook Lite

- **Prelims** - EPFO Passbook Lite
- **Mains** - GS 2 - Governance

Why in the news?

- EPFO launches Passbook Lite for easier access to PF balance and other details such as contributions and withdrawals.

EPFO Passbook Lite

- **What is it?**: It is a new feature introduced by the EPFO that allows members to view a simplified/summary view of their EPF (Provident Fund) passbook- contributions, withdrawals, and current balance via the EPFO Member Portal itself.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Single Login Convenience**: The summary view ("Lite") is available from the Member Portal with the same login credentials without going to a separate passbook portal.
 - **Quick Snapshot**: The most important data (contributions, withdrawals, balance) are visible in a concise format aiding a fast check.
 - **Reduced Load & Faster Access**: Reduced traffic on the old passbook site/portal, leads to fewer delays.
 - If a person needs full details (transaction-history, graphical displays etc.), they can still go to the full/existing Passbook Portal.
- **Significance:**
 - **Convenience**: Less hopping between different portals makes easier access through one login.
 - **Transparency**: Members can quickly verify their contributions & balances; also helps in case of PF transfers / change of job.
 - **Time-saving**: Faster access and faster claim processing leads to less waiting.
 - **Digital Records**: With Annexure K downloadable and traceable, there is better documentation, which is important for pension / service history.
- **Related New Features:**
 - **Annexure K Download**: Transfer certificate related to PF when you change jobs. Now members can download Annexure K (in PDF) directly via the Member Portal.
 - **Faster Settlements/Reduced Approval Layers**: Some claim-process approvals have been delegated to lower-level officers.



3. Industrial Park Rating System 3.0

- **Prelims** - Industrial Park Rating System 3.0
- **Mains** - GS 2 - Governance

Why in the news?

- The Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched Industrial Park Rating System 3.0 to benchmark industrial parks and boost Make in India initiative.

Industrial Park Rating System 3.0 (IPRS 3.0)

- **What is it?:** It is an initiative by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Government of India, with technical support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- **Goal:** To benchmark industrial parks/estates/clusters for infrastructure, services, environment & safety, to improve competitiveness, transparency, attract investment, help states/UTs identify gaps.
- **What is new in IPRS 3.0:**
 - ➔ **Sustainability & Green Infrastructure:** More emphasis on parks being environmentally sustainable, green norms, etc.
 - ➔ **Logistics Connectivity:** Better evaluation of how well parks are connected (road, rail, ports, last-mile connectivity) for smoother supply chains.
 - ➔ **Digitalization:** Digital tools or services in parks; perhaps online services, smart infrastructure.
 - ➔ **Skill Linkages:** How well parks connect with skill development institutions, training to workers etc.
 - ➔ **Enhanced Tenant Feedback:** More weight to what tenants (the companies operating in the parks) say- their satisfaction etc.
- **Pillars of IPRS:**
 - ➔ Internal Infrastructure & Utilities (roads within park, water, power, waste, etc.)
 - ➔ External Infrastructure & Connectivity (access to transport, links to ports/airports, last mile)
 - ➔ Business Support Services & Facilities (single window clearances, facilitation, online services, dormitories, etc.)



→ Environment & Safety Management (safety, environmental norms, monitoring, disaster management)

- **Significance:**

- Helps investors make informed choices (which industrial parks are better in terms of infrastructure, logistics, environment etc.). Transparent benchmarks.
- Encourages healthy competition between states / UTs to improve industrial park infrastructure.
- Identifies gaps/downside in parks which require policy or infrastructural intervention. Helps central/state governments plan where investment is most needed.
- Supports “Make in India” initiative by striving to bring industrial infrastructure up to international standards, improving India’s global competitiveness.
- Aids employment generation, improves ease of doing business.

- **Challenges:**

- **Implementation:** Ensuring accurate, up-to-date data especially for external connectivity, environment metrics.
- **Participation:** Getting all states / private parks to participate and get rated.
- **Capacity:** Some parks may lack financial or institutional capacity to meet higher benchmarks (especially in remote or less-developed areas).
- **Follow-through:** Rating is fine, but improvement requires investment, policy incentives, monitoring.
- **Balancing sustainability vs growth:** As parks strive to meet green norms, cost may increase; ensuring affordability matters.



4. Baltic Sea

- **Prelims** - Location of Baltic Sea
- **Mains** - GS 1 - Geography

Why in the news?

- Germany said that Russian military plane entered airspace over Baltic Sea.

Baltic Sea

- **Location**
 - Semi-enclosed inland sea in Northern Europe, part of the North Atlantic Ocean system.
 - Lies between the Scandinavian Peninsula and continental Europe.
 - Connected to the Atlantic via the Danish Straits.
- **Neighbouring Countries:** Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Finland, Sweden.
- **Major Gulfs**
 - Gulf of Bothnia (between Sweden & Finland)
 - Gulf of Finland (towards Russia & Finland)
 - Gulf of Riga (Latvia & Estonia)
- **Major Rivers Flowing to Sea**
 - Neva River (Russia) – largest inflow.
 - Other important rivers: Vistula (Poland), Oder (Germany/Poland), Daugava (Latvia).
- **What Characteristics:** Shallow & brackish (low salinity due to heavy freshwater inflows).
- **Connectivity**
 - White Sea Canal → connects Baltic to White Sea (Russia).
 - Kiel Canal → connects Baltic to North Sea (German Bight).

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