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Analysis

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1. Dark Pattern

- **Prelims** - Dark Pattern
- **Mains** - GS 2 - Governance

Why in the news?

- The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) announced that 26 digital storefronts, including Flipkart, Meesho, BlinkIt, Zomato, BigBasket, and Reliance Retail, declared compliance with the 2023 guidelines against “dark patterns”

Dark Pattern

- **Definition:** Dark patterns are deceptive design techniques in UI/UX that manipulate users into unintended actions benefiting companies.
- **Types:** Common patterns include bait-and-switch, forced continuity, sneak into the basket, confirm shaming, and hidden costs.
- **Impact:** These practices exploit user trust, reduce autonomy, and often lead to unethical outcomes.
- **Legal Concerns:** Regulatory frameworks like GDPR, CCPA, and emerging Indian IT laws penalize manipulative designs.
- **Examples:** Social media platforms, e-commerce sites, and mobile apps frequently use dark patterns to retain users or extract data.
- **Measures:**
 - ➔ Dark patterns fall under the category of “unfair trade practices” as defined in the Sub-section 47 under Section 2 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
 - ➔ Central Consumer Protection Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 18 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, issued “Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023” for prevention and regulation of dark patterns listing 13 specified dark patterns identified in e-Commerce sector.

2. Natural Farming

- **Prelims** - Natural Farming
- **Mains** - GS 3 - Environment

Why in the news?

- The Prime Minister of India said that natural farming is the need of the 21st century at the inaugural session of the South India Natural Farming Summit 2025.

Natural Farming

- **What is it?:**
 - Natural Farming is a chemical-free, low-cost, agroecology-based farming practice that relies on natural processes, local resources, and minimal external inputs to cultivate crops.
 - It rejects synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and intensive tilling, focusing on soil biology, biodiversity, and regenerative practices.
- **Core Principles:**
 - No Chemical Inputs: No synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides or GM seeds.
 - Soil Regeneration: Enhanced soil microbiology through cow dung, cow urine, and bio-cultures.
 - On-farm Inputs Only: Encourages use of **farm-made solutions** like-
 - ★ *Beejamrit*: Seed treatment
 - ★ *Jeevamrit*: Microbial culture/enzyme
 - ★ *Mulching*: Soil cover using crop residues
 - ★ *Waaphasa*: Soil aeration and moisture balance
 - Biodiversity & Crop Diversity: Multilayer cropping, intercropping, agroforestry, companion crops.
 - Minimising External Costs: Reduces cost of cultivation drastically (hence “zero budget”).
- **Key Features:**
 - Low-input and low-risk agriculture.
 - Climate-resilient: higher tolerance to droughts, floods, heat.
 - Improves soil health and increases earthworm population.

- Restores natural ecosystem functions.
- Reduces dependency on credit by eliminating expensive inputs.

- **Government Initiatives:**

- **Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP):** Sub-scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) that promotes ZBNF practices with financial support to farmers.
- **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA):** Supports natural farming through climate-resilient practices.
- **PM-KSY Watershed & Soil Health Management:** Supports natural farming's soil and water conservation needs.
- **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment):** Encourages natural/organic farming as sustainable lifestyle practice.
- **Andhra Pradesh Community Natural Farming (APCNF):** One of the world's largest natural farming programmes.

3. Regulation of Social Media and OTT Platforms in India

- **Prelims** - Regulation of Social Media and OTT Platforms in India
- **Mains** - GS 2 - Governance

Why in the news?

- The Union government has proposed guidelines defining “obscenity” and other disallowed content online in the Information Technology Rules, 2021, which govern social media companies and OTT streaming platforms.

Regulation of Social Media and OTT Platforms in India

- Need for Regulation

- ➔ **Misinformation:** To control fake news and prevent social unrest.
- ➔ **Privacy Protection:** Safeguard personal data and protect user privacy.
- ➔ **National Security:** Address security concerns such as terrorism and cyber threats.
- ➔ **Cyberbullying & Harassment:** Prevent online abuse, particularly towards vulnerable groups.
- ➔ **Content Moderation:** Ensure content is culturally appropriate and does not violate societal norms. For example content like violence, nudity, and defamation.

- Significance of Regulation

- ➔ **Public Safety:** Protects citizens from harmful content and cybercrimes.
- ➔ **Democratic Integrity:** Helps curb misinformation influencing public opinion.
- ➔ **Economic Fairness:** Ensures fair competition in the OTT market.
- ➔ **Cultural Protection:** Safeguards cultural values and norms.
- ➔ **Vulnerable Groups:** Ensures protection for marginalized communities.

- Challenges in Regulation

- ➔ **Balancing Free Speech:** Striking a balance between regulating content and preserving freedom of expression.
- ➔ **Privacy vs. Security:** Conflict between protecting user data and ensuring law enforcement access.

- **Technological Complexity:** Difficulty in moderating content on platforms with advanced algorithms.
- **Global Nature:** Jurisdictional issues with global platforms.
- **Over-regulation:** Risk of stifling creativity and innovation.
- **Enforcement:** Resource-intensive and difficult to monitor effectively.

- **Government Measures**

- **Social Media Regulation:**

- ★ **Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code (2021):** Requires grievance mechanisms, accountability, and content moderation.
 - ★ **Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (2023):** Protects user privacy and regulates data processing.
 - ★ **Digital India Act (Proposed):** Aims to address emerging tech like AI and cyber threats.

- **OTT Regulation:**

- ★ **Content Moderation:** Platforms must follow content guidelines, age ratings, and self-regulation.
 - ★ **Grievance Redressal:** Tiered complaint mechanisms with oversight.
 - ★ **Parental Controls:** To protect younger audiences from inappropriate content.



4. BRICS Grouping

- **Prelims** - BRICS Grouping
- **Mains** - GS 2 - International Relations

Why in the news?

- For its year-long BRICS Presidency in 2026, India is going to follow the model of its 2023 G20 Presidency and take the meetings and delegations to all 28 states and nine Union Territories.

BRICS Grouping

- Formation

- In 2001, the British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- The grouping was formalised during the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers' in 2006.
- Founded in 2009.
- South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS.

- **BRICS**: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- **New Members**: Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, Indonesia.
- **Partner Countries**: Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan.

- Facts:

- The BRICS brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing 41% of the global population, 24% of the global GDP and 16% of the global trade.
- The chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.

- Objectives:

- Promote peace, security, and development in member countries and globally.
- Reform international financial and governance institutions (e.g., IMF, World Bank) to reflect emerging economies' interests.

- Enhance multilateral trade and investment, cooperation in various sectors (technology, finance, health).
- Encourage people-to-people exchanges and cultural ties.

- **Key Initiatives:**

- **New Development Bank (NDB):** Established in 2014 at the BRICS summit in Fortaleza, Brazil. Provides funding for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies.
- **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):** A framework to support members in case of short-term balance of payment pressures.
- **BRICS Business Council & Think Tank Council:** Strengthens economic ties and policy coordination.

- **Significance:**

- Provides a platform for non-Western countries to voice their perspectives in global governance.
- Promotes South-South cooperation.
- Acts as a counterbalance to Western-dominated institutions like G7 and NATO.
- Encourages a multipolar world order.

- **Challenges:**

- Divergent national interests (e.g., India-China border disputes).
- Economic and political differences may hinder deeper integration.
- Criticism of lacking a clear institutional structure or binding charter.

5. G20 Grouping

- **Prelims** - G20 Grouping
- **Mains** - GS 2 - International Relations

Why in the news?

- The G20 summit begins at South Africa's Johannesburg without the presence of the US President.

G20 Grouping

- **Origins and Membership:** Established in 1999, includes 19 countries and the EU
- **Purpose:** Addresses global economic and financial issues, international economic cooperation, market stability, and sustainable development.
- **Annual Summit:** Rotating annual summit hosted by member nations for high-level discussions on trade, debt, energy security, and more. India hosted in 2023.
- **Association with Other Organisation:** It is representative of the International Monetary Fund(IMF) and the World Bank.
- **Headquarters:** It does not have permanent headquarters.
- **Members:** Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the EU.
- **Significance:**
 - Represents about 80% of global GDP, 75% of global trade, and two-thirds of the world's population
 - Balances interests of both advanced and emerging economies
 - Coordinates macroeconomic policies and manages global economic crises
 - Influences global institutions and standards (e.g., IMF, World Bank)
 - Expands its agenda to include climate change, sustainable development, and energy security
- **Challenges:**
 - Diverse membership with conflicting national interests
 - Informal structure with non-binding commitments, affecting policy implementation
 - Rapidly changing global economic and geopolitical landscape
 - Issues with transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement

6. Blue Package

- **Prelims** - Blue Package
- **Mains** - GS 3 - Environment

Why in the news?

- At COP30, nations introduced the Blue Package, a coordinated initiative aimed at rapidly advancing solutions across the priority ocean sectors.

Blue Package

- **What is it?:** It is a coordinated, collective plan designed to rapidly accelerate the implementation of ocean-climate solutions by 2028, focusing on five key sectors: marine conservation, aquatic food, ocean renewable energy, shipping, and coastal tourism.
- **Key Features:**
 - The plan was launched by the five Ocean Breakthroughs group and aims to mobilize action and investment across ocean-based solutions, critical to both climate mitigation and adaptation.
 - 17 countries joined the Blue NDC Challenge at COP30, committing to integrate ocean-based solutions into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the UNFCCC, which marks a significant shift from commitment to concrete policy and delivery on ocean issues.
 - The package includes the establishment of the "**One Ocean Partnership**," a global network of regenerative seascapes aiming to mobilize at least USD 20 billion for a regenerative blue economy by 2030, creating 20 million jobs.
 - Supporting tools such as the **Ocean Breakthroughs Implementation Dashboard** and the **Marine Biodiversity and Ocean Health toolkit** will help track country- and sector-level progress for increased accountability and transparency.
- **Strategic Initiatives and Impacts:**
 - Ocean-based climate solutions highlighted include offshore renewable energy, sustainable fisheries, decarbonized shipping, blue carbon ecosystems (such as mangroves), and regenerative tourism.

- The Blue Package provides a pathway for non-state actors and governments to collaborate, supporting the synergistic implementation of climate and biodiversity commitments under the Rio Conventions.
- It addresses longstanding gaps in climate finance, aiming to close the "ocean opportunity gap"- with ocean action historically receiving less than 1% of global climate finance- by unlocking significant sources of investment.
- **Blue Package and India:**
 - India is one of the 17 countries that joined the Blue NDC Challenge under the Blue Package framework.
 - This aligns with India's aim to support over 5,000 climate startups by 2030, indicating a strong push toward blue economy innovation and climate action tied to oceans.
 - By joining the Blue NDC Challenge, India can access technical assistance, finance mechanisms, and a global knowledge-sharing platform that accelerates capacity building in marine renewable energy, sustainable fisheries, and decarbonized shipping, fostering innovation and green job creation in ocean sectors.

7. Neurotechnology

- **Prelims** - Neurotechnology
- **Mains** - GS 3 - Science and Technology

Why in the news?

- UNESCO released the world's first international ethical framework governing the use and development of neurotechnology.

Neurotechnology

- **What is it?:**
 - Neurotechnology encompasses devices and techniques designed to access, record, monitor, or modulate neural systems, particularly the human brain and nervous system.
 - It includes brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), neural implants, neuroimaging (such as EEG and MRI), neurostimulation, and neuromodulation methods.
- **Applications:**
 - **Medical:** Diagnosis and treatment of neurological and psychiatric disorders such as paralysis, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, stroke, and depression.
 - **Assistive devices:** Brain-controlled prosthetics and communication aids for disabled individuals.
 - **Research:** Understanding brain function, cognition, and consciousness.
 - **Emerging commercial and military uses:** Cognitive enhancement, brain-machine communication, and decision-making support.
- **Risks and Concerns:**
 - **Privacy and Data Protection:** Possible misuse of the extremely sensitive brain data.
 - **Cognitive liberty:** Concerns over manipulation of thoughts and emotions.
 - **Inequality:** Access to advanced neurotech deepens the socio-economic gaps
 - **Ethical Concerns:** Issues related to consent and autonomy
 - **Security Risk:** Potential for neural hacking of brain linked devices.