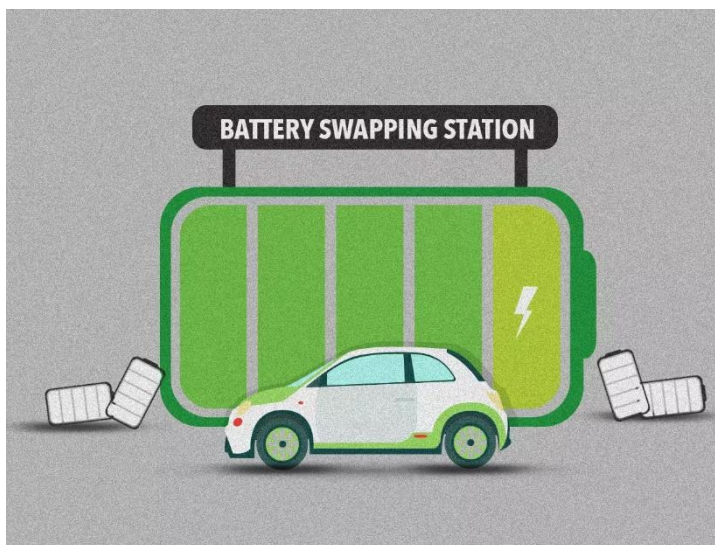




## Current Affairs of the Day

### NITI Aayog targets EV push with battery-swapping policy

1. The NITI Aayog released a draft battery-swapping policy targeted at electric two- and three-wheelers as the government think tank aims to expedite large-scale adoption of EVs.
2. The policy proposals include incentives for EVs with swappable batteries, subsidies to firms manufacturing swappable batteries, technical and testing requirements, and a reduction of GST among other things.
3. Battery swapping involves exchanging discharged batteries for charged ones, delinking the vehicle and fuel and hence, reducing the upfront cost of the vehicles.
4. The draft policy recommends prioritising all metropolitan cities with a population greater than four million for the development of battery-swapping networks under the first phase (1-2) years, followed by all major cities such as State capitals, UT headquarters and cities with populations greater than 5 lakh in the next 2-3 years.
5. To ensure battery safety and security of assets, swappable batteries would be equipped with advanced features such as IoT-based battery monitoring systems, remote monitoring and immobilisation capabilities, as well as other required control features.



The NITI Aayog has also proposed that demand-side incentives offered under existing or new schemes for EV purchase could be made available to EVs with swappable batteries eligible under this policy.



## Fertilizer subsidies may surge to ₹1.9 lakh cr.: Crisil

1. India's fertilizer subsidy bill could hit a record high this year, in the range of ₹1.65 lakh crore to ₹1.9 lakh crore, necessitating a reworking of the Centre's fiscal math outlined in the Union Budget, credit rating agency Crisil said.
2. The government has budgeted for a fertilizer subsidy bill of ₹1.05 lakh crore for 2022-23, but that was prior to the unprecedented rise in raw material costs and global fertilizer prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

## House panel suggests changes to wildlife Amendment Bill

1. Non-official members should also be part of the state wildlife board committee proposed to assess infrastructure projects in and around protected areas, a parliamentary panel reviewing the Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2021, said.
2. The standing committee of the state board for wildlife, if formed, should be represented by several non-official members — at least three wildlife institutions and the director of the Wildlife Institute of India or his/her nominee, the parliamentary standing committee on science, technology, environment, forests and climate change cautioned in its report.

## Standing committee of the state board for wildlife

1. Soon after the introduction of the bill in Parliament last year, many wildlife and legal experts criticised some of its clauses, citing loopholes and saying they were counterintuitive to the objectives of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
2. One such clause drawing flak from independent experts was the proposal to set up a standing committee of the state board for wildlife, to be headed by its vice-chairperson, a post to be held by the state's forest minister, and shouldn't have over 10 members nominated by the panel chief.
3. The experts claimed such a board would be "packed with official members" and end up being a "rubber stamp for faster clearance of projects".
4. Environmental lawyers had pointed out concerns regarding a provision for trade in live elephants. The Wildlife Act prohibits trade in wild animals, including captive and wild elephants. Under sections 40 and 43 of the law,



transfer, acquiring and receiving of the captive elephant is permissible only with the nod of the chief wildlife warden.

5. The Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment, a non-profit, said the bill introduces a Subsection (4) to Section 43 that takes away the protection from trade in them.
6. The House panel report has recommended the deletion of the clause and provided an explanation of provisions for the transport of captive elephants.

## Food subsidy bill likely to touch record ₹3.94L cr on relief scheme

1. The Centre's food subsidy bill is likely to touch a record ₹3.94 lakh crore this fiscal mainly on account of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, a Covid-relief scheme to give 5 kg of free grains every month to about 800 million beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act, official estimates show.
2. The Centre's food subsidy has spiralled since 2020 on account of this pandemic relief measure. Total expenditure in 2021-22 stood at ₹2.94 lakh crore, 140% higher than the subsidy amount in 2020-21 and about 267% more than in 2019-20.
3. The Centre has so far spent ₹2.60 lakh crore on the free food scheme. Another ₹80,000 Crore will be spent over the next 6 months till September 2022, taking the total food subsidy under the PMGKAY to nearly ₹3.40 lakh crore, the official said.
4. The free food scheme, which was initially announced for a quarter and is now extended till September 2022, has shielded the poor from hunger and food price shocks.

## The World Bank Report:

1. According to a World Bank working paper on the government's pandemic relief measures "nearly 80% of all households received at least one social protection benefit from government programs" and "approximately 40% of all poor households reported receiving both food and cash assistance".



2. Their analysis found the relief measures were “pro-poor and broad-based in outreach” but had “state-level variations in benefit delivery”.
3. In 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, the government announced 5kg of free foodgrains per person per month, over and above the entitlements of 5kg of wheat or rice at ₹2 and ₹3 a kg under the food security Act.

<b>MCQs</b>	<p>Q1. Which of the following island countries is not situated in the pacific ocean?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Fiji</li> <li>b. Solomon Islands</li> <li>c. New Caledonia</li> <li>d. Agalega Islands</li> </ol>
<b>MAINS DAWP</b>	<p>Q1. <i>China's security pact with the Solomon Islands is a first, but unlikely to be the last. It signals towards rising of a new hegemon. Comment.</i></p> <p>Q2. A battery-swapping policy is a must to expedite the large-scale adoption of EVs. Elaborate.</p> <p>Q3. With global confrontations driven to maritime zone, particularly the Indo-Pacific, the militarisation of Island countries is emerging as a new challenge to global peace and security. Critically discuss.</p>