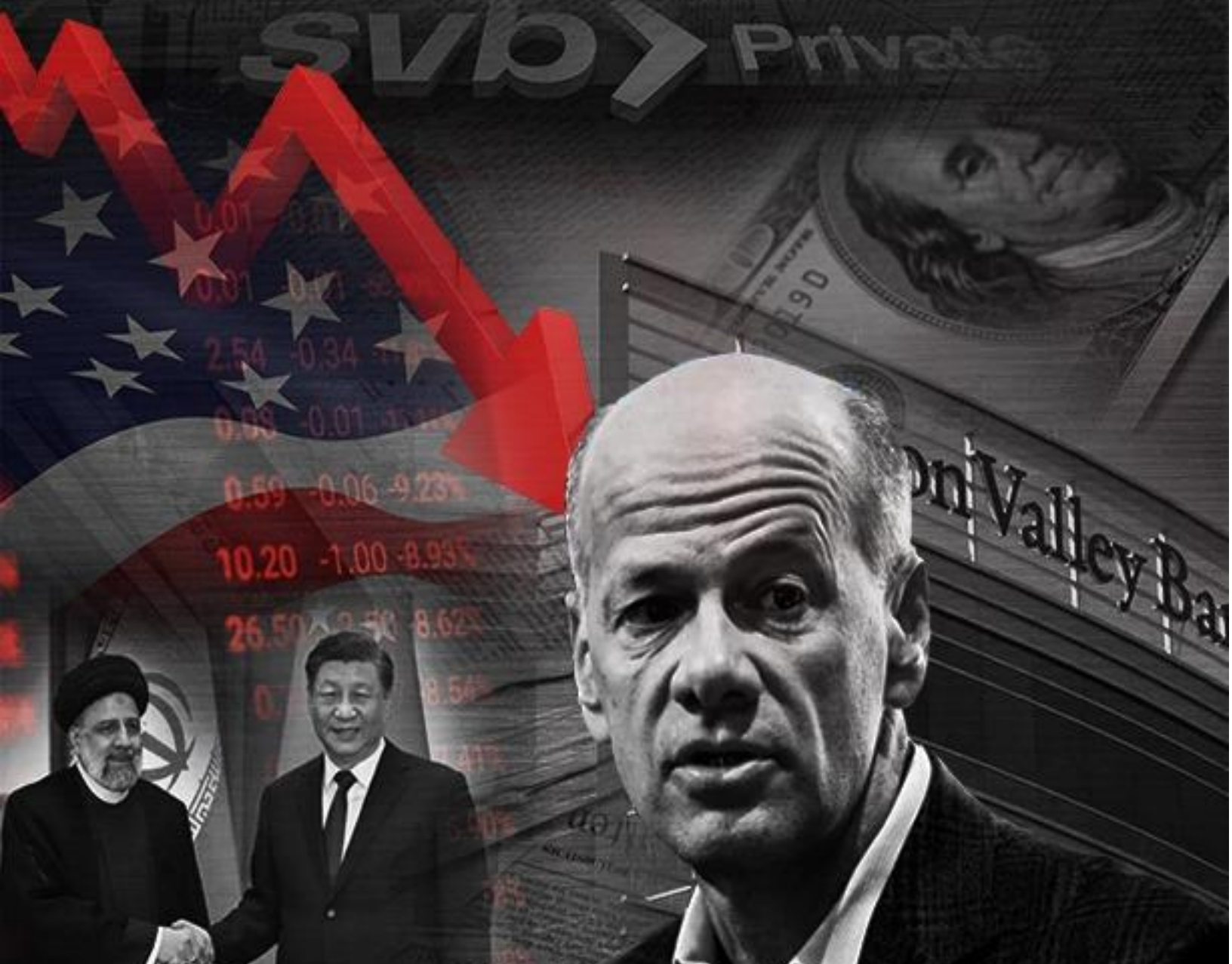


The Clat Post

MARCH
2023 EDITION



INDEX

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TOPIC GALAXY

March, 2023

DELHI EXCISE POLICY CASE: (RIGHT AGAINST SELF-INCRIMINATION)

News

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to hear a plea by Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia seeking bail in the excise policy case after a Delhi court on Monday remanded him in CBI custody till March 4.

- The Supreme Court disapproved of Sisodia approaching it directly under Article 32 of the Constitution when the remedy of moving the High Court under Section 482 of the CrPC was available to him.

What is the Right Against Self-Incrimination?

- The right against self-incrimination is a fundamental principle of criminal law that protects individuals from being forced to give evidence against themselves. In India, this right is protected by Article 20(3) of the Constitution.
- The right against self-incrimination is the right of an individual to remain silent when they are being interrogated or questioned by law enforcement officials.
- This right ensures that no person can be forced to confess to a crime they did not commit or provide evidence that could be used against them in a criminal case.

Application of the Right Against Self-Incrimination in India:

- The right against self-incrimination is a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution of India. It applies to all individuals, regardless of whether they are citizens or not. The right can be invoked at any stage of a criminal proceeding, including during police investigation, trial, and appeal.

The case of Manish Sisodia:

Manish Sisodia, the Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, invoked his right against self-incrimination in a case related to the Delhi Excise Policy.

- The case involved allegations of irregularities in the implementation of the policy, and Sisodia was summoned to appear before the Delhi Assembly's Privileges Committee.
- Sisodia refused to answer the committee's questions, citing his right against self-incrimination.

Constitutional Remedies:

Individuals who believe their right against self-incrimination has been violated can seek constitutional remedies to protect their rights.

- These remedies include writs such as habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, and certiorari.
- These writs are issued by the High Courts and the Supreme Court to protect the fundamental rights of individuals.
- In addition to writs, individuals can also file a complaint under Section 156(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- This section allows individuals to file a complaint before a Magistrate if they believe a cognizable offence has been committed. If the Magistrate is satisfied that there is sufficient ground for an investigation, they can direct the police to conduct an investigation.

Conclusion:

The right against self-incrimination is a crucial protection that ensures fairness and justice in criminal proceedings. It is a fundamental right that is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, and individuals can invoke it at any stage of a criminal proceeding. The case of Manish Sisodia is an example of how this right can be invoked in practice. However, if an individual believes their right against self-incrimination has been violated, there are constitutional remedies available to protect their rights. These remedies can be used to ensure that justice is served and fundamental rights are protected in India.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the right against self-incrimination?
 (a) The right to confess to a crime
 (b) The right to remain silent when questioned by law enforcement officials
 (c) The right to provide evidence against oneself
 (d) The right to refuse legal representation 2. Which article of the Indian Constitution protects the right against self-incrimination?
 (a) Article 19(1)(a) (b) Article 21
 (c) Article 20(3) (d) Article 25 3. What is the purpose of the writs issued by the High Courts and the Supreme Court?
 (a) To prosecute individuals who violate fundamental rights
 (b) To protect the fundamental rights of individuals | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (c) To appoint judges to the judiciary
 (d) To create new laws 4. When can an individual invoke the right against self-incrimination in a criminal proceeding?
 (a) Only during the trial
 (b) Only during the police investigation
 (c) At any stage of the criminal proceeding
 (d) Only during the appeal 5. What is Section 156(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure used for?
 (a) To file a complaint before a Magistrate if a cognizable offence has been committed
 (b) To file an appeal against a conviction
 (c) To seek bail in a criminal case
 (d) To seek legal representation in a criminal case |
|---|--|

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (b) The right against self-incrimination is the right of an individual to remain silent when they are being interrogated or questioned by law enforcement officials. 2. (c) The right against self-incrimination is protected by Article 20(3) of the Indian Constitution. 3. (b) The writs issued by the High Courts and the Supreme Court are intended to protect the fundamental rights of individuals. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. (c) The right against self-incrimination can be invoked at any stage of a criminal proceeding, including during police investigation, trial, and appeal. 5. (a) Section 156(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure allows individuals to file a complaint before a Magistrate if they believe a cognizable offence has been committed. |
|---|--|

WINDSOR FRAMEWORK

News

The Windsor Framework, meant to finally resolve the longstanding Northern Ireland Protocol dilemma, was first announced by UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on February 27.

- The so-called Stormont Brake, a key part of the Windsor Framework that would give members of Northern Ireland's Assembly a formal process to flag concerns about new or amended EU laws, won overwhelming support in the UK House of Commons on March 22.

The Northern Ireland Protocol problem

After the UK left the European Union, Northern Ireland remained its only constituent that shared a land border with an EU-member, the Republic of Ireland. Since the EU and the UK have different product standards, border checks would be necessary before goods could move from Northern Ireland to Ireland.

- However, the two Irelands have had a long history of conflict, with a hard-fought peace secured only in 1998 under the Belfast Agreement, also called the Good Friday agreement.
- Fiddling with this border was thus considered too dangerous, and it was decided the checks would be conducted between Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland (which together with Great Britain forms the United Kingdom).
- This was called the Northern Ireland Protocol.
- Under the protocol, Northern Ireland remained in the EU single market, and trade-and-customs inspections of goods coming from Great Britain took place at its ports along the Irish Sea.
- The checks made trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland cumbersome, with food products, especially, losing out on shelf life while they waited for clearance.
- Some taxation and spending policies of the UK government could not be implemented in Northern Ireland because of EU rules. The sale of medicines, too, was caught between different British and EU rules.
- Also, any kind of border in the Irish Sea irked those who want a united United Kingdom. Significantly, one such person was Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, leader of Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland.
- The DUP has not allowed Stormont, its Parliament, to function since last year, because of its opposition to the Protocol.

What the Windsor Framework proposes

The framework has two crucial aspects – the introduction of a green lane and red lane system for goods that will stay in Northern Ireland and those that will go to the EU respectively; and the ‘**Stormont Brake**’, which allows Northern Ireland lawmakers and London to veto any EU regulation they believe affects the region adversely.

○ The two lanes

- British goods meant for Northern Ireland will use the green lane at the ports, and will be allowed to pass with minimal paperwork and checks. Physical checks will be conducted if the goods are deemed suspicious, in place of the routine checks now.
- This is especially significant for meat products, such as sausages, travelling between the two parts of the UK, as the EU has stricter rules about animal products. Also, people in Northern Ireland can order goods online from Britain easily now. Because of the cumbersome checks, many firms had stopped deliveries to Northern Ireland.
- Plants and seeds can move easily now, and pets can travel without “expensive health treatments like rabies or documentation from a vet”, according to the UK government’s website.
- “The same medicines, in the same packs, with the same labels, will be available across the UK, without the need for barcode scanning requirements under the old Protocol. The UK will license all medicines for all UK citizens, including novel medicines like cancer drugs, rather than the European Medicines Agency under the old Protocol,” the government website says.
- Goods destined for Ireland or the rest of the EU will have to take the red lane, with the attendant customs and other checks.

What is Stormont Brake

“The new Stormont Brake means the democratically elected Northern Ireland Assembly can oppose new EU goods rules that would have significant and lasting effects on everyday lives in Northern Ireland.

- For this, they will need the support of 30 members from at least two parties.
- The British government can then veto the law.

Potential Benefits of the Windsor Framework

A. Reduced trade barriers

- The Windsor Framework, by aligning UK and EU rules and regulations, could significantly reduce trade barriers between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
- This reduction would lead to smoother trade flows, lower costs for businesses, and improved economic prospects for both sides.

B. Improved political stability

- By addressing the issues arising from the Northern Ireland Protocol, the Windsor Framework could help ease tensions between the nationalist and unionist communities in Northern Ireland.
- This easing of tensions could contribute to a more stable political environment and foster greater cooperation between the UK and the EU.

C. Strengthened UK-EU relations

- The successful implementation of the Windsor Framework could serve as a model for future UK-EU cooperation.
- By working together to resolve the issues associated with the Northern Ireland Protocol, both parties could build trust and demonstrate their commitment to a mutually beneficial relationship.

Conclusion

The Windsor Framework offers a potential solution to the trade disruptions and political instability caused by the Northern Ireland Protocol. Through alignment of rules and regulations, the establishment of joint EU-UK bodies, and a fair dispute resolution mechanism, the framework could pave the way for improved relations between the UK and the EU, benefiting both parties economically and politically.

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| <p>6. What is the Northern Ireland Protocol?</p> <p>(a) It is an agreement between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland</p> <p>(b) It is an agreement between Great Britain and Northern Ireland</p> <p>(c) It is an agreement between the European Union and Northern Ireland</p> <p>(d) It is an agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union</p> | <p>(c) A system for physical checks on goods at ports</p> <p>(d) A joint EU-UK body to oversee the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol</p> |
| <p>7. What is the Stormont Brake?</p> <p>(a) A mechanism to veto EU regulations that affect Northern Ireland adversely</p> <p>(b) A system of physical checks on goods at ports</p> <p>(c) A process to flag concerns about new or amended EU laws</p> <p>(d) A joint EU-UK body to oversee the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol</p> | <p>9. What are the potential benefits of the Windsor Framework?</p> <p>(a) Reduced trade barriers, improved political stability, and strengthened UK-EU relations</p> <p>(b) Increased trade barriers, decreased political stability, and weakened UK-EU relations</p> <p>(c) Reduced trade barriers, decreased political stability, and strengthened UK-EU relations</p> <p>(d) Increased trade barriers, improved political stability, and weakened UK-EU relations</p> |
| <p>8. What is the green lane system?</p> <p>(a) A system for goods that will stay in Northern Ireland</p> <p>(b) A system for goods that will go to the EU</p> | <p>10. What is the purpose of the Windsor Framework?</p> <p>(a) To reduce trade barriers between Great Britain and Northern Ireland</p> <p>(b) To address the issues arising from the Northern Ireland Protocol</p> <p>(c) To foster greater cooperation between the UK and the EU</p> <p>(d) All of the above</p> |

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>6. (d) It is an agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union.
 Explanation: The Northern Ireland Protocol is an agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union which sets out the terms of trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, as well as between Northern Ireland and the EU.</p> <p>7. (a) A mechanism to veto EU regulations that affect Northern Ireland adversely.
 Explanation: The Stormont Brake is a mechanism introduced under the Windsor Framework that allows Northern Ireland lawmakers and London to veto any EU regulation they believe affects the region adversely.</p> <p>8. (a) A system for goods that will stay in Northern Ireland.
 Explanation: The green lane system is part of the Windsor Framework and is a system for goods</p> | <p>that will stay in Northern Ireland. British goods meant for Northern Ireland will use the green lane at the ports and will be allowed to pass with minimal paperwork and checks.</p> <p>9. (a) Reduced trade barriers, improved political stability, and strengthened UK-EU relations.
 Explanation: The potential benefits of the Windsor Framework include reduced trade barriers between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, improved political stability in Northern Ireland, and strengthened UK-EU relations.</p> <p>10. (d) All of the above.
 Explanation: The Windsor Framework is intended to address the issues arising from the Northern Ireland Protocol, reduce trade barriers between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and foster greater cooperation between the UK and the EU.</p> |
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CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENT: EXPLAINED

News

The appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in India has been a topic of discussion due to the lack of a transparent and standardized procedure.

- The Supreme Court of India recently issued a ruling on this matter, calling for greater transparency and the establishment of a formal selection process for the CEC.

Current Procedure for CEC Appointment

A. Overview

Currently, the President of India appoints the CEC based on the advice of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). **There is no set procedure or criteria for selecting the CEC**, which has led to concerns about transparency and the potential for political influence in the appointment process.

The Constitution of India grants the Election Commission (EC) broad powers to ensure free and fair elections. Over time, the structure and powers of the Election Commission have evolved, with various laws and Supreme Court rulings shaping its current form and function.

Powers of the Election Commission

A. Constitutional Provisions

Article 324 of the Indian Constitution empowers the Election Commission to oversee, direct, and control the entire election process. The Constitution, however, does not define the scope of these powers in detail.

B. Representation of the People Acts

Parliament passed the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to define and expand the powers of the Election Commission.

C. Supreme Court Interpretation

In the Mohinder Singh Gill case (1977), the Supreme Court held that Article 324 grants the Election Commission plenary powers to manage national and state elections. The Court stated that the terms "superintendence, direction, and control" are broad and apply to areas not specifically covered by legislation.

Evolution of the Election Commission's Structure

A. Single-Member Body

Initially, the Election Commission was a single-member body with only a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). This structure remained in place until 1989 when the Rajiv Gandhi government expanded the Commission to include two additional members.

B. Expansion and Contraction

The expansion of the Election Commission in 1989 was short-lived, as the V.P. Singh government repealed the presidential notification that had created the additional positions. However, the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, was later enacted, providing the CEC with a status equal to a Supreme Court judge and setting the retirement age at 65.

C. Re-establishing a Multi-Member Body

In 1993, the P.V. Narasimha Rao government expanded the Election Commission again, appointing M.S. Gill and G.V.G. Krishnamurthy as Election Commissioners. An amendment to the 1991 Act granted all three members equal decision-making powers and required them to act unanimously. In case of differing opinions, the majority view would prevail.

Supreme Court Ruling on the Election Commission's Structure

A. T.N. Seshan vs. Union of India

CEC T.N. Seshan challenged the 1993 amendment, alleging that it was an attempt to curtail his powers. A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice A.M. Ahmadi, dismissed the petition. The Election Commission has functioned as a three-member body since then.

Powers and Evolution of the Election Commission of India

Supreme Court Ruling

A. Overview

In response to a public interest litigation (PIL), the Supreme Court of India issued a ruling on the appointment of the CEC. The Court emphasized the need for greater transparency and the establishment of a formal selection process to ensure that the CEC is appointed based on merit.

B. Key Observations

1. **Independence of the Election Commission**
The Supreme Court highlighted the importance of the Election Commission's independence to maintain the integrity of India's electoral process. It noted that the current procedure for appointing the CEC may compromise this independence.
2. **Need for a Transparent Selection Process**
The Court called for a transparent selection process for the CEC, stressing that merit and experience should be the primary criteria for appointment. A transparent process would reduce the potential for political influence and ensure the selection of a qualified candidate.
3. **Suggested Framework**

The Supreme Court suggested a framework for the CEC's appointment, which includes: a. Formation of a high-powered committee: The committee would comprise the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of

India or a judge nominated by them. b. Objective criteria: The committee would evaluate candidates based on objective criteria, such as experience, qualifications, and track record. c. Shortlisting and consultation: The committee would shortlist candidates and consult with relevant stakeholders before making a recommendation to the President.

Implications of the Supreme Court Ruling

A. Impact on the CEC Appointment Process

The Supreme Court's ruling is expected to bring significant changes to the CEC appointment process by introducing a transparent and merit-based selection procedure. This new process will likely reduce the potential for political influence and ensure that qualified candidates are appointed to the position.

B. Strengthening the Election Commission's Independence

By calling for a transparent selection process, the Supreme Court's ruling aims to strengthen the independence of the Election Commission. This enhanced independence will contribute to maintaining the integrity of India's electoral process and upholding democratic principles.

C. Potential Influence on Other Constitutional Appointments

The Supreme Court's ruling on the CEC appointment process may have broader implications for other constitutional appointments in India. By emphasizing the importance of transparency, merit, and the involvement of a high-powered committee, the ruling sets a precedent that could be applied to other positions that currently lack a standardized selection process.

D. Upholding Democratic Values

The introduction of a transparent, merit-based selection process for the CEC appointment aligns with the democratic values enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Ensuring that the CEC is appointed without political influence or bias helps reinforce the credibility of the electoral process and promotes public trust in India's democratic institutions.

Comparison with Other Constitutional Appointments

A. Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) and Central Information Commissioner (CIC)

The appointment process for the CEC can be compared to that of the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) and Central Information Commissioner (CIC). Both positions have a more transparent and standardized selection process, involving a high-powered committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and a Union Cabinet Minister.

B. Lokpal

The appointment of the Lokpal, India's anti-corruption ombudsman, also follows a transparent process. A selection committee, including the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India, and other eminent persons, evaluates candidates based on objective criteria before making an appointment.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's ruling on the CEC appointment process marks a significant step toward ensuring transparency, meritocracy, and independence in the selection of key constitutional positions. By suggesting a standardized framework involving a high-powered committee and objective criteria, the Court aims to preserve the integrity of India's electoral process and uphold democratic principles. This ruling may also influence the appointment procedures for other constitutional positions, further strengthening India's democratic institutions.

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| <p>11. What is the current procedure for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in India?</p> <p>(a) A high-powered committee evaluates candidates based on objective criteria</p> | <p>(b) The President of India appoints the CEC based on the advice of the Prime Minister's Office</p> <p>(c) The Chief Justice of India appoints the CEC</p> <p>(d) The CEC is elected by the general public</p> |
|--|--|

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| <p>12. What powers does the Election Commission (EC) have according to the Indian Constitution?</p> <p>(a) The power to oversee, direct, and control the entire election process</p> <p>(b) The power to declare election results</p> <p>(c) The power to appoint political candidates</p> <p>(d) The power to amend the Constitution</p> <p>13. What was the Supreme Court's ruling on the appointment of the CEC in India?</p> <p>(a) The Supreme Court called for greater transparency and the establishment of a formal selection process for the CEC</p> <p>(b) The Supreme Court ruled that the CEC should be elected by the general public</p> <p>(c) The Supreme Court ruled that the Prime Minister should appoint the CEC without any consultation</p> <p>(d) The Supreme Court ruled that the appointment of the CEC should be based on political influence</p> | <p>14. What is the suggested framework for the CEC's appointment process?</p> <p>(a) Formation of a high-powered committee, objective criteria, and shortlisting of candidates</p> <p>(b) Appointment by the Prime Minister's Office based on political influence</p> <p>(c) Appointment by the Chief Justice of India</p> <p>(d) Appointment by the general public through an election process</p> <p>15. What is the potential impact of the Supreme Court's ruling on the CEC appointment process?</p> <p>(a) The ruling is expected to bring significant changes to the CEC appointment process by introducing a transparent and merit-based selection procedure</p> <p>(b) The ruling is not expected to have any impact on the CEC appointment process</p> <p>(c) The ruling is expected to reduce the independence of the Election Commission</p> <p>(d) The ruling is expected to increase political influence in the appointment of the CEC</p> |
|--|--|

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

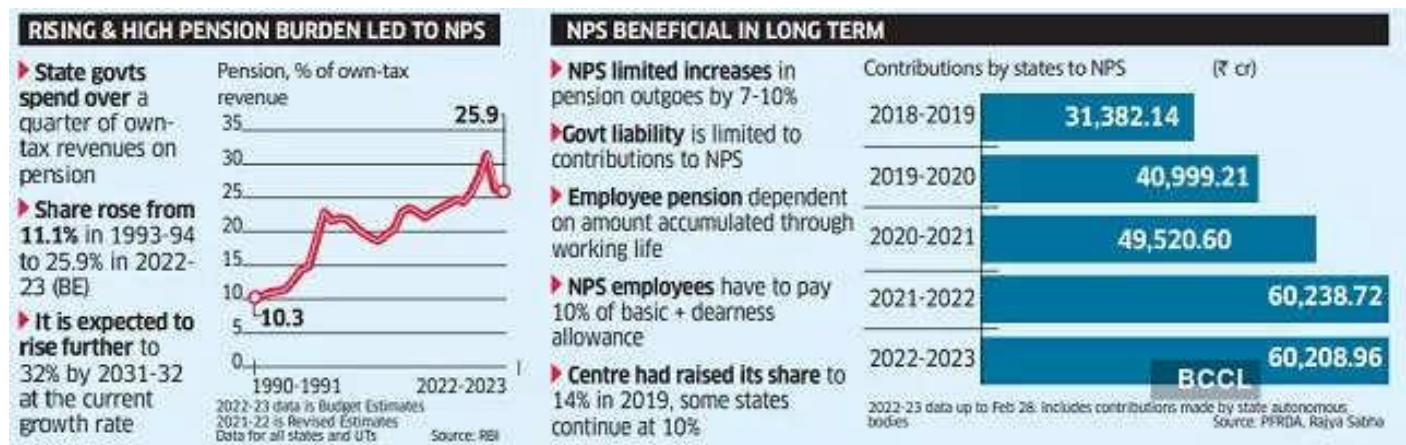
- | | |
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| <p>11. (b) The President of India appoints the CEC based on the advice of the Prime Minister's Office
 Explanation: Currently, the appointment of the CEC is based on the advice of the Prime Minister's Office, and there is no set procedure or criteria for selecting the CEC.</p> <p>12. (a) The power to oversee, direct, and control the entire election process
 Explanation: Article 324 of the Indian Constitution empowers the Election Commission to oversee, direct, and control the entire election process.</p> <p>13. (a) The Supreme Court called for greater transparency and the establishment of a formal selection process for the CEC
 Explanation: The Supreme Court issued a ruling on the appointment of the CEC, calling for</p> | <p>greater transparency and the establishment of a formal selection process for the CEC.</p> <p>14. (a) Formation of a high-powered committee, objective criteria, and shortlisting of candidates
 Explanation: The Supreme Court suggested a framework for the CEC's appointment, which includes the formation of a high-powered committee, objective criteria, and shortlisting of candidates.</p> <p>15. (a) The ruling is expected to bring significant changes to the CEC appointment process by introducing a transparent and merit-based selection procedure
 Explanation: The Supreme Court's ruling is expected to bring significant changes to the CEC appointment process by introducing a transparent and merit-based selection procedure.</p> |
|---|--|

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (NPS) VS. OLD PENSION SCHEME (OPS) EXPLAINED

News

The pension system in India underwent a significant transformation with the introduction of the National Pension Scheme (NPS) in 2004, which replaced the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

- The change aimed to address fiscal concerns and create a more sustainable and market-driven pension system. This note provides an in-depth comparison between NPS and OPS, covering their key features and differences.



Old Pension Scheme (OPS)

A. Overview

The Old Pension Scheme, also known as the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme, was a traditional pension system applicable to government employees in India. It provided retirees with a guaranteed, fixed pension based on their last salary drawn and years of service.

B. Key Features

Defined Benefit: OPS ensured a fixed pension amount for life, calculated based on an employee's final salary and length of service.

No Employee Contribution: Under OPS, employees were not required to contribute to their pension fund.

Government's Liability: The government bore the entire pension liability, making the scheme fiscally unsustainable in the long run.

National Pension Scheme (NPS)

A. Overview

Introduced in 2004, the National Pension Scheme is a market-linked, defined contribution pension system. It is applicable to all new government employees and is also open to private-sector employees and self-employed individuals.

B. Key Features

- Defined Contribution:** NPS is based on individual contributions, with returns dependent on market performance.
- Employee and Employer Contributions:** Both employees and employers contribute to the pension fund, with a minimum contribution of 10% of an employee's basic salary and dearness allowance.
- Investment Options:** NPS offers multiple investment options, including equity, corporate bonds, and government securities, allowing individuals to choose based on their risk appetite and investment goals.
- Annuity and Lump Sum Withdrawal:** Upon retirement, at least 40% of the accumulated corpus must be used to purchase an annuity, providing a regular pension income. The remaining amount can be withdrawn as a lump sum.

- Tax Benefits: NPS offers tax benefits under various sections of the Income Tax Act, such as 80CCD(1), 80CCD(1B), and 80CCD(2).

HYBRID OPTIONS				
	Old pension scheme	New pension scheme	Guaranteed pension scheme	RBI group
Employee contribution	0	10% of basic + DA	10% of basic + DA	10% of basic + DA
Employer contribution	100%	10/14% of basic + DA	10/14% of basic + DA	10% of basic + DA
Pension	50% of basic + DA or average earnings in the last 10 months	Based on accumulated	33% of basic pay	50% of average pay of last 36 months
Burden on exchequer	Entire pension corpus	10/14% contribution to NPS	10/14% investment of salary per year per employee + gap between final return and promised pension	10% investment of salary per year per employee + gap between final return and promised pension

Source: NPS, AP Govt, RBI, media reports

► Andhra Pradesh has proposed GPS model, which includes elements of both

► It continues with contributions, but guarantees defined pension of 33% of basic pay

► RBI's 2003 group headed by BK Bhattacharyya had also recommended a hybrid model

Comparison Between NPS and OPS

A. Pension Benefits

- Guaranteed Pension (OPS): OPS provided a guaranteed pension for life, calculated based on the employee's final salary and years of service.
- Market-Linked Pension (NPS): NPS offers a pension based on the individual's contributions and investment returns, making it subject to market fluctuations.

B. Employee Contributions

- No Contribution (OPS): Employees did not contribute to their pension fund under the OPS.
- Mandatory Contribution (NPS): NPS requires employees to contribute a minimum of 10% of their basic salary and dearness allowance.

C. Government's Liability

- Full Liability (OPS): The government bore the entire pension liability under the OPS, making it fiscally unsustainable.
- Shared Liability (NPS): Both the government and employees contribute to the pension fund under the NPS, reducing the government's pension liability.

D. Investment Options

- No Investment Options (OPS): The OPS did not offer any investment options, as the pension amount was predetermined.
- Multiple Investment Options (NPS): NPS provides a range of investment options, allowing individuals to choose based on their risk appetite and investment goals.

E. Annuity and Lump Sum Withdrawal

No Lump Sum Withdrawal (OPS): The OPS did not permit lump sum withdrawals, as the pension amount was fixed for life.

F. Tax Benefits

- Limited Tax Benefits (OPS): The OPS provided limited tax benefits on pension contributions and withdrawals.

- Enhanced Tax Benefits (NPS): NPS offers tax benefits under various sections of the Income Tax Act, incentivizing individuals to save for their retirement.

G. Flexibility

- **Less Flexibility (OPS):** OPS offered limited flexibility, as the pension was predetermined based on salary and years of service.
- **Greater Flexibility (NPS):** NPS provides flexibility in terms of investment options, contribution amounts, and withdrawal options.

H. Applicability

- **Government Employees Only (OPS):** The OPS was applicable exclusively to government employees.
- **Wider Applicability (NPS):** NPS is open to all new government employees, private-sector employees, and self-employed individuals, making it more inclusive.

Recent Developments and Discussions

A. Demand for Reinstating OPS

Some government employees, especially those who joined the service after 2004, have been demanding the reinstatement of the OPS. They argue that the market-linked returns of the NPS are not sufficient to ensure a comfortable retirement, and the OPS provided better financial security.

B. Government's Stance

The government has maintained that reinstating the OPS is not feasible due to fiscal constraints and long-term sustainability concerns. The NPS was introduced to address the high pension liabilities of the OPS and create a more market-driven pension system.

C. Expert Opinions

Some experts argue that the NPS has the potential to offer better returns and financial security, provided individuals make informed investment choices and contribute consistently. They also emphasize the importance of financial literacy and awareness to help individuals make the most of the NPS.

Conclusion

The transition from the Old Pension Scheme to the National Pension Scheme marked a significant shift in India's pension landscape. While the OPS provided guaranteed pension benefits, it was fiscally unsustainable for the government. The NPS, on the other hand, introduced a market-driven, defined contribution system with enhanced flexibility, tax benefits, and wider applicability. Although some government employees continue to demand the reinstatement of the OPS, the government remains committed to the NPS, emphasizing the importance of financial literacy and prudent investment choices for ensuring a secure retirement.

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| <p>16. What is the key feature of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) in India?</p> <p>(a) It is a market-linked, defined contribution pension system.</p> <p>(b) It provides a guaranteed, fixed pension amount based on an employee's final salary and length of service.</p> <p>(c) It requires both employees and employers to contribute to the pension fund.</p> <p>(d) It offers multiple investment options, including equity, corporate bonds, and government securities.</p> | <p>17. When was the National Pension Scheme (NPS) introduced in India?</p> <p>(a) 1991 (b) 2004</p> <p>(c) 2010 (d) 2015</p>
<p>18. What is the key difference between OPS and NPS in terms of pension benefits?</p> <p>(a) OPS offers a market-linked pension, while NPS offers a fixed pension.</p> <p>(b) OPS provides a guaranteed, fixed pension, while NPS offers a pension based on individual contributions and investment returns.</p> |
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| <p>(c) OPS requires both employees and employers to contribute to the pension fund, while NPS does not.</p> <p>(d) OPS bears the entire pension liability, while NPS shares it with employees.</p> <p>19. What is the minimum contribution required from employees and employers under NPS?</p> <p>(a) 5% of an employee's basic salary and dearness allowance</p> <p>(b) 10% of an employee's basic salary and dearness allowance</p> <p>(c) 15% of an employee's basic salary and dearness allowance</p> | <p>(d) 20% of an employee's basic salary and dearness allowance</p> <p>20. What is the key feature of NPS in terms of investment options?</p> <p>(a) It offers a fixed investment option.</p> <p>(b) It provides a guaranteed return on investment.</p> <p>(c) It offers multiple investment options, including equity, corporate bonds, and government securities.</p> <p>(d) It requires employees to invest in government securities only.</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>16. (b) It provides a guaranteed, fixed pension amount based on an employee's final salary and length of service.
Explanation: The Old Pension Scheme (OPS) in India provided retirees with a guaranteed, fixed pension based on their last salary drawn and years of service</p> <p>17. (b) National Pension Scheme (NPS) was introduced in India in 2004.</p> <p>18. (b) OPS provides a guaranteed, fixed pension, while NPS offers a pension based on individual contributions and investment returns.
The key difference between OPS and NPS in terms of pension benefits is that OPS provided a guaranteed, fixed pension, while NPS offers a pension based on individual contributions and investment returns.</p> | <p>19. (b) 10% of an employee's basic salary and dearness allowance
Under the National Pension Scheme (NPS), both employees and employers are required to contribute to the pension fund, with a minimum contribution of 10% of an employee's basic salary and dearness allowance.</p> <p>20. (c) It offers multiple investment options, including equity, corporate bonds, and government securities.
Explanation: The key feature of the National Pension Scheme (NPS) in terms of investment options is that it offers multiple investment options, including equity, corporate bonds, and government securities.</p> |
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THE UN HIGH SEAS TREATY: DRAFT AGREEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS

News

On March 4, a draft international agreement referred to as the UN High Seas Treaty was finalised to govern the conduct of governments in 'open seas' – a majority of the world's oceans that lie beyond the jurisdiction of any one country.

- Though this agreement is still in the draft stage, when it is ratified by countries (requiring them to also pass it in their own Parliaments), it will become legally binding.
- Also referred to as the 'Paris Agreement for the Ocean', the treaty to deal with Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction has been under discussion for several years.

Background and Timeline

Negotiations for the High Seas Treaty began in 2004, with a UN resolution in 2017 setting a 2022 deadline for its finalization. However, pandemic-related delays and disagreements over language pushed the deadline further.

- The proposed treaty seeks to protect marine areas beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of individual countries, which cover roughly two-thirds of the world's oceans.

The High Seas and their Importance

A. Definition and Extent

The high seas refer to the international waters that lie beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of individual countries, which extend up to 200 nautical miles from their coastlines. The high seas constitute around 64% of the world's oceans and 45% of the Earth's surface.

B. Significance

1. **Biodiversity:** The high seas are home to a vast array of marine species, including migratory and deep-sea organisms, many of which are yet to be discovered and studied.
2. **Climate Regulation:** Marine ecosystems play a crucial role in regulating the Earth's climate by absorbing and storing large amounts of carbon dioxide.
3. **Economic Value:** The high seas provide valuable resources such as fish, minerals, and genetic resources, which are vital for various industries, including pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and cosmetics.

The Need for the High Seas Treaty

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) currently governs countries' rights regarding marine resources, but there is no specific treaty for conserving the health of vast ocean areas. The High Seas Treaty aims to address this gap and implement '30x30' goals to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030, as agreed upon at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) and supported by the High Ambition Coalition of over 100 countries, including India, the US, and the UK.

Marine Species at Risk

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), nearly 10% of marine species are at risk of extinction due to overfishing, pollution, and climate change. Particularly vulnerable species include sharks, whales, and abalone. Climate change exacerbates these threats, with carbon dioxide absorption increasing ocean acidity and marine heatwaves contributing to extreme events and mass mortality.

The Draft UN High Seas Treaty

A. Overview

The draft treaty aims to establish a legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the high seas. The agreement seeks to address the growing threats to marine ecosystems from overfishing, pollution, and climate change, as well as the unregulated exploitation of marine genetic resources.

B. Key Elements

- i. The polluter-pays principle; which is an important concept in environmental laws. It means those causing pollution in a particular region are responsible for its reduction, such as a factory owner having to compensate for air pollution.
- ii. Building ecosystems' resilience against adverse effects of climate change and ocean acidification, and also maintaining and restoring ecosystem integrity.
- iii. Parties should take legislative, administrative or policy measures with the aim of ensuring that traditional knowledge associated with marine genetic resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction held by Indigenous Peoples and local communities shall only be accessed with their free, prior and informed consent.
- iv. Full recognition of the special circumstances of small island developing States and of least developed countries; Acknowledgement of the special interests and needs of landlocked developing countries.
- v. Parties are to promote international cooperation in marine scientific research and in the development and transfer of marine technology.
- vi. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): The High Seas Treaty proposes the establishment of MPAs to help achieve the global goal of protecting 30% of the world's oceans by 2030. Activities within these areas must align with



conservation objectives and not harm marine life. This could involve limiting fishing activities, shipping routes, and exploration activities such as deep-sea mining.

- vii. **Environmental Impact Assessments:** The treaty emphasizes the importance of environmental impact assessments to evaluate the potential consequences of activities on marine biodiversity and ecosystems. This will help ensure that activities in the high seas are carried out sustainably and minimize harm to marine life.
- viii. **Access and Benefit-Sharing of Genetic Resources:** The High Seas Treaty seeks to ensure equitable access to and sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources. This involves establishing a framework for cooperation and coordination among countries, research institutions, and industries to promote sustainable use and conservation of these resources.
- ix. **Capacity Building and Technology Transfer:** The treaty includes provisions for capacity building and technology transfer, with developed countries supporting developing countries in these areas. This will enable developing nations to participate effectively in the conservation and sustainable use of high seas marine biodiversity.

Potential Implications and Benefits

A. Protection of Marine Biodiversity

The treaty's provisions for MPAs, EIAs, and ABS mechanisms have the potential to protect marine biodiversity, reduce overexploitation, and promote the sustainable use of high seas resources.

B. Climate Change Mitigation

By conserving critical marine ecosystems, the treaty could contribute to climate change mitigation efforts by ensuring the continued functioning of the ocean's carbon sink.

C. Equitable Distribution of Benefits

The proposed ABS mechanism would enable the equitable sharing of benefits derived from marine genetic resources, ensuring that all countries can benefit from the economic and scientific potential of the high seas.

D. Strengthened International Cooperation

The treaty could foster increased international cooperation and coordination in the management and conservation of marine biodiversity in the high seas.

Conclusion

The UN High Seas Treaty is a significant step towards conserving marine biodiversity and ensuring sustainable use of marine resources in the high seas. However, its success will depend on overcoming various challenges, including enforcement, balancing competing interests, harmonizing with existing legal frameworks, ensuring capacity building and technology transfer, and addressing climate change impacts. Continued efforts from all stakeholders are essential to finalize and implement an effective and comprehensive treaty that safeguards the world's high seas and their invaluable resources.

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| <p>21. What is the significance of the 30x30 goal agreed upon at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To reduce carbon emissions by 30% by 2030. (b) To protect 30% of the world's endangered species by 2030. (c) To increase renewable energy production to 30% of total energy production by 2030. (d) To achieve the global goal of protecting 30% of the world's oceans by 2030. | <p>22. What is the primary threat to marine biodiversity according to the IUCN?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Overfishing (b) Pollution (c) Habitat Destruction (d) Climate Change <p>23. What percentage of the Earth's surface do the high seas constitute?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 10% (b) 30% (c) 45% (d) 64% |
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| <p>24. What are the key elements of the draft UN High Seas Treaty?</p> <p>(a) Building ecosystems' resilience against adverse effects of climate change, promoting international cooperation in marine scientific research, and establishing marine protected areas.</p> <p>(b) Access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources, capacity building and technology transfer, and environmental impact assessments.</p> <p>(c) The polluter-pays principle, full recognition of the special circumstances of small island developing States, and traditional knowledge associated with marine genetic resources.</p> | <p>(d) All of the above.</p> <p>25. What is the UNCLOS and what is its current role in governing countries' rights in marine resources?</p> <p>(a) A UN resolution that sets a 2022 deadline for the finalization of the High Seas Treaty.</p> <p>(b) A treaty that governs countries' rights regarding marine resources.</p> <p>(c) An international agreement that aims to protect marine biodiversity in the high seas.</p> <p>(d) A global initiative to promote sustainable use of the world's oceans.</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>21. (d) To achieve the global goal of protecting 30% of the world's oceans by 2030.
Explanation: The 30x30 goal agreed upon at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) is to achieve the global goal of protecting 30% of the world's oceans by 2030.</p> <p>22. (a) Overfishing
Explanation: According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), overfishing is the primary threat to marine biodiversity.</p> <p>23. (d) 64%
Explanation: The high seas constitute around 64% of the Earth's surface.</p> <p>24. (d) All of the above.
Explanation: The draft UN High Seas Treaty includes several key elements such as building</p> | <p>ecosystems' resilience against adverse effects of climate change, promoting international cooperation in marine scientific research, establishing marine protected areas, access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources, capacity building and technology transfer, environmental impact assessments, the polluter-pays principle, full recognition of the special circumstances of small island developing States, and traditional knowledge associated with marine genetic resources.</p> <p>25. (b) A treaty that governs countries' rights regarding marine resources.
Explanation: The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) currently governs countries' rights regarding marine resources.</p> |
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PM GATI SHAKTI NATIONAL MASTER PLAN

News

The Gati Shakti National Master Plan is a comprehensive infrastructure development initiative launched by the Government of India. This ambitious plan aims to drive economic growth, job creation, and improve the overall quality of life by revamping the country's infrastructure and multimodal logistics.

- By fostering better connectivity and integration across various sectors, the plan seeks to streamline the movement of goods and people, ultimately boosting the nation's economic potential.

Gati Shakti National Master Plan

A Giant Stride in India's \$5 Trillion Economy Goal

Connecting Pillars of New India

Pragati Ki Gati Bharat Ki Shakti

Multimodal Connectivity Infrastructure to various Economic Zones

Targets upto 2024-25 for Ministry of Shipping

- Increase in Cargo capacity at the Ports to 1,759 MMTPA from 1,282 MMTPA in 2020
- Cargo movement on all National Waterways will be 95 million MT from 74 million MT in 2020
- Cargo movement on Ganga to be increased from 9 to 29 million MT

To cover infrastructure initiatives like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, Ports, UDAN, Economic Zones, Railways etc

Social infrastructure such as hospitals, universities to be integrated in the next phase

To develop new possibilities for the creation of future economic zones

Vision of PM Gati Shakti

PM Gati Shakti will incorporate the infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN etc. Economic Zones like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, agri zones will be covered to improve connectivity & make Indian businesses more competitive.

- It will also leverage technology extensively including spatial planning tools with ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) imagery developed by BiSAG-N (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics).

6 Pillars of PM Gati Shakti

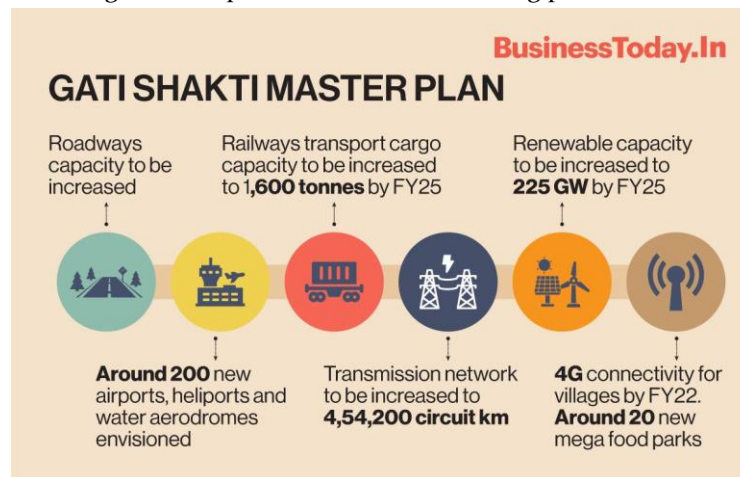
PM Gati Shakti is based on six pillars:

- Comprehensiveness:** It will include all the existing and planned initiatives of various Ministries and Departments with one centralized portal. Each and every Department will now have visibility of each other's activities providing critical data while planning & execution of projects in a comprehensive manner.
- Prioritization:** Through this, different Departments will be able to prioritize their projects through cross-sectoral interactions.
- Optimization:** The National Master Plan will assist different ministries in planning for projects after identification of critical gaps. For the transportation of the goods from one place to another, the plan will help in selecting the most optimum route in terms of time and cost.
- Synchronization:** Individual Ministries and Departments often work in silos. There is lack of coordination in planning and implementation of the project resulting in delays. PM Gati Shakti will help in synchronizing the activities of each department, as well as of different layers of governance, in a holistic manner by ensuring coordination of work between them.
- Analytical:** The plan will provide the entire data at one place with GIS based spatial planning and analytical tools having 200+ layers, enabling better visibility to the executing agency.
- Dynamic:** All Ministries and Departments will now be able to visualize, review and monitor the progress of cross-sectoral projects, through the GIS platform, as the satellite imagery will give on-ground progress periodically and progress of the projects will be updated on a regular basis on the portal. It will help in identifying the vital interventions for enhancing and updating the master plan.

Overview of Gati Shakti National Master Plan

A. Objectives

- Enhance infrastructure connectivity: The plan seeks to improve connections between different transport modes and regions, facilitating efficient movement of people and goods across the country.
- Improve multimodal logistics: By integrating various modes of transportation and logistics services, the plan aims to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and support the growth of trade and commerce.
- Foster economic growth: A well-connected and efficient infrastructure network is crucial for attracting investments, supporting industrial growth, and boosting overall economic activity.
- Generate employment opportunities: The development of infrastructure projects under the plan will directly create jobs in construction, engineering, and related sectors, while also indirectly generating employment through multiplier effects.
- Promote sustainable development: The plan emphasizes the need for environmentally friendly and resilient infrastructure, ensuring long-term sustainability and reducing the impact on the environment.
- Streamline regulatory processes: The initiative aims to simplify and expedite regulatory processes related to infrastructure projects, enabling faster implementation and reducing potential bottlenecks.



B. Key Features

- INR 100 lakh crore investment: The plan envisages a massive investment of INR 100 lakh crore over the coming years, with funding from both public and private sources.
- Integration of 16 ministries and departments: The plan brings together 16 different ministries and departments, ensuring better coordination and alignment of policies, programs, and projects.
- Coordination with state governments and local bodies: The initiative aims to work closely with state governments and local bodies, ensuring that the plan is implemented effectively at the grassroots level.
- Focus on digital platforms and technologies: The plan emphasizes the use of digital platforms and advanced technologies for planning, monitoring, and executing infrastructure projects.
- Creation of a Project Monitoring Group: A dedicated group will be set up to monitor the progress of projects, identify bottlenecks, and ensure timely completion.

Sectors Covered by Gati Shakti

A. Transportation

- Roadways: The plan will focus on developing high-quality road networks, including highways, expressways, and rural roads, to ensure seamless connectivity across the country.
- Railways: Expansion and modernization of the railway network, including high-speed trains and dedicated freight corridors, will be prioritized to facilitate faster and more efficient movement of goods and passengers.
- Aviation: The plan envisions the development of new airports, upgrading existing facilities, and improving air connectivity to boost domestic and international travel.

- **Waterways:** The initiative aims to develop inland waterways and coastal shipping routes, promoting a cost-effective and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

B. Energy

- **Power generation and transmission:** The plan focuses on expanding power generation capacity, both from conventional and renewable sources, and improving transmission infrastructure to ensure reliable and affordable electricity supply.
- **Renewable energy:** The initiative aims to promote clean energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Oil and gas:** The plan seeks to enhance the exploration, production, and distribution of oil and gas resources, ensuring energy security and reducing import dependence.

C. Urban Infrastructure

- **Housing:** The initiative aims to provide affordable and quality housing for all, addressing the growing demand for urban housing and improving living standards.
- **Water supply:** The plan emphasizes the need to improve urban water supply systems, ensuring access to clean and safe drinking water for all citizens.
- **Sewerage and sanitation:** The initiative seeks to enhance urban sanitation infrastructure, including sewerage systems and wastewater treatment plants, to promote a cleaner and healthier living environment.
- **Smart city development:** The plan envisions the development of smart cities that leverage advanced technologies and innovative solutions to address urban challenges and improve the quality of life.

D. Rural Infrastructure

- **Rural roads:** The initiative aims to improve rural connectivity by constructing and upgrading rural roads, bridging the infrastructure gap between urban and rural areas.
- **Irrigation:** The plan seeks to develop efficient irrigation systems and water resource management strategies to support agriculture and enhance rural livelihoods.
- **Digital connectivity:** The initiative emphasizes the need to expand digital connectivity in rural areas, enabling access to information, education, healthcare, and other services through digital platforms.

E. Industrial Infrastructure

- **Industrial corridors:** The plan envisions the development of industrial corridors, connecting major industrial hubs and facilitating the movement of goods and services.
- **Special economic zones:** The initiative aims to establish special economic zones (SEZs) to attract investments, boost exports, and generate employment opportunities.
- **Logistics parks:** The plan seeks to develop logistics parks that integrate various modes of transportation and provide modern logistics facilities, enhancing efficiency and reducing costs.

F. Social Infrastructure

- **Education:** The initiative focuses on improving educational infrastructure, including schools, colleges, and universities, to ensure access to quality education for all citizens.
- **Healthcare:** The plan emphasizes the need to enhance healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals and primary healthcare centers, to provide accessible and affordable healthcare services.
- **Tourism:** The initiative seeks to develop tourism infrastructure, such as hotels, resorts, and cultural centers, promoting tourism and boosting local economies.

Key Benefits of Gati Shakti National Master Plan

A. Economic Growth

- **Attraction of domestic and foreign investments:** An improved infrastructure network will attract domestic and international investors, fostering business growth and boosting the economy.



- Reduction in logistics costs: By enhancing connectivity and integrating various modes of transport, the plan aims to reduce logistics costs and improve the competitiveness of Indian industries.
- Enhanced productivity and competitiveness: Efficient infrastructure enables faster movement of goods and people, improving overall productivity and making Indian industries more competitive in the global market.

B. Employment Generation

- Direct job creation in infrastructure projects: Large-scale infrastructure development under the plan will create numerous direct job opportunities in construction, engineering, and related sectors.
- Indirect job creation through multiplier effects: Infrastructure development will indirectly generate employment in various sectors, as improved connectivity and efficiency spur economic activity.

C. Improved Connectivity

- Seamless integration of transport modes: The plan aims to integrate different modes of transportation, enabling smooth and efficient movement of goods and people.
- Efficient movement of goods and people: Enhanced connectivity will facilitate faster and more cost-effective movement of goods and people, supporting trade and commerce.
- Reduction in travel time and costs: Improved infrastructure will reduce travel time and costs, making transportation more affordable and accessible for all.

D. Environmental Sustainability

- Promotion of green infrastructure: The plan emphasizes the need for environmentally friendly and sustainable infrastructure solutions, reducing the negative impact on the environment.
- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions: By promoting clean energy sources and encouraging public transportation, the initiative aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change.
- Encouragement of public transportation and non-motorized transport: The plan seeks to promote the use of public transportation and non-motorized transport options, reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

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| <p>26. Which sector is NOT covered under the Gati Shakti National Master Plan?</p> <p>(a) Energy
(b) Agriculture
(c) Social infrastructure
(d) Defense</p> | <p>(a) Comprehensiveness
(b) Synchronization
(c) Sustainability
(d) Innovation</p> |
| <p>27. What is the role of the Project Monitoring Group in the Gati Shakti National Master Plan?</p> <p>(a) To identify critical gaps in project planning and execution
(b) To enhance digital connectivity in rural areas
(c) To promote sustainable development
(d) To monitor the progress of projects and ensure timely completion</p> | <p>29. Which sector is a key focus area of the Gati Shakti National Master Plan?</p> <p>(a) Education (b) Tourism
(c) Transportation (d) Healthcare</p> |
| <p>28. Which of the following is NOT one of the six pillars of the Gati Shakti National Master Plan?</p> | <p>30. What is the primary benefit of the Gati Shakti National Master Plan for India's economy?</p> <p>(a) Improved productivity and competitiveness
(b) Environmental sustainability
(c) Enhanced digital connectivity
(d) Better social welfare</p> |

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>26. (b) Agriculture is not specifically listed as a sector covered by the Gati Shakti National Master Plan. However, several aspects of rural infrastructure development, such as irrigation and digital</p> | <p>connectivity, are relevant to agriculture and rural livelihoods.</p> |
| <p>27. (d) The Project Monitoring Group is a key component of the Gati Shakti National Master</p> | <p></p> |



Plan's implementation framework. It is responsible for tracking the progress of projects, identifying bottlenecks, and ensuring timely completion. This monitoring and evaluation function is critical to the success of the initiative, as it helps to detect and address potential issues before they escalate.

28. (c) Sustainability. The six pillars of the Gati Shakti National Master Plan are comprehensiveness, prioritization, optimization, synchronization, analytical, and dynamic.

The six pillars of the Gati Shakti National Master Plan are the guiding principles that underpin the initiative. Sustainability is an important consideration in the plan's objectives and key features, but it is not listed as one of the six pillars.

29. (c) Transportation. Transportation is one of the key sectors covered by the Gati Shakti National Master Plan, along with energy, urban infrastructure, rural infrastructure, industrial infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

The Gati Shakti National Master Plan aims to enhance infrastructure connectivity and improve multimodal logistics, with the ultimate goal of driving economic growth and job creation. Transportation is a critical component of this effort, as it enables the movement of goods and people across the country.

30. (a) The Gati Shakti National Master Plan is designed to enhance infrastructure connectivity, improve multimodal logistics, and streamline regulatory processes related to infrastructure projects. By achieving these objectives, the plan aims to attract domestic and international investments, reduce logistics costs, and enhance productivity and competitiveness, ultimately driving economic growth and job creation. While the plan may also have positive social and environmental impacts, its primary focus is on economic development.

TRANS AND GAY PEOPLE, WOMEN SEX WORKERS CAN'T DONATE BLOOD: WHAT THE CENTRE SAID IN SC

News

The Centre recently told the Supreme Court, that the exclusion of transgenders, gay people, and female sex workers as blood donors by including them in the "at risk" category for HIV, Hepatitis B, or C infections is based on due consideration of scientific evidence.

What was the issue

The Central government's response came after Thangjam Singh, a member of the transgender community, moved the Supreme Court seeking to strike down the prohibition on gay and transgender people from donating blood under clauses 12 and 51 of the 'Guidelines for Blood Donor Selection & Blood Donor Referral, 2017' issued by the National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC) and the National Aids Control Organisation on October 11, 2017.

The Centre also referred to the Annual Report of the Department of Health and Family Welfare (2020-2021) pointing to a three to six times higher HIV prevalence among adults who are Hijras, Transgenders, MSM (Men who have sex with men), and female sex workers.

The 'Guidelines for Blood Donor Selection & Blood Donor Referral, 2017' issued by the National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC) and the National Aids Control Organisation on October 11, 2017.

LGBTQ and their rights in India

Until recent years, same-sex relationships were considered a criminal offence in India under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalised "carnal intercourse against the order of nature."

What is the History of Recognition of LGBTQIA+ In India?

- During British rule in 1860, homosexual intercourse was considered unnatural and was declared a criminal offence under Chapter 16, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- After independence, on November 26, 1949, the Right to Equality was implemented under Article 14 but homosexuality still remained a criminal offence.

- Decades later, on August 11, 1992, the first known protest for gay rights was held.
- In 1999, Kolkata hosted India's first Gay Pride Parade. The parade, with only 15 attendees, was named Calcutta Rainbow Pride.
- In 2009, a landmark Delhi High Court decision in the Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi case held that treating consensual homosexual consummation between adults as a crime is a violation of fundamental rights protected by India's Constitution.
- The Supreme Court in 'NALSA v Union of India' (2014) and 'Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India' (2018) held discrimination on the basis of sex under Article 15 to include gender-based discrimination and sexual orientation-based discrimination.
- In the Suresh Kumar Koushal and another v. NAZ Foundation and others case in 2013, the Supreme Court overturned the Delhi High Court Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi case and reinstated Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.
- In late 2015, MP Shashi Tharoor introduced a bill to decriminalise homosexuality but it was rejected by the Lok Sabha.
- In August 2017, the Supreme Court upheld the right to privacy as a fundamental right under the Constitution in the landmark Puttuswamy judgement. This gave renewed hope to LGBT activists.
- On September 6, 2018, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Section 377 was unconstitutional "in so far as it criminalises consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same sex".
- The battle against Section 377 has ended but the bigger battle for equal rights for the LGBT community is still ongoing.

More facts about LGBTQ

- In 1977, Shakuntala Devi published the first study of homosexuality in India, called "The World of Homosexuals".
- In 1994, they were legally granted voting rights as a third sex.
- In 2014, the Supreme Court of India ruled that transgender people should be treated as the third category of gender.
- In 2019, Parliament enacted Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act with an objective to provide for protection of rights of transgender people, their welfare, and other related matters.
- **Special Marriage Act of 1954** lays down provision for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries allowing them to marry irrespective of their faith, caste and religion, but **there is no such provision for the same-sex couples to marry.**

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019

The trans community in India has vehemently rejected the bill citing following provisions of the bill as they infringe their fundamental rights and do not comply with the NALSA judgement.

- The bill snatches from an individual the right to determine his/her sexual orientation.
- **As per the bill, the change of gender identity in documents can only be done after proof of sex reassignment surgery which must be certified by the District Magistrate.**
- **Another discriminatory aspect of the bill is that the punishment prescribed in the case of 'Sexual abuse against Transgender' is only of two years**
- **There are no provisions in relation to providing any scholarships, reservation, changing the curriculum** to make it LGBT+ inclusive or ensuring safe inclusive schools and workplaces for the trans-community.

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| <p>31. Thangjam Singh who challenged the exclusion of transgenders, gay people, and female sex workers as blood donors question which provision of Guidelines for Blood Donor Selection & Blood Donor Referral, 2017?</p> <p>(a) Clauses 12 and 51 (b) Clauses 12 and 52
(c) Clauses 13 and 51 (d) Clauses 13 and 52</p> | <p>(c) Kolkata, 1999 (d) Mumbai, 1998</p> |
| <p>32. Which Indian city hosted the India's First Gay Parade and in which year?</p> <p>(a) Delhi, 1999 (b) Bengaluru, 2000</p> | <p>33. Who Published the first study of homosexuality in India, called "The World of Homosexuals".</p> <p>(a) Shakuntala Devi (b) Arundhati Roy
(c) Jhumpa Lahiri (d) Vikram Seth</p> |
| | <p>34. Consider the following statements related to LGBTQ+ rights?</p> <p>1. In 1993, they were legally granted voting rights as a third sex.</p> |



2. In late 2013, MP Shashi Tharoor introduced a bill to decriminalise homosexuality but it was rejected by the Lok Sabha.
3. The Supreme Court in 'NALSA v Union of India' (2014) and 'Suresh Kumar Koushal and another v. NAZ Foundation' held discrimination on the basis of sex under Article 15 to include gender-based discrimination and sexual orientation-based discrimination.
4. During British rule in 1860, homosexual intercourse was considered unnatural and was declared a criminal offence under Chapter 15, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Which of the above mentioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only 1 & 3 (b) Both 1 & 2
 (c) Only 4 (d) None of the above

35. Which of the following state about Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 are correct?
 - (a) The bill from an individual the right to determine his/her sexual orientation.
 - (b) Another discriminatory aspect of the bill is that the punishment prescribed in the case of 'Sexual abuse against Transgender' is only of two years
 - (c) As per the bill, the change of gender identity in documents can only be done after proof of sex reassignment surgery which must be certified by the District Judge.
 - (d) There are provisions in relation to providing any scholarships, reservation, changing the curriculum to make it LGBT+ inclusive or ensuring safe inclusive schools and workplaces for the trans-community.

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

31. (a) The correct answer is option A. Thangjam Singh, a member of the transgender community, moved the Supreme Court seeking to strike down the prohibition on gay and transgender people from donating blood under clauses 12 and 51 of the 'Guidelines for Blood Donor Selection & Blood Donor Referral, 2017'.
32. (c) The correct answer is option C. In 1999, Kolkata hosted India's first Gay Pride Parade. The parade, with only 15 attendees, was named Calcutta Rainbow Pride.
33. (a) The correct answer is option A. In 1977, Shakuntala Devi published the first study of homosexuality in India, called "The World of Homosexuals".
34. (d) The correct answer is option D. In 1994, they were legally granted voting rights as a third sex. In late 2013, MP Shashi Tharoor introduced a bill to decriminalise homosexuality but it was rejected by the Lok Sabha. In the Suresh Kumar Koushal and another v. NAZ Foundation and others case in 2013, the Supreme Court

- overturned the Delhi High Court Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi case and reinstated Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. During British rule in 1860, homosexual intercourse was considered unnatural and was declared a criminal offence under Chapter 156 Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
35. (b) The correct answer is option B. The bill snatches from an individual the right to determine his/her sexual orientation. As per the bill, the change of gender identity in documents can only be done after proof of sex reassignment surgery which must be certified by the District Magistrate. Another discriminatory aspect of the bill is that the punishment prescribed in the case of 'Sexual abuse against Transgender' is only of two years. There are no provisions in relation to providing any scholarships, reservation, changing the curriculum to make it LGBT+ inclusive or ensuring safe inclusive schools and workplaces for the trans-community.

National Security Act, 1980

News

Under Indira Gandhi's administration, the National Security Act (NSA) was passed on September 23, 1980.

The National Security Act authorises state and central governments to arrest individuals and keep them from operating against national welfare and security, harming India's international affairs, or blocking the preservation and provision of important services to society.

About the National Security Act, 1980

- The NSA is a preventive detention law. Preventive Detention involves the detainment (containment) of a person in order to keep him/her from committing future crimes and/or from escaping future prosecution.



- Article 22 (3) (b) of the Constitution allows for preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order. Further, Article 22(4) states that no law providing for preventive detention shall authorise the detention of a person for a longer period than three months unless:
- An Advisory Board reports sufficient cause for extended detention. The 44th Amendment Act of 1978 has reduced the period of detention without obtaining the opinion of an advisory board from three to two months. However, this provision has not yet been brought into force, hence, the original period of three months still continues. Such a person is detained in accordance with the provisions of any law made by the Parliament.

History of NATIONAL SECURITY ACT

Preventive detention is basically the detention of a person without a trial to prevent him/her from committing a crime. Read more on preventive detention in the linked article.

- The forerunner to the preventive detention laws in India can be traced to the British colonial period.
- The first such law was 1818's Bengal Regulation III which enabled the government to arrest anyone for defence or for maintaining public order without giving the person any legal remedies.
- Then, in 1919, the Rowlatt Acts were passed which drew widespread condemnation from the political activists of the time.
- Later, after independence, the Nehru government enacted the Preventive Detention Act of 1950 which expired in 1969.
- In 1971, Indira Gandhi enacted the MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971), which gave unlimited powers to the government and law enforcement bodies. This was repealed in 1977. In 1980, the NSA was enacted.

National Security Act Provisions

The Act empowers the central and state governments to detain a person as a preventive measure for reasons of security of the state and/or public order.

- The person can be detained so as to prevent him/her from acting in any manner prejudicial to national security. The person needn't be charged during the period of detention.
- The government can also keep a person in preventive detention to prevent him from disrupting public order or for the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community.
- The detainee can be kept for up to a period of 12 months. The period of detention can be extended if the authorities find adequate evidence.
- The detainee need not be informed of the reason for his/her detention for up to five days and in exceptional circumstances, for up to ten days also.
- No suit or legal action shall be filed against the central or state government for anything done in good faith done in pursuance of the NSA.

What are the grounds for detention under NSA?

- Acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers, or the security of India.
- Regulating the continued presence of any foreigner in India or to make arrangements for his expulsion from India.
- Preventing them from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community it is necessary so to do.

Advisory Board

- The advisory board constituted by the central or state government shall comprise three persons (who are qualified to be appointed as judges of a high court).
- Within three weeks of detention as per the NSA, the government must place before the Board the reasons for detention.
- The detainee can appeal but is not entitled to legal representation by a lawyer.
- If the Board does not find sufficient reasons for the detention, the government should revoke the detention order and release the person immediately.

Criticism of the National Security Act

The rights of an arrestee are protected under Article 22 and numerous articles of the CrPC.

- The individual who has been arrested must be notified of the reason for their detention.



- The freedom to consult and be represented by a lawyer of his choice cannot be denied to an arrested individual.
 - Within 24 hours, any detained individual must be brought before the nearest public prosecutor.
 - For up to 10 days, an individual might be kept under wraps about the reason for his detention.
36. Under the leadership of which Prime-Minister National Security Act was enacted?
(a) Jawaharlal Nehru (b) Morarji Desai
(c) Indira Gandhi (d) P.V. Narshimarao
37. In 1971, Indira Gandhi enacted the MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971), which gave unlimited powers to the government and law enforcement bodies. It was considered as precursor of NSA. In which Year MISA was repealed?
(a) 1975 (b) 1976
(c) 1978 (d) 1977
38. Which of the following statements about National Security Act 1980 is incorrect?
(a) The detainee can be kept for up to a period of 12 months. The period of detention can be extended if the authorities find adequate evidence.
(b) The detainee need not be informed of the reason for his/her detention for up to five days and in exceptional circumstances, for up to nine days also.
(c) No suit or legal action shall be filed against the central or state government for anything done in good faith done in pursuance of the NSA.
- (d) The person can be detained so as to prevent him/her from acting in any manner prejudicial to national security. The person needn't be charged during the period of detention.
39. Which of the following statements are correct about advisory board formed under NSA?
(a) The advisory board constituted by the central or state government shall comprise two persons (who are qualified to be appointed as judges of a high court).
(b) Within three weeks of detention as per the NSA, the government must place before the Board the reasons for conviction.
(c) The detainee can appeal and is entitled to legal representation by a lawyer.
(d) If the Board does not find sufficient reasons for the detention, the government should revoke the detention order and release the person immediately.
40. Which Article of the Indian Constitution deals with protection against arrest and detention in certain cases?
(a) Article 21 (b) Article 22
(c) Article 24 (d) Article 23

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

36. (c)
37. The correct answer is option C. Under Indira Gandhi's administration, the National Security Act (NSA) was passed on September 23, 1980. The National Security Act authorises state and central governments to arrest individuals and keep them from operating against national welfare and security, harming India's international affairs, or blocking the preservation and provision of important services to society.
38. (d) The correct answer is option D. In 1971, Indira Gandhi enacted the MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971), which gave unlimited powers to the government and law enforcement bodies. This was repealed in 1977. In 1980, the NSA was enacted.
39. (b) The correct answer is option B. The detainee need not be informed of the reason for his/her detention for up to five days and in exceptional circumstances, for up to ten days also.
40. (c) The correct answer is option C. The detainee can appeal but is not entitled to legal representation by a lawyer. If the Board does not find sufficient reasons for the detention, the government should revoke the detention order and release the person immediately.
41. (b) The correct answer is option B. Article 22(1) – Any person who is in custody has to be informed as to why he has been arrested. Further, he cannot be denied the right to consult an advocate. Article 22(2) – The arrested individual should be produced before a judicial magistrate within 24 hours of his arrest.

Synthesis Report of IPCC AR6

News

- The fourth and final installment of the sixth assessment report (AR6) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was released.
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations responsible for advancing knowledge on human-induced climate change.
- It was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

About

- The report highlighted the Climate change that is a threat to human well-being and planetary health and there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.
- The report finds that it is likely that warming will exceed 1.5°C during the 21st century, despite progress in climate mitigation policies and legislation.
- The report also highlights the economic imperative for taking action, finding that the global economic benefit of limiting global warming to 2°C exceeds the cost of mitigation in most assessed literature.
- The report demonstrates an undeniable scientific consensus about the urgency of the climate crisis, and the irreversible harm that will occur if warming surpasses 1.5°C, even temporarily.
- The report evaluates the physical science basis of climate change, impacts, adaptation and vulnerability, and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.

Key findings:

- The new report, written by 39 scientists, is divided into three sections arranged by timeline:
 1. Current status and trends, looking back through history to the present;
 2. Long-term climate projects and development prospects for 2100 and beyond;
 3. Future Responses to Climate Change looks at the current international policy timeline between now and 2030
- Humans' ability to survive on our planet depends on what we do in the next seven years. There is no time to lose in the goal of keeping the global average temperature below 1.5°C.
- Limiting warming to "below 2 ° C" by 2030, according to the goals of the Paris Agreement, will be difficult to achieve, but avoiding 1.5 ° C is still possible.
- The report also outlines the economic need for action to ensure that "the global economic benefits of limiting global warming to 2°C outweigh the costs of mitigation in most of the literature assessed."
- Human-caused climate change has affected climate and extreme weather in every region of
- Greenhouse gas emissions will soon increase global warming and reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2035.
- Current warming is around 1.1°C, and current climate policies are expected to increase global warming by 3.2°C by 2100.
- The IPCC is "strongly convinced" that the risks and adverse effects of climate change will increase with global warming.
- To keep within the limit of 1.5 ° C, emissions must be reduced by at least 43% by 2030 and at least 60% by 2035 compared to 2019. Ten years are important to achieve this.

What is IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)?

- The IPCC is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change.
- The headquarters of IPCC is located in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It was jointly set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The IPCC produces comprehensive assessment reports on the state of knowledge about climate change, based on the input of thousands of scientists and experts from around the world.
- It has produced six Assessment Reports (AR) so far, with the latest one being AR6, which was released in 2021.

United Nations Environment Programme

- **About:** The UNEP is a leading global environmental authority established on 5th June 1972.
- **Functions:** It sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for global environment protection.

- **Major Reports:** Emission Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.
 - **Major Campaigns:** Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.
 - **Headquarters:** Nairobi, Kenya.
41. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations responsible for advancing knowledge on human-induced climate change was established in which year?
 (a) 1987 (b) 1986
 (c) 1976 (d) 1988
42. Which of the following statements are incorrect IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)?
 (a) The IPCC is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change.
 (b) It was jointly set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
 (c) The IPCC produces comprehensive assessment reports on the state of knowledge about climate change, based on the input of thousands of scientists and experts from around the world.
 (d) It has produced six Assessment Reports (AR) so far, with the latest one being AR6, which was released in 2022.
43. According to this Report the current warming is around 1.1°C , and current climate policies are expected to increase global warming by 3.2°C by (x). Fill up the (x)
 (a) 2080 (b) 2090
 (c) 2100 (d) 2110
44. According to report to keep within the limit of 1.5°C , emissions must be reduced by at least (X)% by 2030 and at least (Y)% by 2035 compared to 2019. Ten years are important to achieve this. Replace X and Y with appropriate action?
 (a) 43% & 60% (b) 42% & 70%
 (c) 41% & 60% (d) 44% & 70%
45. Where are the headquarters of IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) are located?
 (a) Nairobi, Kenya (b) Paris, France
 (c) Geneva, Switzerland (d) Washington, USA

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

41. (d) The correct answer is option D. It was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
42. (d) The correct answer is option D. It has produced six Assessment Reports (AR) so far, with the latest one being AR6, which was released in 2021.
43. (c) The correct answer is option C. Current warming is around 1.1°C , and current climate policies are expected to increase global warming by 3.2°C by 2100.
44. (a) The correct answer is option A. To keep within the limit of 1.5°C , emissions must be reduced by at least 43% by 2030 and at least 60% by 2035 compared to 2019. Ten years are important to achieve this.
45. (c) The correct answer is option C. The IPCC is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change. The headquarters of IPCC is located in Geneva, Switzerland.

PM MITRA SCHEME

The Govt. of India announced the sites for setting up of 7 PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks for the Textile industry. The Parks will come up in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

What is PM-MITRA?

- In 2021, Ministry of Textiles (MoT) launched PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel Parks (MITRAs) Scheme to strengthen the Indian textile industry by way of enabling scale of operations, reduce logistics cost by housing entire value chain at one location, attract investment, generate employment and augment export potential.
- PM MITRA is inspired by the 5F vision of the Prime Minister. The '5F' Formula encompasses - Farm to fibre; fibre to factory; factory to fashion; fashion to foreign.



- It aspires to fulfil the vision of building an Aatmanirbhar Bharat and to position India strongly on the Global textiles map.
- Piyush Goyal is the current minister of Ministry of Textile.

PM MITRA Parks Features

- Under the project, PM MITRA parks will be established by a special purpose vehicle, owned by the state governments and the Centre in a public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- This is in a form of viability gap funding to make the project attractive for the participation of the private sector.
- A master developer will be selected on an objective criterion developed by the State and Central Governments who will not only develop the industrial park but also maintain it during the concession period.

Components of the project:

- The parks will have 50% area for manufacturing activity, 20% for utilities, and 10% area for commercial development.
- The textile parks will include an incubation centre and plug-and-play facility, developed factory sites, roads, power, water, and waste-water system, common processing house and CETP, and other related facilities like design centre, testing centre, among others. The parks will also have workers' hostels and housing, logistics park, warehousing, medical, training and skill development facilities.

Capital Support:

- For a Greenfield PM MITRA park, the Government of India development capital support will be 30 per cent of the project cost, with a cap of Rs 500 crore.
- For Brownfield sites, after assessment, development capital support at 30 per cent of project cost of balance infrastructure and other support facilities to be developed and restricted to a limit of Rs 200 crore.
- The Centre will also provide a fund of ₹300 crores for each PM MITRA Park to incentivize the establishment of manufacturing units.
- This will be known as competitiveness incentive support (CIS) and will be paid up to 3 per cent of the turnover of a newly established unit in the parks.
- Meanwhile, State government support will include the availability of "contiguous and encumbrance-free land parcel of over 1,000+ acres" along with other textiles-related facilities and ecosystems.

What is the Scenario of the Textile Sector of India?

Status:

- The textile sector is one of the critical sectors of the Indian economy, accounting for more than 2% of the total GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and more than 12 % of the manufacturing sector GDP.
- The textile sector has a diverse value chain spread across fibre to readymade garments.

Potential:

- The sector is the 2nd largest provider of employment in India, after agriculture.
- It provides employment to an estimated 45 million people directly and to another 60 million indirectly through allied activities.
- India is the 6th largest exporter of textile and apparel in the world, with 4% share of the global trade in textiles and apparel.
- India's textile and apparel exports (including handicrafts) stood at USD 44.4 billion in FY22, a 41% increase YoY.
- India's textiles industry has around 4.5 crore employed workers including 35.22 lakh handloom workers across the country.

Challenges:

Decline in Production:

The production of textiles as measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for textile has seen a consistent decline since March 2022. The index value, which was 118.5 in March 2022, has fallen to 102.3 in October 2022.

Surge in Imports:

- In the period from April to November 2022, imports of textiles were valued at Rs 433 billion, same as last year they were valued at Rs. 313 billion.
- India allowed duty-free import of readymade garments from Bangladesh under the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) in 2006, resulting in an increase in imports of apparels made with Chinese fabrics and yarns.

Exports Suffer:

- India suffers from the disadvantage of duties being imposed by the importing countries.
- Countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and African countries get duty-free access and make India's textiles comparatively less competitive in the international landscape.

Inverted Duty Structure:

- The Man-Made Fibre (MMF) value chain in the textile industry currently faces an Inverted Duty Structure, that is the tax on output, or the final product is lower than taxes on inputs, creating an inverse accumulation of input tax credit.
- This is usually refunded by the government, creating a revenue outflow for the government, but also blocks crucial working capital flow for businesses in the meantime.

46. **Who is the current minister** of Ministry of Textile?

- Piyush Goyal
- Dharmendra Pradhan
- Narendra Singh Tomar
- Nitin Gadkari

47. Which of the following statements are correct about PM MITRA Scheme?

- PM MITRA is a scheme under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It envisages strengthening the Indian textile industry by way of enabling the scale of operations, reducing logistics costs by housing the entire value chain at one location, attracting investment, generating employment and augmenting export potential.

Choose the correct answer with reference to the following statements.

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

48. Which of the following statements is incorrect about PM MITRA Parks?

- Under the project, PM MITRA parks will be established by a special purpose vehicle, owned by the state governments and the Centre in a public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- This is in a form of viability gap funding to make the project attractive for the participation of the private sector.

(c) A master developer will be selected on an objective criterion developed by the State and Central Governments who will not only develop the industrial park but also maintain it during the concession period.

(d) The Parks will come up in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala.

49. Which of the following statements about Indian Textile Industry are correct?

- The textile sector is one of the critical sectors of the Indian economy, accounting for more than 2% of the total GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and more than 12 % of the manufacturing sector GDP.
- India is the 7th largest exporter of textile and apparel in the world, with 4% share of the global trade in textiles and apparel.
- India's textile and apparel exports (including handicrafts) stood at USD 44.4 billion in FY22, a 43% increase YoY.
- India's textiles industry has around 4.6 crore employed workers including 35.22 lakh handloom workers across the country.

50. The parks will have 50% area for manufacturing activity, 20% for utilities, how much % area is allotted for commercial development.?

- 10%
- 20%
- 30%
- 5%

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

46. (a) The correct answer is option A. Piyush Goyal is the current minister of Ministry of Textile.

47. (b) The correct answer is option B. In 2021, Ministry of Textiles (MoT) launched PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel Parks (MITRAs) Scheme to strengthen the Indian textile industry by way of enabling scale of operations, reduce logistics cost by housing entire value chain at one location, attract investment, generate employment and augment export potential.

48. (d) The correct answer is option D. The Govt. of India announced the sites for setting up of 7 PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks for the Textile industry. The Parks will come up in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

49. (a) The correct answer is option A. The sector is the 2nd largest provider of employment in India, after agriculture. It provides employment to an estimated 45 million people directly and to

another 60 million indirectly through allied activities. India is the 6th largest exporter of textile and apparel in the world, with 4% share of the global trade in textiles and apparel. India's textile and apparel exports (including handicrafts) stood at USD 44.4 billion in FY22, a 41% increase YoY. India's textiles industry has

around 4.5 crore employed workers including 35.22 lakh handloom workers across the country.

50. (a) The correct answer is option A. The parks will have 50% area for manufacturing activity, 20% for utilities, and 10% area for commercial development

IRAN-SAUDI DEAL

News

Recently, Saudi and Iranian officials held bilateral talks that concluded with an agreement to restore diplomatic ties which have been severed since 2016. The major diplomatic breakthrough negotiated by China in Beijing. It comes as diplomats have been trying to end a long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply entrenched. Saudi Arabia and Iran, signed an agreement in Beijing, China, to re-establish diplomatic ties, respect each other's sovereignty and maintain non-interference in the other's domestic affairs

What was the reasons for dispute

- Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts after Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric days earlier.
- Saudi Arabia has long portrayed itself as the world's leading Sunni nation while Iran views itself as the protector of the Islam's Shiite minority.
- Since US's withdrawal from Iran's Nuclear deal, Iran was blamed for a series of attacks including one targeting the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in 2019.
- Saudi Arabia and Iran - two powerful neighbours - are locked in a fierce struggle for regional dominance.
- Uprisings across the Arab world (after the Arab Spring in 2011) caused political instability throughout the region.
- Iran and Saudi Arabia exploited these upheavals to expand their influence, notably in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, further heightening mutual suspicions.
- Moreover, external powers like the US and Israel have a major role in exacerbating conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- Proxy Wars: Iran and Saudi Arabia are not directly fighting but they are engaged in a variety of proxy wars (conflicts where they support rival sides and militias) around the region.
- For Example, Houthi rebels in Yemen. These groups can acquire greater capabilities which can cause further instability in the region. Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of supporting them.
- Leader of Islamic World: Historically, Saudi Arabia, a monarchy and home to the birthplace of Islam, saw itself as the leader of the Muslim world.
- However, this was challenged in 1979 by the Islamic revolution in Iran which created a new type of state in the region - a kind of revolutionary theocracy - that had an explicit goal of exporting this model beyond its own borders.

What are the Key Outcomes of the Talks?

- The two countries **plan to reopen their respective embassies in Tehran and Riyadh.**
- They also vowed to **respect countries' sovereignty and not interfere in internal affairs.**
- They also **agreed to activate a 2001 security cooperation agreement, as well as a general economy, trade and investment agreement** signed in 1998.

Implications of Accord:

- China is also planning to host a cross-Gulf conference of Iran and the six Gulf monarchies (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, who make up the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC) this year to further strengthen peace in the region.
- The new agreement will make Saudi relations with Israel more complex and the Abraham accord which was signed under US influence to isolate Iran in west Asia will be strained.
- Saudi Arabia has a reluctance to openly engage with Israel due to unresolved Palestinian issues and a lack of accommodative stance by Israel towards Palestinians.
- Saudi Arabia's conditions such as its civil nuclear programme and security guarantee to engage with Israelis is also unheeded by the US which gives more reason for Saudi Arabia to have close ties with China.

- With the deal, China has emerged as a political and economic power in the region.
- China is also moving in to fulfil the strategic vacuum created by US activities such as the US pivot in Indo-Pacific, Europe and Ukraine war.
- According to an Iranian government official, the agreement is expected to change the dynamics of the region.
- Western sanctions on Iran also led to China engaging significantly with Iran in terms of energy and goods trade.
- Both nations Saudi and Iran realize that the shift towards non-renewable energy by the US and European countries will leave them with markets in Asia.
- With the signing of the agreement, there are chances for an end to the Yemen conflict which Saudi has been looking for provided that Iran also cooperates.

What can be the Implications for India?

- Iran and Saudi Arabia are two major oil producers in the world, and any conflict between them can lead to oil price spikes that can have a significant impact on India's energy security.
- Normalizing ties between these two countries could help stabilize global oil prices and ensure a consistent supply of oil to India.
- Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are important trading partners for India. Normalizing ties between them could open up new avenues for trade and investment, leading to increased economic opportunities for India.
- India has strong economic and strategic interests in the Middle East including International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- Iran is part of India's extended neighbourhood. Any instability in the region can have far-reaching consequences for India. Normalizing ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia could contribute to greater stability in the region, reducing the risk of conflict and terrorism.
- India maintains cordial relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia and plays a role in maintaining peace and stability in the region. Normalizing ties between these two countries could help India in its efforts to promote peace and security in the region.
- However, Chinese mediation between Iran and Saudi will create challenges for India as it will contribute to increasing Chinese influence in the region.

51. Saudi and Iranian officials held bilateral talks that concluded with an agreement to restore diplomatic ties. In which year did Saudi Arabia break off ties with Iran?

- (a) 2018 (b) 2017
(c) 2016 (d) 2015

52. Which of the following was not a reason for dispute among Saudi Arabia and Iran?

- (a) Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts after Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric days earlier.
(b) Since US's withdrawal from Iran's Nuclear deal, Iran was blamed for a series of attacks including one targeting the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in 2019.
(c) Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of supporting Houthi rebels in Syria.

(d) Iran and Saudi Arabia are not directly fighting but they are engaged in a variety of proxy wars around the region.

53. Which Country negotiated between Iran and Saudi Arabia for restoration of bilateral ties?

- (a) China (b) South Africa
(c) USA (d) India

54. One of the key outcome of the deal was that the countries also **agreed to activate a 2001 security cooperation agreement, as well as a general economy, trade and investment agreement** signed in which year?

- (a) 1998 (b) 1997
(c) 1996 (d) 1993

55. Which of the following is not a member of 'Gulf Cooperation Council' (2016)?

- (a) Iran (b) Saudi Arabia
(c) Oman (d) Kuwait

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

51. (c) The correct answer is option C. Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts after Saudi

Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric days earlier.

52. (c) The correct answer is option C. Houthi rebels in Yemen (not Syria). These groups can acquire greater capabilities which can cause further instability in the region. Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of supporting them.
53. (a) The correct answer is option A. The major diplomatic breakthrough negotiated by China in Beijing. It comes as diplomats have been trying to end a long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply entrenched. Saudi Arabia and Iran, signed an agreement in Beijing, China, to re-establish diplomatic ties, respect each other's sovereignty and maintain non-interference in the other's domestic affairs.
54. (a) The correct answer is option A. They also **agreed to activate a 2001 security cooperation agreement, as well as a general economy, trade and investment agreement** signed in 1998.
55. (a) The correct answer is option A. China is also planning to host a cross-Gulf conference of Iran and the six Gulf monarchies (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, who make up the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC) this year to further strengthen peace in the region.

Women's Reservation Bill

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha began a day-long hunger strike in New Delhi, demanding passage of the Women's Reservation Bill (WRB).

- The Bill will reserve **one-third of the total number of seats** in state Assemblies and Parliament for women.
- The Women's Reservation Bill, also known as the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008 is a proposed legislation in India that seeks to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women. Despite being introduced more than two decades ago, the bill has yet to be passed in the Lok Sabha.

Historical Background of the Women's Reservation Bill

A. Early Attempts

- 1996: The bill was first introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Deve Gowda government.
- 1998: The bill was reintroduced in the Lok Sabha by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government but could not be passed due to lack of consensus.

B. Major Milestone

- 2010: The bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha during the UPA-II government, but it has not yet been passed in the Lok Sabha.

Key Features of the Women's Reservation Bill

A. Reservation of Seats

- 33% reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- One-third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) will also be reserved for women.

B. Rotation of Reserved Constituencies

- The reserved constituencies will be rotated after each general election.
- The rotation system aims to ensure that different constituencies are covered under the reservation policy over time.

C. Reservation Period

The reservation policy will be in place for a period of 15 years from the commencement of the amendment.

Arguments in Favor of the Women's Reservation Bill

A. Empowerment of Women

- Increased representation of women in politics.
- Strengthening of democracy by ensuring diversity and inclusiveness.
- Empowerment of women at the grassroots level.

B. Better Decision Making

- Women's perspectives and concerns will be better represented in policy decisions.
- Studies suggest that women are more likely to focus on social issues such as education, health, and welfare.

C. Social Change

- The bill can help break gender stereotypes and promote gender equality.
- Increased representation of women in politics can inspire more women to participate in public life.

Arguments Against the Women's Reservation Bill

A. Tokenism

- Critics argue that the bill may lead to tokenism, with women candidates acting as proxies for their male relatives.
- It may not necessarily empower women or address the root causes of gender inequality.

B. Impact on Smaller Parties

- Some argue that the bill will disproportionately affect smaller parties, as they will have to sacrifice a higher percentage of their seats for women.
- This may lead to political instability and affect the functioning of smaller parties.

C. Caste-based Concerns

- Certain groups argue that the bill does not address caste-based reservations adequately.
- The proposed legislation may further marginalize women from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

Way Forward and Possible Solutions

A. Building Consensus

- Engaging with all stakeholders to address their concerns and develop a consensus on the bill.
- Encouraging dialogue and discussion to arrive at a common understanding.

B. Addressing the Root Causes of Gender Inequality

- Implementing measures to promote gender equality in society, such as education, employment opportunities, and social awareness programs.
- Encouraging women's participation in politics at all levels, not just through reservation.

C. Encouraging Voluntary Reservations

- Encouraging political parties to voluntarily reserve seats for women in their candidate lists.
- Recognizing and rewarding parties that demonstrate a commitment to promoting women's representation in politics.

International Comparison

A. Global Representation of Women in Politics

- According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as of 2021, the global average of women in national parliaments stands at 25.5%.
- India ranks 148th out of 193 countries in terms of women's representation in the lower house of parliament, with only 14.4% of seats held by women in the Lok Sabha.

B. Reservation Policies in Other Countries

Several countries have implemented reservation policies or quotas to promote women's representation in politics, including Rwanda, Bolivia, and Sweden.

Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in its national parliament, with 61.3% of seats held by women, due in part to its gender quota system.

Role of Civil Society and Women's Organizations

A. Advocacy for the Women's Reservation Bill

- Civil society organizations and women's groups have been actively advocating for the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.
- These groups have been organizing campaigns, workshops, and seminars to raise awareness about the importance of women's representation in politics and the need for reservation policies.

B. Capacity Building and Training

- Several organizations, such as the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and the National Alliance of Women (NAWO), are involved in capacity building and training initiatives for women in politics.
- These programs aim to equip women with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively participate in political processes and represent their constituencies.

Impact of Women's Reservation at the Local Level

A. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

- In 1993, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments mandated a 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies.
- This reservation policy has significantly increased women's representation in local governance and led to more gender-sensitive decision-making at the grassroots level.

B. Empowerment and Social Change

- The reservation policy in PRIs has empowered women at the local level, allowing them to take part in decision-making processes and become agents of change.
- Increased women's representation in PRIs has led to a greater focus on social issues, such as health, education, and sanitation, improving the overall quality of life in rural areas.

C. Lessons for the Women's Reservation Bill

- The success of women's reservation in PRIs can serve as an example and motivation for implementing similar reservation policies at the national and state levels.
- Addressing the challenges faced by women representatives in PRIs, such as patriarchal attitudes and lack of resources, can help inform the implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill and ensure its success.

Conclusion

The Women's Reservation Bill remains a contentious issue in India, with both strong support and opposition. To ensure its successful implementation and achieve the desired outcomes, it is crucial to build a consensus among stakeholders, address concerns, and learn from the experiences of reservation policies at the local level. By doing so, India can work towards a more inclusive and diverse political landscape that empowers women and strengthens democracy.

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| <p>56. Who is leading the hunger strike in New Delhi demanding the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill?</p> <p>(a) K Kavitha (b) Sonia Gandhi
(c) Mamata Banerjee (d) Sushma Swaraj</p> | <p>(d) Reservation of 10% of seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women</p> |
| <p>57. What is the key feature of the Women's Reservation Bill?</p> <p>(a) Reservation of 50% of seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women
(b) Reservation of 33% of seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women
(c) Reservation of 25% of seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women</p> | <p>58. What is the reservation period for the Women's Reservation Bill?</p> <p>(a) 10 years (b) 15 years
(c) 20 years (d) 25 years</p> <p>59. Which country has the highest proportion of women in its national parliament, due in part to its gender quota system?</p> <p>(a) India (b) Rwanda
(c) Bolivia (d) Sweden</p> |

60. What is the main argument against the Women's Reservation Bill?
 (a) Tokenism

- (b) Empowerment of women
 (c) Better decision-making
 (d) Social change

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

56. (a) K Kavitha, a leader of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), began a day-long hunger strike in New Delhi to demand the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, which seeks to reserve one-third of seats in state Assemblies and Parliament for women.
57. (b) Reservation of 33% of seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women.
 Explanation: The Women's Reservation Bill seeks to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women. Additionally, one-third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) will also be reserved for women.
58. (b) The Women's Reservation Bill proposes a reservation policy for a period of 15 years from

- the commencement of the amendment. After the 15-year period, the reservation policy will expire unless it is renewed or extended by the government.
59. (b) Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in its national parliament, with 61.3% of seats held by women. This is due in part to its gender quota system, which ensures that women hold at least 30% of seats in parliament and other decision-making bodies.
60. (a) Critics of the Women's Reservation Bill argue that it may lead to tokenism, with women candidates acting as proxies for their male relatives. This can undermine the aim of the bill to empower women and promote gender equality in politics.

Rethinking Safe Harbour Concept in IT Act Revamp

News

The Indian government is considering revamping the Information Technology Act, 2000, which deals with cybersecurity, data protection, and e-commerce regulations.

- The Union government formally outlined the Digital India Act, 2023 which is a broad overhaul of the decades-old Information Technology Act, 2000.
- 'A key aspect of the proposed changes includes rethinking the "safe harbour" concept for intermediaries, which has significant implications for internet service providers, social media platforms, and other online intermediaries.

What is the Safe Harbour Concept?

A. Definition

- Safe harbour provisions are legal mechanisms that protect intermediaries from liability for the actions of their users.
- These provisions exist to encourage innovation, free speech, and the growth of the internet ecosystem while shielding intermediaries from potential legal actions.

B. Safe Harbour in the Indian IT Act

- Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, provides safe harbour protection to intermediaries, provided they meet certain conditions.
- These conditions include exercising due diligence, not being involved in selecting, modifying, or transmitting the content, and removing or disabling access to the content when notified by a court order or the government.

The Need for Rethinking Safe Harbour

A. Changing Digital Landscape

- The rapid growth of the internet and social media platforms has resulted in an increase in user-generated content, which poses new challenges in terms of monitoring and controlling online content.
- Existing safe harbour provisions may no longer be sufficient to address the complexities of the modern digital landscape and evolving concerns around privacy, security, and misinformation.

B. Legal and Regulatory Challenges

- Several incidents in recent years have highlighted the limitations of the safe harbour concept in addressing issues like hate speech, misinformation, and privacy violations.
- Policymakers and legal experts have called for a more nuanced approach to safe harbour provisions that balances the interests of intermediaries, users, and the broader public.

Proposed Changes to the Safe Harbour Concept

A. Redefining the Role of Intermediaries

- The government is considering redefining the role of intermediaries in the IT Act, which could potentially change their responsibilities and liability with respect to user-generated content.
- This may involve introducing new categories of intermediaries or modifying the existing conditions for safe harbour protection.

B. Enhanced Due Diligence and Content Moderation

- The proposed changes could require intermediaries to undertake more proactive measures to monitor and regulate user-generated content on their platforms.
- This may include implementing content moderation policies, employing content filters, or collaborating with government agencies to address harmful content.

C. Strengthening Grievance Redressal Mechanisms

- The government is also considering enhancing the grievance redressal mechanisms for users who are affected by harmful content on online platforms.
- This could involve setting up specialized dispute resolution bodies, streamlining the process for reporting content, or increasing transparency in the intermediary's decision-making process.

Potential Impact of the IT Act Revamp

A. Balancing Innovation and Regulation

- The proposed changes to the safe harbour concept may have a significant impact on the balance between promoting innovation and growth in the digital ecosystem and ensuring robust regulation of online content.
- Policymakers will need to carefully consider the potential consequences of these changes on the industry and users to strike the right balance.

B. Implications for Intermediaries

- The proposed changes could result in increased compliance requirements and legal risks for intermediaries, which may affect their operations and business models.
- Intermediaries may need to invest in additional resources for content moderation, implement more stringent user policies, and engage in closer collaboration with government authorities.

C. User Privacy and Freedom of Speech Concerns

- As intermediaries are potentially required to take on a more active role in monitoring and regulating user-generated content, concerns related to user privacy and freedom of speech may arise.
- Stricter content moderation and surveillance measures might lead to potential overreach and censorship, impacting users' rights to express their opinions and share information freely.

Global Trends and Comparisons

A. International Approaches to Safe Harbour

- Different countries have adopted varying approaches to safe harbour provisions, reflecting their legal systems and policy priorities.
- For instance, the United States has the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), which offers safe harbour protection to intermediaries for copyright infringement claims, while the European Union's e-Commerce Directive provides a similar framework for online intermediaries.

B. Recent Developments



- In recent years, several countries have been reevaluating their safe harbour laws to address the challenges posed by the evolving digital landscape.
- The European Union has introduced the Digital Services Act (DSA), which aims to modernize the legal framework for online intermediaries, including revising safe harbour provisions and imposing new obligations for content moderation and transparency.
- Similarly, the United States is currently debating potential changes to the DMCA and Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which provides immunity to online platforms for third-party content.

Conclusion and Future Outlook

A. Striking the Right Balance

- As the Indian government moves forward with its plans to revamp the IT Act and rethink the safe harbour concept, it must carefully balance the need for innovation and growth in the digital ecosystem with the need for effective regulation and protection of user rights.
- This will require a nuanced approach that addresses the complexities of the modern digital landscape while safeguarding the interests of intermediaries, users, and the broader public.

B. Engaging Stakeholders

- In order to develop a well-rounded policy framework, it is crucial to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including intermediaries, users, legal experts, and civil society organizations.
- Through an inclusive and consultative process, the government can ensure that the revised IT Act effectively addresses the challenges and opportunities presented by the rapidly evolving digital landscape in India.

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| <p>61. What is the Digital India Act, 2023?</p> <p>(a) A new cybersecurity law proposed by the Indian government</p> <p>(b) A broad overhaul of the Information Technology Act, 2000</p> <p>(c) A law aimed at regulating e-commerce platforms in India</p> <p>(d) A data protection and privacy law proposed by the Indian government</p> | <p>(c) Stricter user policies</p> <p>(d) All of the above</p> |
| <p>62. What changes are being proposed to the safe harbour concept in the Digital India Act, 2023?</p> <p>(a) Redefining the role of intermediaries</p> <p>(b) Enhanced due diligence and content moderation</p> <p>(c) Strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms</p> <p>(d) All of the above</p> | <p>64. What is the primary purpose of the safe harbour concept for intermediaries?</p> <p>(a) To increase liability for intermediaries for the actions of their users</p> <p>(b) To discourage innovation, free speech and growth of the internet ecosystem</p> <p>(c) To protect intermediaries from potential legal actions</p> <p>(d) To encourage intermediaries to select, modify or transmit content</p> |
| <p>63. What are some potential implications of the IT Act revamp for intermediaries?</p> <p>(a) Increased compliance requirements and legal risks</p> <p>(b) Need for additional resources for content moderation</p> | <p>65. What is the role of intermediaries under the Information Technology Act, 2000?</p> <p>(a) To exercise due diligence in selecting, modifying or transmitting content</p> <p>(b) To not be involved in selecting, modifying or transmitting content</p> <p>(c) To remove or disable access to the content when notified by a court order or the government</p> <p>(d) All of the above</p> |

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>61. (b) The Digital India Act, 2023 is a broad overhaul of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which deals with cybersecurity, data protection, and e-commerce regulations in India. The proposed</p> | <p>changes include rethinking the "safe harbour" concept for intermediaries, among other things.</p> |
| <p>62. (d) The proposed changes to the safe harbour concept under the Digital India Act, 2023</p> | <p></p> |



- include redefining the role of intermediaries, enhanced due diligence and content moderation, and strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms. These changes reflect the need to balance the interests of intermediaries, users, and the broader public in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.
63. (d) proposed changes to the IT Act and the safe harbour concept may result in increased compliance requirements and legal risks for intermediaries. This may affect their operations and business models, requiring additional resources for content moderation, implementation of more stringent user policies, and closer collaboration with government authorities.
64. (c) The safe harbour concept provides legal mechanisms to protect intermediaries from liability for the actions of their users. The primary purpose of the concept is to encourage innovation, free speech, and growth of the internet ecosystem while shielding intermediaries from potential legal actions.
65. (d) Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, provides safe harbour protection to intermediaries, provided they meet certain conditions. These conditions include exercising due diligence, not being involved in selecting, modifying, or transmitting the content, and removing or disabling access to the content when notified by a court order or the government.

Silicon Valley Bank's failure

News

Brief overview of SVB Financial Group: SVB Financial Group is the parent company of Silicon Valley Bank, a US-based financial institution that specializes in providing banking services and funding to technology and start-up companies.

- Importance of SVB Financial Group in the global and Indian start-up ecosystems: SVB Financial Group, through Silicon Valley Bank, has played a crucial role in supporting start-ups worldwide, including India, by offering tailored financial services and facilitating access to global funding networks.

The Collapse of SVB Financial Group

- Factors leading to the group's failure: The collapse of SVB Financial Group resulted from a combination of factors such as increased defaults on loans, deteriorating financial health, and reduced investor confidence.
- Immediate consequences on the global market and investors: The failure led to a significant loss of confidence in global financial markets, affecting the stock prices of other banks and financial institutions. Investors became more cautious in funding start-ups, particularly in the tech sector.

Implications for the Indian Tech Industry

- SVB Financial Group's role in funding Indian start-ups: Through Silicon Valley Bank, SVB Financial Group has been a vital source of funding for many Indian start-ups, providing the capital necessary for growth and expansion.
 - Potential ripple effects on the Indian start-up ecosystem:
 - Access to capital and funding for Indian start-ups: Following the collapse of SVB Financial Group, Indian start-ups may face challenges in securing funding from other sources, particularly international investors.
- Uncertainty and challenges faced by start-ups backed by Silicon Valley Bank: Start-ups that have received funding from Silicon Valley Bank may face uncertainty about their future financing options and may need to explore alternative funding sources.

Possible Actions by the Indian Government and Regulatory Bodies

- Monitoring the situation and assessing potential risks: The Indian government and regulatory bodies need to closely monitor the situation and assess the potential risks to the Indian start-up ecosystem.
- Implementing measures to ensure stability in the Indian tech and start-up sectors: Authorities should consider implementing measures to support and stabilize the Indian tech and start-up sectors, including providing incentives for domestic investors to fund start-ups.
- Exploring alternative funding sources for start-ups: The government can explore alternative funding sources, such as encouraging venture capital firms and angel investors to support the Indian start-up ecosystem.

Long-term Impact on the Indian Tech Industry

- Adaptation and resilience of the Indian startup ecosystem: Despite the challenges posed by the collapse of SVB Financial Group, the Indian startup ecosystem has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability.

- Strengthening domestic funding sources and investor networks: The incident highlights the need to strengthen domestic funding sources and investor networks to reduce dependence on foreign financial institutions.
- Lessons learned and future strategies for the Indian tech industry: The SVB Financial Group collapse serves as a lesson for the Indian tech industry to diversify its funding sources and prioritize financial stability.

Conclusion

- Reflecting on the SVB Financial Group collapse as a cautionary tale: The failure of SVB Financial Group should serve as a reminder of the risks associated with relying on a single funding source and the importance of diversifying funding options.
- Emphasizing the importance of a robust and diverse funding ecosystem for startups: A diverse and robust funding ecosystem is critical to ensuring the long-term success and growth of startups.
- Recognizing the potential for growth and innovation in the Indian tech industry despite challenges: Despite the challenges posed by the SVB Financial Group collapse, the Indian tech industry has demonstrated its potential for growth and innovation, suggesting a bright future for the sector.

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| <p>66. What is the primary service provided by SVB Financial Group?</p> <p>(a) Banking (b) Insurance
(c) Real estate (d) Consulting</p> <p>67. What is the primary focus of Silicon Valley Bank?</p> <p>(a) Providing funding to technology and start-up companies
(b) Providing loans to small businesses
(c) Providing investment advice to individuals
(d) Providing insurance to large corporations</p> <p>68. What was the main cause of the collapse of SVB Financial Group?</p> <p>(a) Increased defaults on loans
(b) Deteriorating financial health
(c) Reduced investor confidence
(d) All of the above</p> | <p>69. What are some potential implications of the SVB Financial Group collapse for the Indian start-up ecosystem?</p> <p>(a) Challenges in securing funding from other sources
(b) Uncertainty and challenges faced by start-ups backed by Silicon Valley Bank
(c) Both a) and b)
(d) None of the above</p> <p>70. What possible actions can the Indian government and regulatory bodies take in response to the SVB Financial Group collapse?</p> <p>(a) Monitor
(b) Implement measures
(c) Explore alternative funding sources
(d) All of the above</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>66. (a) SVB Financial Group is primarily a financial institution that provides banking services to individuals and businesses, with a focus on technology and start-up companies.</p> <p>67. (a) Silicon Valley Bank specializes in providing funding and financial services to technology and start-up companies, with a focus on innovation and growth.</p> <p>68. (d) The collapse of SVB Financial Group resulted from a combination of factors, including increased defaults on loans, deteriorating financial health, and reduced investor confidence.</p> <p>69. (c) Following the collapse of SVB Financial Group, Indian start-ups may face challenges in securing funding from other sources, particularly</p> | <p>international investors. Start-ups that have received funding from Silicon Valley Bank may face uncertainty about their future financing options and may need to explore alternative funding sources.</p> <p>70. (d) The Indian government and regulatory bodies need to closely monitor the situation and assess the potential risks to the Indian start-up ecosystem. Authorities should consider implementing measures to support and stabilize the Indian tech and start-up sectors, including providing incentives for domestic investors to fund start-ups. The government can explore alternative funding sources, such as encouraging venture capital firms and angel</p> |
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investors to support the Indian start-up ecosystem.

Net-zero waste

News

All upcoming housing societies and commercial complexes in the country will soon mandatorily have to ensure net zero waste and have their liquid discharge treated, as part of the government's push for reforming and modernising the sewage disposal system.

- Achieving net zero waste means reducing, reusing, and recovering waste streams (sludge) to convert them to valuable resources so that zero solid waste is sent to landfills.

Background

India's rapid urbanization and economic growth leading to increased construction activity and waste generation.

- The government's initiative to achieve net-zero waste from buildings as part of its sustainable development strategy.

Policy Framework and Regulatory Measures

- Existing policies and regulations: Overview of current waste management policies and regulations in the building sector, including the Solid Waste Management Rules, the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, and the National Building Code of India.
- Proposed policy changes: The government's plan to strengthen and harmonize the existing policy framework, incorporating net-zero waste principles and objectives.

Net-Zero Waste Concept and Targets

- Definition: Explanation of the net-zero waste concept, which involves minimizing waste generation and maximizing resource recovery from waste streams.

Targets: The government's proposed targets for achieving net-zero waste from buildings, including timelines and milestones.

Waste Minimization Strategies

- Sustainable design and construction: Emphasizing the importance of incorporating waste minimization principles and practices at the design and construction stages of building projects.
- Resource-efficient materials: Encouraging the use of resource-efficient materials and technologies, such as green building materials, prefabrication, and modular construction, to reduce waste generation.

Waste segregation and recycling: Implementing effective waste segregation and recycling systems to facilitate the recovery of valuable resources from waste streams.

Waste Management Infrastructure and Services

- Collection and transportation: Ensuring efficient and environmentally friendly collection and transportation systems for waste generated from buildings.
- Treatment and disposal: Investing in state-of-the-art waste treatment and disposal facilities, such as recycling plants, waste-to-energy plants, and sanitary landfills, to ensure safe and sustainable waste management.
- Capacity building and training: Enhancing the capacity and skills of waste management personnel and stakeholders through training and capacity-building programs.

Financing and Incentive Mechanisms

- Funding sources: Identifying potential funding sources for net-zero waste initiatives, such as government budgets, multilateral and bilateral funding agencies, and private sector investments.

- Incentive schemes: Designing and implementing incentive schemes to encourage the adoption of net-zero waste practices, such as tax breaks, subsidies, and preferential financing options.

Awareness and Capacity Building

- Public awareness campaigns: Conducting public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of net-zero waste and their role in achieving it.
- Training and capacity building: Providing training and capacity-building programs for key stakeholders, such as architects, engineers, builders, and waste management professionals, to enhance their knowledge and skills in net-zero waste principles and practices.

Global Context and Best Practices

- International initiatives: Understanding the global context of net-zero waste buildings, including international initiatives such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and the Paris Agreement on climate change.
- Case studies and best practices: Examining successful examples of net-zero waste buildings from around the world, identifying best practices and strategies that can be adapted and implemented in the Indian context.

Collaboration with Industry and Stakeholders

- Involvement of the private sector: Encouraging the participation of private sector players, such as real estate developers and construction companies, in promoting and implementing net-zero waste initiatives.
- Public-private partnerships: Exploring opportunities for public-private partnerships to develop and scale-up net-zero waste solutions in the building sector.
- Community engagement: Actively engaging with local communities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to raise awareness and promote the adoption of net-zero waste practices at the grassroots level.

Role of Technology and Innovation

Digitalization and smart technologies: Leveraging digital technologies, such as the Internet of Things (Things), artificial intelligence, and big data analytics, to optimize waste management processes and monitor progress towards net-zero waste goals.

- Innovations in waste management: Highlighting innovative solutions and technologies for waste minimization, treatment, and disposal, such as waste-to-energy conversion, advanced recycling techniques, and new construction materials derived from waste.
- Technology transfer and collaboration: Facilitating technology transfer and collaboration between research institutions, businesses, and government agencies to develop and implement cutting-edge waste management solutions for the building sector.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

- Performance indicators: Developing a set of key performance indicators to measure progress towards net-zero waste goals and track the effectiveness of waste management strategies.
- Data collection and analysis: Establishing robust data collection and analysis systems to support evidence-based decision-making and inform policy adjustments.
- Reporting and disclosure: Encouraging transparency and accountability in waste management performance through regular reporting and disclosure of progress towards net-zero waste targets.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Barriers to implementation: Identifying and addressing potential challenges and barriers to achieving net-zero waste from buildings, such as lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and financial constraints.
- Opportunities for growth: Exploring the potential economic, social, and environmental benefits of adopting net-zero waste practices, including job creation, resource conservation, and climate change mitigation.

Conclusion

- Importance of net-zero waste in the building sector: Reiterating the significance of achieving net-zero waste from buildings in the context of sustainable urban development and the broader environmental agenda.

- Call to action: Urging all stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, and citizens, to collaborate and take decisive action to achieve net-zero waste from buildings in India.

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| <p>71. What is net-zero waste?</p> <p>(a) Generating as much waste as possible</p> <p>(b) Minimizing waste generation and maximizing resource recovery from waste streams</p> <p>(c) Recycling waste through traditional methods</p> <p>(d) None of the above</p> <p>72. What is the government's initiative to achieve net-zero waste from buildings?</p> <p>(a) To promote sustainable development strategies</p> <p>(b) To encourage industrial growth</p> <p>(c) To increase waste generation</p> <p>(d) None of the above</p> <p>73. What are some waste minimization strategies?</p> <p>(a) Sustainable design and construction</p> <p>(b) Resource-efficient materials</p> <p>(c) Waste segregation and recycling</p> <p>(d) All of the above</p> | <p>74. What are some financing and incentive mechanisms for net-zero waste initiatives?</p> <p>(a) Government budgets</p> <p>(b) Multilateral and bilateral funding agencies</p> <p>(c) Private sector investments</p> <p>(d) All of the above</p> <p>75. What is the role of technology and innovation in achieving net-zero waste?</p> <p>(a) Leveraging digital technologies to optimize waste management processes</p> <p>(b) Highlighting innovative solutions and technologies for waste minimization, treatment, and disposal</p> <p>(c) Facilitating technology transfer and collaboration between research institutions, businesses, and government agencies</p> <p>(d) All of the above</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>71. (b) Achieving net-zero waste involves reducing, reusing, and recovering waste streams (sludge) to convert them to valuable resources so that zero solid waste is sent to landfills.</p> <p>72. (a) India's rapid urbanization and economic growth have led to increased construction activity and waste generation. The government's initiative to achieve net-zero waste from buildings is part of its sustainable development strategy.</p> <p>73. (d) Waste minimization strategies include incorporating waste minimization principles and practices at the design and construction stages of building projects, encouraging the use of resource-efficient materials and technologies, and implementing effective waste segregation and recycling systems.</p> | <p>74. (d) Potential funding sources for net-zero waste initiatives include government budgets, multilateral and bilateral funding agencies, and private sector investments. Incentive schemes can also be designed and implemented to encourage the adoption of net-zero waste practices, such as tax breaks, subsidies, and preferential financing options.</p> <p>75. (d) Technology and innovation can play a significant role in achieving net-zero waste, including leveraging digital technologies to optimize waste management processes, highlighting innovative solutions and technologies for waste minimization, treatment, and disposal, and facilitating technology transfer and collaboration between research institutions, businesses, and government agencies.</p> |
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CURRENT AFFAIRS PRACTICE SHEET

Passage (Q.76-Q.80): The Indian government opposes recognising same-sex marriages, it said in a filing to the Supreme Court on Sunday, urging the court to reject challenges to the current legal framework lodged by LGBT couples. The Ministry of Law believes that while there may be various forms of relationships in society, the legal recognition of marriage is for heterosexual relationships and the state has a legitimate interest in maintaining this, according to the filing seen by Reuters, which has not been made public.

"Living together as partners and having sexual relationship by same sex individuals ... is not comparable with the Indian family unit concept of a husband, a wife and children," the ministry argued. The court cannot be asked "to change the entire legislative policy of the country deeply embedded in religious and societal norms", it said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-government-opposes-recognising-same-sex-marriage-court-filing-2023-03-12/>

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| <p>76. The Supreme Court of India decriminalised sexual intercourse between same-sex persons in which of the following years?</p> <p>(a) 2019 (b) 2018
(c) 2017 (d) 2016</p> <p>77. The Court ruled that Section 377 is unconstitutional as it infringed on the fundamental rights of</p> <p>(a) Autonomy (b) Intimacy
(c) Identity (d) All of the above</p> <p>78. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution stands for which of the following?</p> <p>(a) Right to life and dignity
(b) Right to equality</p> | <p>(c) Right to freedom of speech
(d) Right against exploitation</p> <p>79. Which of the following countries does not recognize same-sex marriage as of 2022?</p> <p>(a) Taiwan (b) Japan
(c) United Kingdom (d) South Africa</p> <p>80. Which of the following is not one of the arguments against same-sex marriage?</p> <p>(a) Religious and Cultural Beliefs
(b) Procreation
(c) Legal issues
(d) International Obligations</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>76. (b) On 6 September 2018, the Supreme Court issued its verdict. The Court unanimously ruled that Section 377 is unconstitutional as it infringed on the fundamental rights of autonomy, intimacy, and identity, thus legalising homosexuality in India. The Court explicitly overturned its 2013 judgement.</p> <p>77. (d) On 6 September 2018, the Supreme Court issued its verdict. The Court unanimously ruled that Section 377 is unconstitutional as it infringed on the fundamental rights of autonomy, intimacy, and identity, thus legalising homosexuality in India. The Court explicitly overturned its 2013 judgement.</p> <p>78. (a) According to Article 21: "Protection of Life and Personal Liberty: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law." This</p> | <p>fundamental right is available to every person, citizens and foreigners alike.</p> <p>The government argued that the Court had only decriminalised sexual intercourse between same-sex persons in its 2018 judgement in Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, and not legitimised this "conduct". The court, while decriminalising homosexuality, did not accept same-sex marriage as part of the fundamental right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.</p> <p>79. (b) Japan does not recognize same-sex marriages or civil unions. It is the only country in the G7 that does not legally recognize same-sex unions in any form.</p> <p>Same-sex marriage in South Africa has been legal since the Civil Union Act, 2006 came into force on 30 November 2006.</p> |
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Legislation to allow same-sex marriage in England and Wales was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in July 2013 and took effect on 13 March 2014. Legislation to allow same-sex marriage in Scotland was passed by the Scottish Parliament in February 2014 and took effect on 16 December 2014. Legislation to allow same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in July 2019 and took effect on 13 January 2020.

Same-sex marriage between citizens became legal in Taiwan on 24 May 2019, making Taiwan the first state in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage.

80. (d) Arguments Against Same Sex Marriage:

- Religious and Cultural Beliefs: Many religious and cultural groups believe that marriage should only be between a man and a woman. They argue that changing the traditional definition of marriage would go against the fundamental principles of their beliefs and values.
- Procreation: Some people argue that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation,

and that same-sex couples cannot have biological children. Therefore, they believe that same-sex marriage should not be allowed because it goes against the natural order of things.

- Legal issues: There are concerns that allowing same-sex marriage will create legal problems, such as issues with inheritance, tax, and property rights. Some people argue that it would be too difficult to change all the laws and regulations to accommodate same-sex marriage.

International Obligations: India is a signatory to various international human rights treaties and conventions, which require it to protect the rights of all individuals, including the LGBTQ+ community.

As many other countries such as Canada, the United States, and Australia have recognized same-sex marriage, it is imperative that India legalizes it to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all individuals regardless of their sexual orientation.

Passage (Q.81-Q.85): [1] is the newest film to be named Best Motion Picture of the Year by the Academy Awards after it swept the 95th Oscars ceremony earlier this month. In addition to its win for Best Picture, [1] holds the all-time record for most “above the line” wins in the history of awards, as it won Best Director, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Editing. It’s not far off from the all-time record for wins either; currently, that honor is tied between Ben-Hur, Titanic, and The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, each with [2] wins.

It will be interesting to see how [1] is judged as a Best Picture winner in the future. The Oscars have sometimes honored future classics with their top prize, including Casablanca, West Side Story, On the Waterfront, and Silence of the Lambs; there’s also been obviously undeserving films such as Around The World In 80 Days, Cimarron, Crash, and Green Book that have aged even more poorly following their victories.

<https://movieweb.com/oscars-best-picture-winner-decades/>

81. Which of the following had been replaced by [1] in the passage?

- (a) Everything Everywhere All At Once
- (b) Everything Everywhere Altogether
- (c) Everything Everywhere But Nothing
- (d) Everything Everywhere Once and for all

82. Which of the following had been replaced by [2] in the passage?

- (a) 9
- (b) 12

- (c) 14
- (d) 11

83. Who was the first Indian to win an Oscar award?

- (a) Satyajit Ray
- (b) AR Rahman
- (c) Athaiya Bhanu
- (d) Resul Pookotty

84. Oscar award winning ‘The Elephant Whisperers’, won the award in which of the following categories?

- (a) Best Documentary (Short Subject)
- (b) Best Documentary Feature

- (c) Best Foreign Language Film
 (d) Best Original Score

85. Who among the following won the Oscar award for the Best Actress?
 (a) Jamie Lee Curtis (b) Michelle Yeoh
 (c) Cate Blanchett (d) Ana de Armas

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

81. (a) Everything Everywhere All At Once is the newest film to be named Best Motion Picture of the Year by the Academy Awards after it swept the 95th Oscars ceremony earlier this month. In addition to its win for Best Picture, Everything Everywhere All At Once holds the all-time record for most "above the line" wins in the history of awards, as it won Best Director (The Daniels), Best Actress (Michelle Yeoh), Best Supporting Actress (Jamie Lee Curtis), Best Supporting Actor (Ke Huy Quan), Best Original Screenplay (The Daniels), and Best Editing. It's not far off from the all-time record for wins either; currently, that honor is tied between Ben-Hur, Titanic, and The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, each with 11 wins.
82. (d) Everything Everywhere All At Once is the newest film to be named Best Motion Picture of the Year by the Academy Awards after it swept the 95th Oscars ceremony earlier this month. In addition to its win for Best Picture, Everything Everywhere All At Once holds the all-time record for most "above the line" wins in the history of awards, as it won Best Director (The Daniels), Best Actress (Michelle Yeoh), Best Supporting Actress (Jamie Lee Curtis), Best Supporting Actor (Ke Huy Quan), Best Original Screenplay (The Daniels), and Best Editing. It's not far off from the all-time record for wins

- either; currently, that honor is tied between Ben-Hur, Titanic, and The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, each with 11 wins.
83. (c) Bhanu Athaiya was the first Indian to win the Oscar Award for costume designing. Her work in the film 'Gandhi' bagged her the 55th Academy Award in the "Best Costume Design" Category.
84. (a) India won its first Oscar for 2023 for Netflix's 'The Elephant Whisperer' by Kartiki Gonsalves and Guneet Monga in the Best Documentary (Short Subject) category at the 95th Academy Awards.
85. (b) Everything Everywhere All At Once is the newest film to be named Best Motion Picture of the Year by the Academy Awards after it swept the 95th Oscars ceremony earlier this month. In addition to its win for Best Picture, Everything Everywhere All At Once holds the all-time record for most "above the line" wins in the history of awards, as it won Best Director (The Daniels), Best Actress (Michelle Yeoh), Best Supporting Actress (Jamie Lee Curtis), Best Supporting Actor (Ke Huy Quan), Best Original Screenplay (The Daniels), and Best Editing. It's not far off from the all-time record for wins either; currently, that honor is tied between Ben-Hur, Titanic, and The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, each with 11 wins

Passage (Q.86-Q.90): Burkina Faso is the 1st country on the continent and the [1] most affected country in the world according to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2023, a report published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). "The Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa is now the epicenter of terrorism...accounting for more deaths from terrorism in 2022 than South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) combined," after the report. "Across the Sahel, 22,074 people were killed in 6,408 terrorist attacks between 2007 and 2022," the report said. With 8,564 victims, Burkina Faso ranks [1] in the world for the most affected countries in 2022. [2] is ranked first country since 2019. The country recorded 310 terrorist incidents in 2022 compared to 224 in 2021.
<https://www.africanews.com/2023/03/28/burkina-faso-ranked-2nd-in-global-terrorism-impact/>

86. Which of the following had been replaced by [1] in the passage?
 (a) 6th (b) 5th
 (c) 3rd (d) 2nd

87. Which of the following had been replaced by [2] in the passage?
 (a) Pakistan (b) Afghanistan
 (c) Syria (d) Oman

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| <p>88. Which of the following is India's rank in the index list?</p> <p>(a) 31st (b) 13th
 (c) 42nd (d) 24th</p> <p>89. According to the report, Globally, deaths from terrorism fell by 9% to 6,701 deaths, marking a 38% decrease from its peak in ____.</p> <p>(a) 2020 (b) 2015</p> | <p>(c) 2010 (d) 2012</p> <p>90. GTI report is produced by which of the following institutions?</p> <p>(a) Institute for Economics & Peace
 (b) Fund for Peace
 (c) The Rotary Foundation
 (d) Peace Direct</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>86. (d) Burkina Faso is the 1st country on the continent and the 2nd most affected country in the world according to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2023, a report published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).</p> <p>87. (b) With 8,564 victims, Burkina Faso ranks 2nd in the world for the most affected countries in 2022, just behind Afghanistan, ranked first country since 2019. The country recorded 310 terrorist incidents in 2022 compared to 224 in 2021.</p> <p>88. (b) India ranks 13th on The Global Terrorism Index (GTI). The report shows that Afghanistan continues to be the country most affected by terrorism for the 4th year in a row, even though attacks and deaths decreased.</p> <p>89. (b) The GTI report is produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), a think tank, using data from TerrorismTracker and other sources.</p> | <p>Globally, deaths from terrorism fell by 9% to 6,701 deaths, marking a 38% decrease from its peak in 2015.</p> <p>90. (a) The GTI report is produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), a think tank, using data from TerrorismTracker and other sources. EP is an Australian based institute which releases the annual Global Terrorism Index (GTI) based on four parameters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of terrorist incidents per year. Number of fatalities caused by terrorists per year. Number of injuries caused by terrorists per year. Total property damage caused by terrorism per year. |
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Passage (Q.91-Q.95): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday (18 March) inaugurated the Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference at Subramaniam Hall, NASC complex, IARI campus, PUSA New Delhi.

The two-day global conference will have sessions on all important issues related to millets (Shree Anna) like promotion and awareness of millets among producers, consumers and other stakeholders; millets' value chain development; health and nutritional aspects of millets; market linkages; research and development etc.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated and visited the Exhibition cum Buyer Seller Meet Pavilion. He also unveiled a Commemorative [1] and Commemorative [2].

Further, PM Modi digitally launched a compendium of Indian Millet (Shri Anna) startups and a book of millet (Shri Anna) standards.

<https://swarajyamag.com/current-affairs/shree-anna-takes-center-stage-pm-modi-inaugurates-global-millets-conference>

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| <p>91. Which of the following had been replaced by [1] and [2]?</p> <p>(a) Stamp and Coin (b) Coin and Note
 (c) Poster and Stamp (d) Bonds and Posters</p> | <p>92. Which of the following year had been declared as 'International Year of Millets'?</p> <p>(a) 2024 (b) 2023
 (c) 2022 (d) 2025</p> |
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93. Which of the following countries is the largest producer of Millets?
 (a) China (b) India
 (c) Indonesia (d) Russia
94. Which of the following is false about the nutritional value of the grain 'Millet'?

- (a) Rich in calcium (b) Gluten-free
 (c) Rich in magnesium (d) Low Iron Content

95. Which of the following is/are a variety of Millets?
 (a) Sorghum (b) Pearl
 (c) Bomba (d) Both a & b

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

66. (a) The Prime Minister also inaugurated and visited the Exhibition cum Buyer Seller Meet Pavilion. He also unveiled a Commemorative Stamp and Commemorative Coin.
67. (d) The year 2023 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of the Millet, following a proposal by India, which wants to position itself as a global hub for millets.
68. (b) India is the largest producer of millet in the world. It accounts for 20 % of global production and 80% of Asia's production.
69. (d) Millets are less expensive and nutritionally superior to wheat & rice owing to their high protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals like iron content.
 Millets are also rich in calcium and magnesium. For example, Ragi is known to have the highest calcium content among all the food grains. Millets can provide nutritional security and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women. Its high

iron content can fight high prevalence of anaemia in India women of reproductive age and infants.

Gluten-free a low Glycemic Index:

Millets can help tackle lifestyle problems and health challenges such as obesity and diabetes as they are gluten-free and have a low glycemic index (a relative ranking of carbohydrate in foods according to how they affect blood glucose levels).

70. (d) Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi/Mandua), Minor Millets i.e. Foxtail Millet (Kangani/Kakun), Proso Millet (Cheena), Kodo Millet (Kodo), Barnyard Millet (Sawa/Sanwa/ Jhangora), Little Millet (Kutki) and two Pseudo Millets (Buck-wheat (Kuttu) and Ameranthus (Chaulai) are few varieties of Millets grown in India. Whereas, Bomba is a variety of rice cultivated in the Valencia region of Spain.

Passage (Q.96-Q.100): Renowned Carnatic vocalist and Padma Shri awardee [1] has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award for 2023 by the Music Academy.

In a press release, the Music Academy said, [1] is one of the foremost among today's Carnatic musicians, who initially trained under her parents and later under TR Balamani and violin maestro Lalgudi G Jayaraman. Besides Carnatic music, [1] is also trained on the veena, classical dance and Hindustani music.

'She is known for her melodic and meditative style of singing. She has also been training underprivileged children in music and contributing through her art to social causes,' the release noted.

The Nritiya Kalanidhi award for dance will be conferred on [2]. The Music Academy said [2] is an exquisite dancer and acharya par excellence of both Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi.

96. Which of the following has been replaced by [1] in the passage?
 (a) Sudha Ragunathan (b) Bombay Jayashree
 (c) Geetha Rajashekhar (d) Hari Priya

97. Which of the following has been replaced by [2] in the passage?
 (a) Yamini Reddy
 (b) Vijaya Prasad
 (c) Vasanthalakshmi Narasimhachari
 (d) Vempati Chinna Satyam



98. Sangita Kalanidhi award came into existence in which of the following years?
(a) 1971 (b) 1966
(c) 1958 (d) 1942
99. The award is conferred by which of the following institutions?
(a) Madras Music Academy

- (b) Andhra Music University
(c) Karnataka Music Academy
(d) South Indian Association of Art

100. 'Carnatic Music' is a system of music commonly associated with southern India including the following state, except for:
(a) Tamil Nadu (b) Odissa
(c) Sri Lanka (d) Telangana

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

96. (b) Renowned Carnatic vocalist and Padma Shri awardee Bombay Jayashri has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award for 2023 by the Music Academy.
97. (c) The Nritya Kalanidhi award for dance will be conferred on Vasanthalakshmi Narasimhachari. The Music Academy said Narasimhachari is an exquisite dancer and acharya par excellence of both Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi.
98. (d) Recently, Carnatic vocalist Bombay Jayashri, who is known for her melodic and meditative style of singing and is recognised by a Padma Shri from the Indian government has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award of the

- Music Academy for 2023. Sangita Kalanidhi award is considered the highest accolade in the field of Carnatic music, it came into existence in 1942. The award comprises a gold medal and a birudu patra (citation).
99. (a) The award is conferred by the Madras Music Academy. It is considered the highest award in the field of Carnatic music. The award comprises of a gold medal and a birudu Patra (citation).
100. (b) Carnatic music is a system of music commonly associated with southern India including the states Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, but also practised in Sri Lanka.

Passage (Q.101-Q.105): External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has dismissed the World Happiness Index 2023, which ranked India among the least happy countries. Interacting with students during BJYM Yuva Samvada at the RV Dental College in Bengaluru, Jaishankar cited an example of his friend from Singapore who once said Indians looked happier than Europeans.

"You should actually tell everybody to come to Bengaluru - you can see which is the world's happiest place, particularly on a Friday night," the foreign minister said while replying to a question on the World Happiness Index 2023.

"I don't know how these guys make up those indexes. A Singaporean friend of mine told me - every time he travels out, he says 'I just have to go to some place and look at the faces of some people, that is my happiness index'. His sense was people in Europe did not look that happy. People, to him in India, looked very happy. I'm not necessarily saying I will make an index out of it, but these are all mind games that people play," the minister said.

<https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/story/come-to-bengaluru-and-see-s-jaishankar-rejects-indias-ranking-in-world-happiness-index-2023-375036-2023-03-27>

101. On which of the following days is the 'International Day of Happiness' celebrated?
(a) March 20th (b) January 12th
(c) February 6th (d) April 1st
102. In which of the following years was the 'International Day of Happiness' established by UNGA?
(a) 2010 (b) 2012

- (c) 2014 (d) 2008

103. The ranking does not use which of the following factors to measure happiness in the citizens?
(a) Income
(b) Absence of corruption
(c) Freedom
(d) Public Trust in Government

104. Which of the following countries has been ranked number '1' in the index?
- (a) Finland (b) Norway
(c) Denmark (d) Sweden

105. India ranks at ____ position out of the 136 countries.
- (a) 121st (b) 119th
(c) 136th (d) 126th

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

101. (a) The International Day of Happiness is celebrated throughout the world on 20 March. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 June 2012.
102. (b) The International Day of Happiness is celebrated throughout the world on 20 March. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 June 2012. The International Day of Happiness aims to make people around the world realize the importance of happiness within their lives.

103. (d) The ranking uses six key factors to measure happiness — social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption.
104. (a) For the sixth year in a row, Finland has been crowned as the happiest nation, Denmark is at number two, followed by Iceland at number three.
105. (d) India ranks at 126th position out of 136 countries, making it one of the least happy countries in the world. In 2022, India ranked 136th position out of 146 countries. It even lags behind its neighbouring nations like Nepal, China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Passage (Q.106-Q.110): Medical services remained crippled in [1] on Wednesday after government doctors and faculty members in medical colleges went on a one-day strike in solidarity with private doctors agitating against the Right to Health Bill and demanded its rollback.

Emergency services have been exempted from the strike. Doctors boycotted the work in support of the movement, due to which, patients faced trouble in getting treatment in government as well as private institutes yesterday.

Doctors are protesting for more than a week to demand the withdrawal of the medical bill passed in the state assembly last Tuesday.

They are adamant that any discussion on the bill will only be held after the withdrawal of the bill. On the other hand, the government has given no sign of backing out from the bill.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/expained-why-rajasthan-doctors-are-protesting-against-right-to-health-bill-11680147490023.html>

106. Which of the following is replaced by [1] in the passage?
- (a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Rajasthan
(c) Uttar Pradesh (d) Tamil Nadu
107. The right to health is inherent to a life with dignity guaranteed by which of the following Article of the Indian Constitution?
- (a) Article 25 (b) Article 18
(c) Article 21 (d) Article 19
108. Government of India spent ____% of GDP on healthcare in FY23.
- (a) 5.6 (b) 10.1
(c) 8.2 (d) 2.1

109. In which of the following cases the Supreme Court had ruled that “every doctor whether at a government hospital or otherwise has the professional obligation to extend his services with due expertise for protecting life”?
- (a) Parmanand Katara case
(b) Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity case
(c) Ramji Karsan case
(d) Peerless General Finance case
110. World Health Day is observed on which of the following days?
- (a) September 7th (b) April 7th
(c) June 5th (d) March 1st

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>106. (b) Medical services remained crippled in Rajasthan on Wednesday after government doctors and faculty members in medical colleges went on a one-day strike in solidarity with private doctors agitating against the Right to Health Bill and demanded its rollback.</p> <p>107. (c) Article 21 of the Constitution of India guarantees a fundamental right to life & personal liberty. The right to health is inherent to a life with dignity. Articles 38, 39, 42, 43, & 47 put the obligation on the state in order to ensure the effective realization of the right to health.</p> <p>108. (d) Government of India spent 2.1% of GDP on healthcare in FY23. This is much lower than the</p> | <p>average health spending share of the GDP — at around 5.2% — of the Lower- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC).</p> <p>109. (a) In its landmark judgment in Parmanand Katara Vs Union of India (1989), Supreme Court had ruled that every doctor whether at a government hospital or otherwise has the professional obligation to extend his services with due expertise for protecting life.</p> <p>110. (b) World Health Day is a global health awareness day celebrated every year on 7 April, under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization, as well as other related organizations. In 1948, the WHO held the First World Health Assembly.</p> |
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Passage (Q.111-Q.115): The US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo is hopeful of resolving differences with India on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), a partnership framework of [1] countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The IPEF was launched by US President Joe Biden in May 2022 and comprises Australia, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, among others. These nations account for 40% of the world's GDP. The IPEF partners aim to contribute to cooperation, stability, prosperity, development, and peace within the region. The framework helps partners boost their economic activity and investment, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and benefit workers and consumers across the region. [2] is a key absentee from this group and the [2] foreign ministry has called it an initiative to "decouple [2] economically". <https://www.cnbtvi8.com/world/indo-pacific-economic-framework-us-hopeful-of-resolving-indias-concerns-this-year-16130381.htm>

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| <p>111. Which of the following had been replaced by [1] in the passage?
 (a) 10 (b) 9
 (c) 14 (d) 15</p> <p>112. Which of the following had been replaced by [2] in the passage?
 (a) India (b) China
 (c) Japan (d) New Zealand</p> <p>113. India is not a full member of this group due to differences over which of the following parameters?
 (a) Supply Chains (b) Anti-corruption</p> | <p>(c) Clean energy (d) Data and privacy</p> <p>114. Which of the following countries is not a member of the group as of 2022?
 (a) Laos (b) Brunei
 (c) Fiji (d) Philippines</p> <p>115. Who among the following is the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry of India?
 (a) Piyush Goyal
 (b) Subrahmanyam Jaishankar
 (c) Bhupendra Yadav
 (d) Jyotiraditya Scindia</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>111. (c) The US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo is hopeful of resolving differences with India on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), a partnership framework of 14 countries in the Indo-Pacific region.</p> | <p>112. (b) China is a key absentee from this group and the Chinese foreign ministry has called it an initiative to "decouple China economically".</p> <p>113. (d) India is not a full member of this group yet due to differences over data and privacy. India and</p> |
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the US are in agreement over three pillars of the IPEF which includes Supply chains, tax & anti-corruption and clean energy.

114. (a) Currently, India and 13 countries located in the Pacific Ocean are its members, Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam.

115. (a) Piyush Goyal is currently serving as the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry. He had in September 2022 said that India was in the process of firming up its digital framework and laws, particularly regarding privacy and data and therefore India, while continuing to engage with the trade track in the IPEF, will wait for the final contours to emerge.

Passage (Q.116-Q.120): India is considering imposing retaliatory tariffs on European Union exports in response to the bloc's proposed carbon tax that could disrupt over \$8 billion worth of Indian metal exports to the EU, two government officials aware of the development said.

Starting 1 October, iron, steel, and aluminium exports to European Union countries from across the world will face added scrutiny under the bloc's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), or carbon tax. Suppliers will have to report greenhouse gas emissions 'embedded' in their consignments before taxes are levied from 1 January 2026.

The proposal has triggered trade tensions with the rest of the world and particularly angered the developing world. In India it has raised concerns among metal producers, who fear it will create a new trade barrier for exports to Europe.

<https://www.livemint.com/economy/india-may-hit-back-at-eu-s-carbon-tax-1167933500441.html>

116. In which edition of the Conference of Parties, the consortium of countries which includes India had jointly opposed the Carbon Border Taxes?

(a) 26th (b) 27th
(c) 22nd (d) 29th

117. European Commission aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by which of the following years?

(a) 2045 (b) 2050
(c) 2055 (d) 2060

118. The EU is India's _____ largest trading partner.

(a) Second (b) First
(c) Third (d) Fourth

119. COP held in November 2022 was hosted by which of the following countries?

(a) Scotland (b) India
(c) Egypt (d) Israel

120. India has pledged to become a carbon neutral by which of the following years?

(a) 2030 (b) 2040
(c) 2060 (d) 2070

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

116. (b) Recently, a consortium of countries that includes India has jointly opposed the Carbon Border Taxes proposed by the European Union (EU) at 27th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

117. (b) European Commission's European Green Deal that endeavours to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. A carbon border tax is arguably an improvement from a national carbon tax. A national carbon tax is a fee that a government imposes on any company within the country that burns fossil fuels.

118. (c) The EU is India's third largest trading partner. By increasing the prices of Indian-made goods in the EU, this tax would make Indian goods less attractive for buyers and could shrink demand. The tax would create serious near-term challenges for companies with larger greenhouse gas footprint.

119. (c) COP27 was hosted by Egypt in November 2022 at Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

120. (d) India has promised to cut its emissions to net zero by 2070 - missing a key goal of the COP26 summit for countries to commit to reach that target by 2050.

Passage (Q.121-Q.125): Shaheed Diwas 2023 is being celebrated on [1] across the country to mark the sacrifices made by Indian freedom fighters such as Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru, who were hanged by the British authorities in the pre-Independence era.

While [1] is recognized as Martyrs' Day in India, the day which is actually nationally recognized as Shaheed Diwas is January 30, the day on which Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. It must be noted there are eight days in the entire year to mark several sacrifices made by Indian freedom fighters.

February 15 is recognized as Martyrs' Day in Bihar in memory of 34 demonstrators killed by police in Taranpur in 1932.

May 19 is recognized as Language Martyrs' Day in West Bengal to mark the deaths of 11 people killed during the Bengali Language Movement.

October 21 is observed across the country as Police Martyrs' Day to note the day that the CRPF patrol at the Indo-Tibetan Border was ambushed by Chinese forces during the border conflict.

November 17 is observed as Shaheed Diwas to mark the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, who was known as the "[2]" and played an important role in the freedom struggle.

November 19 is observed as Martyrs' Day as it is the birthday of Rani Laxmibai, who was the queen of Jhansi and led an entire army against the British during the early years of the invasion.

November 24 marks the death anniversary of the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was executed by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

<https://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report-shaheed-diwas-2023-why-is-martyrs-day-celebrated-8-times-in-india-know-dates-significance-bhagat-singh-3031801>

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| <p>121. Which of the following had been replaced by [1] in the above passage?</p> <p>(a) March 23 (b) February 21
(c) March 10 (d) April 6</p> | <p>(a) Lahore (b) Karachi
(c) Rawalpindi (d) Hyderabad</p> |
| <p>122. Which of the following had been replaced by [2] in the passage?</p> <p>(a) Iron Man of India (b) Tiger of Bengal
(c) Stallion of India (d) Lion of Punjab</p> | <p>124. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev wanted to revenge the death of which of the following freedom fighters by killing a British Officer?</p> <p>(a) Lala Lajpat Rai (b) Bal Gangadhar Tilak
(c) Bipin Chandra Pal (d) Gopal Krishna Gokhale</p> |
| <p>123. British government hanged the three freedom fighters, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev in which one of the following cities?</p> | <p>125. Bhagat Singh along with his comrades planned to kill which of the following British Officers?</p> <p>(a) John Saunders (b) James Scott
(c) Claude Auchinleck (d) Alan Brooke</p> |

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>121. (a) March 23 is celebrated as Shaheed Diwas to mark the day Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were hanged to death by the British government during their freedom struggle.</p> | <p>124. (a) It was on 30 October 1928 when Lala Lajpat Rai organised a nonviolent demonstration against Sir John Simon's visit to Lahore with the well-known slogan "Simon, go back." Although the demonstration was peaceful, Superintendent of Police James A Scott gave the command to lathi-charge the demonstrators, resulting in fatal injuries on Lala Lajpat Rai after which Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev decided to murder James Scott but they ended up killing another superintendent of police, John P. Saunders by mistake.</p> |
| <p>122. (d) November 17 is observed as Shaheed Diwas to mark the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, who was known as the "Lion of Punjab" and played an important role in the freedom struggle.</p> | |
| <p>123. (a) The history of Martyr's Day dates back to the year 1931 when the British Government hanged the three young freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev to death in Lahore jail.</p> | |

125. (b) The three brave leaders were hanged till death in Lahore for assassinating John Saunders in 1928 when they mistook him for James Scott, a British Police Superintendent. They took this step as an act of revenge against James Scott for

ordering a lathi charge that caused Lala Lajpat Rai's death. Indians will observe the 91st death anniversary of the three brave freedom fighters on 23rd March 2022.

Passage (Q.126-Q.130): Lily Thomas vs UOI is a landmark case in India that dealt with the issue of whether a convicted lawmaker could be disqualified from holding public office. The case was decided by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court in (i), and the judgment has had far-reaching implications for Indian politics. The case was brought before the Supreme Court by Lily Thomas, a social activist and lawyer, who argued that convicted lawmakers should be disqualified from holding public office. She contended that allowing convicted lawmakers to continue in office was a violation of the Indian Constitution, which requires that elected representatives be of good character and conduct. The case was brought against the Union of India (UOI), which argued that disqualifying convicted lawmakers would amount to a violation of their right to participate in the democratic process.

<https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1465956/>

126. What was the main argument of the Union of India in Lily Thomas vs UOI?

- (a) Convicted lawmakers should be disqualified from holding public office
 (b) Disqualifying convicted lawmakers would violate their right to participate in the democratic process
 (c) The Indian Constitution does not provide for disqualifying convicted lawmakers from holding public office
 (d) The Supreme Court does not have the authority to disqualify lawmakers from holding public office

127. In what year was the case of Lily Thomas vs UOI decided by the Supreme Court of India?

- (a) 2010 (b) 2012
 (c) 2013 (d) 2015

128. How has the judgment in Lily Thomas vs UOI impacted Indian politics?

- (a) It has led to the disqualification of several convicted lawmakers
 (b) It has resulted in the Indian Constitution being amended
 (c) It has led to the formation of a new political party
 (d) It has had no impact on Indian politics

129. How many judges were on the bench that decided the case of Lily Thomas vs UOI in the Supreme Court of India?

- (a) Three (b) Five
 (c) Seven (d) Nine

130. Who was the first Chief Justice of India?

- (a) M. Hidayatullah (b) H. J. Kania
 (c) K. N. Wanchoo (d) Harilal Jekisundas Kania

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

126. (b) The Union of India (UOI) argued in the case of Lily Thomas vs UOI that disqualifying convicted lawmakers would violate their right to participate in the democratic process. The UOI contended that lawmakers who had been convicted but had not been sentenced to imprisonment for more than two years should be allowed to continue in office. However, the Supreme Court held that convicted lawmakers should be disqualified from holding public office

as it would be detrimental to the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

127. (c) The case of Lily Thomas vs UOI was decided by the Supreme Court of India in 2013. The case had far-reaching implications for Indian politics, as it established the principle that convicted lawmakers should be disqualified from holding public office.

128. (a) The judgment in Lily Thomas vs UOI has had a significant impact on Indian politics. It has led

to the disqualification of several convicted lawmakers, including Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies. The judgment has also helped to promote greater accountability and transparency in the political process. Option B, C, and D are incorrect as the Indian Constitution has not been amended, no new political party was formed, and the judgment had a significant impact on Indian politics.

129. (b) The case of Lily Thomas vs UOI was decided by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India. The bench included Justices R.M. Lodha, A.K. Patnaik, S.J. Mukhopadhyaya, Dipak Misra, and Ibrahim Kalifulla.
130. (d) Harilal Jekisundas Kania was the first Chief Justice of India. He served as Chief Justice from 1950 to 1951. The office of Chief Justice of India is the highest judicial office in the country and the head of the Indian judiciary.

Passage (Q.131-Q.135): Patent monopoly is a legal right granted to inventors to prevent others from making, using, or selling their invention for a certain period of time. It is granted by the government to encourage innovation and creativity. However, this right can also be misused by companies to gain a monopoly in the market and charge exorbitant prices for essential medicines. One such case is that of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), a pharmaceutical company that holds the patent monopoly for a life-saving drug called Daraprim. Daraprim is used to treat a parasitic infection called toxoplasmosis, which can be fatal for people with weak immune systems. J&J acquired the patent monopoly for Daraprim in (i), and since then, the price of the drug has increased by more than (ii). This price increase has had a devastating impact on patients who rely on Daraprim to survive. Many patients have been forced to ration their medication or go without it altogether due to the high cost.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/08/06/743394396/johnson-johnson-to-pay-oklahoma-572-million-for-role-in-opioid-crisis>

131. By how much did the price of Daraprim increase after Johnson & Johnson acquired the patent monopoly for the drug?
- (a) 500% (b) 1,000%
(c) 2,500% (d) 5,000%
132. What is the name of the parasitic infection that Daraprim is used to treat?
- (a) Malaria (b) Tuberculosis
(c) Toxoplasmosis (d) Dengue fever
133. In what year did Johnson & Johnson acquire the patent monopoly for Daraprim?
- (a) 2010 (b) 2012
(c) 2014 (d) 2015
134. What is one possible solution to prevent companies from abusing their patent monopoly power?
- (a) Increasing the duration of patent monopoly
(b) Allowing companies to charge exorbitant prices for essential medicines
(c) Introducing compulsory licensing to allow other companies to produce generic versions of the drug

- (d) Limiting access to essential medicines to a select few

135. Consider the following statements regarding the concept of patent monopoly:
- Statement 1: Patent monopoly is a legal right granted to inventors to prevent others from making, using, or selling their invention for an indefinite period of time.
- Statement 2: Pharmaceutical companies can abuse their patent monopoly power to charge exorbitant prices for essential medicines.
- Statement 3: Johnson & Johnson holds the patent monopoly for a drug used to treat a parasitic infection called toxoplasmosis.
- Statement 4: Compulsory licensing is a possible solution to prevent companies from abusing their patent monopoly power.
- (a) Only statements 1 and 3 are true
(b) Only statements 2 and 4 are true
(c) Only statements 2, 3, and 4 are true
(d) All statements are true


ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>131. (d) After Johnson & Johnson acquired the patent monopoly for Daraprim in 2015, the price of the drug increased by more than 5,000%. This price increase had a devastating impact on patients who rely on Daraprim to survive.</p> <p>132. (c) Daraprim is used to treat a parasitic infection called toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis is caused by a parasite called Toxoplasma gondii and can be fatal for people with weak immune systems. Daraprim is a life-saving drug for patients with toxoplasmosis, but its high price has made it unaffordable for many patients.</p> <p>133. (d) Johnson & Johnson acquired the patent monopoly for Daraprim in 2015. Since then, the price of the drug has increased by more than 5,000%, making it unaffordable for many patients.</p> <p>134. (c) Introducing compulsory licensing is one possible solution to prevent companies from abusing their patent monopoly power. Compulsory licensing would allow other companies to produce generic versions of the drug at a lower cost, increasing competition in the market and</p> | <p>reducing the price of essential medicines. This would make essential medicines more affordable and accessible to all, especially for patients who need them to survive.</p> <p>135. (b) Statement 1 is false - patent monopoly is a legal right granted to inventors to prevent others from making, using, or selling their invention for a limited period of time, not an indefinite period of time. Statement 2 is true - pharmaceutical companies can abuse their patent monopoly power to charge exorbitant prices for essential medicines, as seen in the case of Johnson & Johnson and Daraprim. Statement 3 is true - Johnson & Johnson holds the patent monopoly for Daraprim, a drug used to treat a parasitic infection called toxoplasmosis. Statement 4 is true - compulsory licensing is a possible solution to prevent companies from abusing their patent monopoly power, as it would allow other companies to produce generic versions of the drug at a lower cost, increasing competition in the market and reducing the price of essential medicines.</p> |
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Passage (Q.136-Q.140): PM-PVTG stands for Prime Minister's Special Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana, which is a special scheme launched by the Government of India for the holistic development of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the country. The PVTGs are a group of tribal communities that are categorized as the most marginalized and vulnerable due to their low literacy rates, poor access to healthcare and basic amenities, and lack of economic opportunities. The PM-PVTG scheme has been launched to address the specific needs and challenges faced by the PVTGs and to ensure their overall development. The scheme focuses on four key areas: education, health, livelihood, and basic amenities. Under the scheme, various initiatives are being taken to improve the education and healthcare outcomes of the PVTGs, to provide them with better livelihood opportunities, and to ensure that they have access to basic amenities such as safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and electricity.

<https://tribal.nic.in/DivisionsFiles/pmvky.htm>

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| <p>136. Under which Union Budget was the Pradhan Mantri PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) Development Mission announced?</p> <p>(a) 2021-22 (b) 2023-24
(c) 2020-21 (d) 2022-23</p> <p>137. What is the aim of the Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) established under the PM-PVTG scheme?</p> <p>(a) To provide quality education to children from urban areas
(b) To provide vocational training to youth in rural areas</p> | <p>(c) To provide quality education to PVTG children and ensure access to educational opportunities on par with the mainstream population
(d) To provide financial incentives to encourage PVTG children to pursue higher education</p> <p>138. The PVTGs Mission will be launched as part of which Saptarishi priority?</p> <p>(a) Empowering the Youth
(b) Strengthening Infrastructure
(c) Reaching The Last Mile
(d) Enhancing Human Capital</p> |
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| <p>139. What is the aim of the health camps and mobile medical units set up under the PM-PVTG scheme?</p> <p>(a) To provide healthcare services to the urban population</p> <p>(b) To provide specialized medical services to the PVTGs</p> <p>(c) To improve the health outcomes of the PVTGs and ensure that they have access to basic healthcare facilities</p> <p>(d) To provide financial incentives to PVTGs to adopt healthy lifestyle practices</p> | <p>140. Which of the following initiatives is NOT included in the PM-PVTG scheme?</p> <p>(a) Setting up Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)</p> <p>(b) Promoting traditional crafts among the PVTGs</p> <p>(c) Setting up health camps and mobile medical units</p> <p>(d) Providing financial incentives for industrial development in PVTG areas</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>136. (b) The Pradhan Mantri PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) Development Mission was announced as part of the Union Budget 2023-24.</p> <p>137. (c) The Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) established under the PM-PVTG scheme are aimed at providing quality education to PVTG children and ensuring that they have access to educational opportunities that are on par with the mainstream population. The scheme also includes the provision of scholarships and other financial incentives to encourage PVTG children to pursue higher education.</p> <p>138. (c) The PVTGs Mission will be launched as part of 'Reaching The Last Mile', one of the seven Saptarishi priorities enlisted in the Union Budget 2023-24.</p> <p>139. (c) The health camps and mobile medical units set up under the PM-PVTG scheme are aimed at</p> | <p>improving the health outcomes of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and ensuring that they have access to basic healthcare facilities. These initiatives are crucial to addressing the poor health outcomes of the PVTGs, who often lack access to basic healthcare services.</p> <p>140. (d) The PM-PVTG scheme includes initiatives such as setting up Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), promoting traditional crafts among the PVTGs, and setting up health camps and mobile medical units to improve the education, livelihood, and health outcomes of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). However, providing financial incentives for industrial development in PVTG areas is not a part of the scheme.</p> |
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Passage (Q.141-Q.145): The Online Safety Bill is a proposed legislation in the United Kingdom aimed at regulating online platforms and social media companies to ensure the safety of users online. The bill was introduced in the Queen's Speech in May 2021 and is expected to be debated in Parliament later this year. The Online Safety Bill seeks to establish a new regulatory framework to address online harms such as cyberbullying, hate speech, and disinformation.

The regulator will be responsible for developing a code of practice for online safety, setting out the standards that companies must meet to ensure the safety of their users. Under the proposed legislation, online platforms and social media companies will be required to remove illegal content quickly and efficiently, and to take proactive measures to prevent harm. Companies will also be required to appoint a senior executive responsible for online safety, and to publish annual transparency reports to demonstrate their compliance with the new regulations.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-bill-2021-factsheet/online-safety-bill-2021-factsheet>

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| <p>141. Who will be responsible for enforcing the rules for online platforms and social media companies under the proposed Online Safety Bill in the United Kingdom?</p> | <p>(a) The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport</p> <p>(b) The Information Commissioner's Office</p> <p>(c) The Office for Communications Regulation (Ofcom)</p> |
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- (d) The Advertising Standards Authority
142. What does End-to-End Encryption (E2EE) help to ensure in digital communication?
- Higher data storage
 - Increased network speed
 - Data privacy and security
 - Enhanced user interface
143. What will be the role of online platforms and social media companies under the proposed Online Safety Bill in the United Kingdom?
- They will be required to comply with a code of practice for online safety
 - They will be exempt from compliance with the new regulations
 - They will be required to report online harms to the police
 - They will be allowed to regulate their own content without any oversight
144. What does Clause 110 of the OSB allow the regulator to do?
- Control advertising on online platforms
 - Issue notices to internet service providers to identify and take down terrorism and CSEA content
 - Limit user screen time on messaging apps
 - Promote political campaigns
145. According to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, what is mandatory for messaging platforms with more than five million users in India?
- Limiting message forwarding
 - Enabling identification of the first originator
 - Scanning and flagging all encrypted content
 - Implementing user verification

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

141. (c) The proposed Online Safety Bill in the United Kingdom seeks to establish a new regulatory framework to address online harms and ensure the safety of users online. Under the proposed legislation, the Office for Communications Regulation (Ofcom) will be responsible for enforcing the rules for online platforms and social media companies.
142. (c) End-to-End Encryption (E2EE) is a method of secure communication that ensures data privacy and security by encrypting the data in a way that only the sender and the intended recipient can access the content.
143. (a) Under the proposed Online Safety Bill in the United Kingdom, online platforms and social media companies will be required to comply with a code of practice for online safety that sets out the standards they must meet to ensure the safety of their users. Compliance with the new regulations will be mandatory, and companies that fail to comply could face significant fines.
144. (b) Clause 110 of the Online Safety Bill empowers the regulator to issue notices to most internet service providers, including private messaging apps, to identify and take down terrorism and Child Sex Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) content.
145. (b) The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, require messaging platforms with more than five million users in India to enable the identification of the first originator of a message, or what is commonly called traceability.

Passage (Q.146-Q.150): The New START treaty is a nuclear arms reduction treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010. The treaty limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to (I) for each country, as well as the number of deployed and non-deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers. The treaty is seen as a major step forward in the effort to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world and to maintain strategic stability between the United States and Russia. Under the terms of the New START treaty, each country is required to provide regular updates on their nuclear arsenals, including the number of deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads, launchers, and delivery systems. The treaty also includes a verification regime that allows for on-site inspections and data exchanges to ensure compliance.



The New START treaty is considered a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, and has been praised by many as a critical step towards reducing the risk of nuclear war. However, the treaty has also faced criticism from some quarters, with concerns raised about the lack of progress towards further reductions in nuclear arsenals, and the potential impact of emerging technologies such as hypersonic weapons..

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| <p>146. What is the maximum number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads allowed under the New START treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010?</p> <p>(a) 1,000 (b) 1,250
(c) 1,550 (d) 2,000</p> <p>147. What is the verification regime included in the New START treaty?</p> <p>(a) A requirement for each country to provide regular updates on their nuclear arsenals
(b) On-site inspections and data exchanges to ensure compliance with the treaty
(c) A commitment to further reductions in nuclear arsenals
(d) A pledge to not use nuclear weapons in a first strike scenario</p> <p>148. What types of delivery systems are included in the limits set out in the New START treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010?</p> | <p>(a) Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)
(b) Fighter jets and bombers
(c) Cruise missiles and drones
(d) Anti-ballistic missile systems and missile defense systems</p> <p>149. What is the expiration date of the extension of the New START treaty negotiated between the United States and Russia in 2021?</p> <p>(a) 2026 (b) 2030
(c) 2035 (d) 2040</p> <p>150. What was the previous treaty that the New START treaty replaced in 2010?</p> <p>(a) The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty
(b) The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)
(c) The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)
(d) The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM)</p> |
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ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

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| <p>146. (c) The New START treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010 limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 for each country.</p> <p>147. (b) The New START treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010 includes a verification regime that allows for on-site inspections and data exchanges to ensure compliance with the treaty. This verification regime is essential to ensuring that both countries are adhering to the limits on deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems set out in the treaty.</p> <p>148. (a) The New START treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010 includes limits on the number of deployed and non-deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) for each country. These delivery systems are</p> | <p>considered the most powerful and destructive nuclear weapons in each country's arsenal.</p> <p>149. (a) The New START treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010 was due to expire in February 2021, but was extended for a further five years following negotiations between the two countries. The extension of the treaty means that it will now expire in 2026, providing additional time for both countries to work towards further reductions in nuclear weapons and delivery systems.</p> <p>150. (b) The New START treaty signed between the United States and Russia in 2010 replaced the previous Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) which expired in 2009. The START treaty was signed in 1991 and was a key arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, aimed at reducing the number of deployed nuclear warheads and delivery systems.</p> |
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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS FOR OLETs

NATIONAL

Visakhapatnam Gears Up To Host Global Investors Summit On March 3, 4.

- Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh is all set to host the Global Investors Summit (GIS) 2023 on March 3 and 4. The Summit is scheduled to be held at the Andhra University Engineering ground in Visakhapatnam. The two-day summit is expected to host over 20 business sessions and several industrial dignitaries are to be present at the summit. The GIS will focus on 13 sectors which will include aerospace, defense, automobile, food processing, electronics, IT, healthcare and medical equipment, textile, infrastructure, tourism, renewable energy, skill development, etc.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate the eighth edition of the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will join the inaugural session as the Chief Guest. The three-day Raisina Dialogue is India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-strategy. It is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with Observer Research Foundation. The theme of the 2023 Edition is "Provocation, Uncertainty, Turbulence: Lighthouse in the Tempest."

PM Narendra Modi Announces Establishment Of 'Startup Bridge' To Boost Strategic Partnership Between India & Italy

- In a bid to boost their bilateral ties to a strategic partnership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday announced the establishment of a 'startup bridge' between India and Italy.
- Addressing the media after a meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, PM Modi said new opportunities were opening up in India in the sector of co-production and co-development, such as renewable energy, green hydrogen, semiconductors, telecom and space, which can be beneficial for both the countries.

NTPC COMMISSIONS INDIA'S FIRST AIR COOLED CONDENSER AT NORTH KARANPURA SUPER CRITICAL PLANT IN JHARKHAND

- The project has been envisaged with Air Cooled Condenser (ACC) which has almost 1/3rd water footprint as compared to a conventional Water Cooled Condenser (WCC). This would result in water saving of around 30.5 mcm annually thus fulfilling the needs of around 1.5 million people in the region annually.
- NTPC has already taken a series of measures across its plant locations on sound water management. NTPC will further imbibe the 3 R's (reduce, reuse, recycle) for water conservation and management while carrying out its core business activity of power generation. NTPC Ltd, is a signatory to the prestigious UN Global Compact's CEO Water Mandate.

In a first, Uttarakhand to set up 'mother milk bank'

- There's hope for children whose mother dies during childbirth: the Uttarakhand health department plans to set up a 'mother milk bank,' the first such facility in the state. "The facility can bring nutritional elements of mother's milk to the newborn to a great extent," Health Minister Dr Dhan Singh Rawat said

Visakhapatnam Gears Up To Host Global Investors Summit On March 3, 4.

- Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh is all set to host the Global Investors Summit (GIS) 2023 on March 3 and 4. The Summit is scheduled to be held at the Andhra University Engineering ground in Visakhapatnam. The two-day summit is expected to host over 20 business sessions and several industrial dignitaries are to be present at the summit. The GIS will focus on 13 sectors which will include aerospace, defense, automobile, food processing, electronics, IT, healthcare and medical equipment, textile, infrastructure, tourism, renewable energy, skill development, etc.

Mauganj To Become Madhya Pradesh's 53rd District, Says CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has announced the creation of a new Mauganj district out of the existing Rewa district. The new Mauganj district will be created with inclusion of four tehsils, including three

existing tehsils — Mauganj, Hanumana and Naigarhi, while Dev Talab will be a new tehsil. With this, Madhya Pradesh now will have 53 districts by August 15.

PM Narendra Modi lauds the initiative of women of the self-help group from Khadki village of Burhanpur, MP

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has praised the efforts of women of the self-help group from Khadki village of Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh to ensure tap connection to every house. Shri Modi called it an example for whole country.

1st Labour 20 (L20) meeting is scheduled to be held in Amritsar, Punjab,

- The 1st Labour 20 (L20) meeting is scheduled to be held in Amritsar, Punjab, from 19 th to 20th March 2023. L20 is one of the engagement groups under G20. It comprises leaders and representatives of trade union centers of G20 countries who provide analyses and policy recommendations aimed at addressing labor-related issues. Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) is the lead national trade union centre for organising the L20 inception meeting under India G20 presidency. Apart from the meeting, the participants of L20 meet would be taken to various excursion sites to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Amritsar.

Indian Navy carries out successful precision strike by ship launched BrahMos missile in Arabian Sea

- Indian Navy today carried out a successful precision strike by ship launched BrahMos missile in the Arabian Sea. It was done with the indigenous seeker and booster designed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

WalkforHealth”, a mega walkathon by Health Ministry for women’s health

- Committed for a healthier self, New Delhi celebrated a Mega walkathon event “WalkforHealth” on 5th March 2023. It was organised by the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to mark the occasion of International Women’s day on 8th March 2023. The rally was conducted from Vijay Chowk to Nirman Bhawan in New Delhi in order to promote physical and mental well-being. More than 500 participants including, doctors, nurses and staff of Central Government hospitals namely, Safdarjung Hospital, Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital and Lady Hardinge Medical College participated in the Walkathon

PM Narendra Modi to attend swearing in ceremony of Meghalaya & Nagaland Chief Ministers on Tuesday and that of Tripura on Wednesday

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend swearing-in ceremony of Meghalaya and Nagaland Chief Ministers on Tuesday and that of Tripura on Wednesday. The swearing-in ceremony of New Meghalaya government will be held at 11 am on Tuesday in Shillong, while that of Nagaland government at 1:45 pm in Kohima the same day. The new government of Tripura will be administered the oath in Agartala at 11 am. on Wednesday.
- Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party(NDPP) Leader Neiphiu Rio and Assam Chief Minister and NEDA Convenor, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma will meet the BJP central leaders in New Delhi today, ahead of the formation of new government in Nagaland.

Madhya Pradesh government launches Ladli Bahna scheme to make women financially independent

- The Madhya Pradesh government has launched a unique scheme to make women financially independent, In this scheme, named Ladli Bahna, each woman will be given Rs 1000 per month.
- Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched the ambitious Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana through remote control at a function on his birthday

Union Minister Parshottam Rupala inaugurates Camel Product Processing Utilisation & Training Wing at ICAR-National Research Centre in Bikaner

- Yesterday, Parshottam Rupala, the Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying of India inaugurated the ‘Camel Product Processing Utilization & Training Wing’ at the ICAR Centre, Bikaner, Rajasthan. The Government of India established a project directorate on Camel at Bikaner (India) on 5th July, 1984 under aegis of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), considering the importance of camel in the socio-economic development of arid and semi-arid zones, which got upgraded on September 20, 1995 to National Research Centre on Camel (NRCC).

- ICAR is a Premier Research Centre and an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri to launch Hydrogen-based advanced FCEV

- Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri will launch Hydrogen-based advanced Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) in New Delhi today. - March 6, 2023
- The launch of the bus is an effort of the central government as part of its commitment toward cleaner energy and low-carbon pathways. The project is similar to the one launched earlier at Kevadia in Gujarat.

First edition of Naval Commanders' Conference 2023 begins onboard INS Vikrant

- The first edition of the Naval Commanders' Conference 2023 began onboard India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, The conference serves as a platform for Naval Commanders to discuss important security issues at the military-strategic level as well as to interact with senior government functionaries through an institutionalised forum.
- The first phase of the Commanders' Conference is being held at sea, and for the first-time, onboard INS Vikrant. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressed the Naval Commanders onboard INS Vikrant on the opening day

India- France Joint Military Exercise FRINJEX-23 to begin at Thiruvananthapuram

- The maiden Joint Military Exercise FRINJEX-23 between Indian Army and French Army will be conducted at Pangode Military Station, Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala on March 7 – 8. For the first time, both the armies are engaging in this format with each contingent comprising a Company Group each from the Thiruvananthapuram-based Indian Army troops and French 6th Light Armoured Brigade. The exercise is aimed at enhancing interoperability, coordination and cooperation between both forces at tactical level.

Indian Navy Successfully Test-Fires Indigenous Medium Range Missile From INS Visakhapatnam

- The Indian Navy on Tuesday successfully carried out a test-firing of a Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) from frontline warship INS Visakhapatnam, the defence force tweeted on Tuesday March 7, As per the officials, the test firing has now validated the capability to engage the weapon as an anti-ship missile, it said.

Conrad K Sangma sworn-in as Chief Minister of Meghalaya

- In Meghalaya, Conrad K Sangma has been sworn-in as Chief Minister of the state, for the second consecutive term, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP senior leaders. Meghalaya Governor Chagu Chauhan has administered the oath of office and secrecy at a grand ceremony held at Shillong this morning

Dr Manik Saha to be sworn-in as CM of Tripura today; PM Modi and HM Amit Shah to attend the ceremony

- In Tripura, all arrangements are put in place for the swearing-in ceremony of senior BJP leader Dr. Manik Saha as the new chief minister of the state. Dr. Saha will be administered oath of office by Governor Satyadeo Narayan Arya. The second term of the BJP-led coalition government in Tripura will begin from today (8th March) with the swearing-in ceremony of Dr. Manik Saha as the Chief minister. Apart from Dr. Saha, a number of council of ministers are also likely to be sworn-in.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launches Swachhotsav under Swachh Bharat Mission Urban 2.

- In the run up to the Women's Day on Wednesday, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has launched Swachhotsav, 3-week women-led swachhata campaign, under the Swachh Bharat Mission Urban 2.0. The campaign aims to recognize and celebrate the transition from women in sanitation to women-led sanitation. A series of events and activities will be organized across cities to celebrate women from all walks of life, who will provide leadership in making the mission of garbage free cities (GFC) a success.

Defence Ministry inks contract with HAL to procure 6 Dornier aircraft

- The defence ministry on Friday signed a ₹667-crore contract with state-run plane maker Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for six Dornier-228 aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF) to boost its operational capabilities. "The aircraft is ideally suited for short haul operations from semi-prepared/short runways of the Northeast and island chains of India. The addition of the six aircraft will further bolster the operational capability of the IAF in the remote areas," it said.

Maharashtra will introduce 4th women's policy

- Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadanvis on Wednesday informed the Legislative Council that the state will introduce the fourth women's policy to give more opportunities to women by considering the issues of women from all groups. On the occasion of International Women's Day, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Council Neelam Gorhe tabled a proposal to provide equal and dignified positions to women in all sectors. While replying to the proposal, Mr Fadanvis said that apart from education, and employment, the women's policy will consider other important aspects, including economic empowerment and gender equality. He also announced that the government will introduce a rehabilitation scheme for those above 18 years old girls from the orphanage.

Central Railway achieves 100 % electrification of broad gauge network

- The Central Railway has achieved 100 per cent electrification of its broad gauge network of 3,825 kilometers, which was resulting in an annual reduction of 5.204 lakh tonnes of carbon footprints. In a release, the CSMT-headquartered zonal railway said the 52-kilometre Ausa Road-Latur Road stretch in Solapur division was the last non-electrified section and its electrification was completed on the 23rd of February this year. This move helps in reducing carbon footprints of 5.204 lakh tonnes every year as well as savings of 1670 crore rupees. It will reduce fuel bills and help earn carbon credit.

Two-day G20 flower festival begins in New Delhi

- A two-day G20 Flower Festival is being organised at Delhi's Connaught Place from today, March 11. It is aimed at highlighting the vibrancy of G20 members and guest countries. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav inaugurated the festival today which is being organised by the New Delhi Municipal Council at Central Park. G20 countries including Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands are participating in it. Flower plants of different colours and varieties are being displayed in different forms and installations to showcase the diversity of the Indian subcontinent. The festival is also showcasing the painting and photographs of flowers of G20 member countries and guest countries. The timing of the festival is from 10 AM to 7 PM and entry is free for the general public. The musical and cultural programmes are also planned at the site of the event.

PM Modi Inaugurates Bengaluru-Mysuru Highway

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his yet another visit to Karnataka on Sunday inaugurated the 10-lane Bengaluru-Mysuru Highway at Mandya. Besides inaugurating, the PM laid foundation stones for several key road projects too on Sunday at Mandya in Karnataka.
- The 118-km long Bengaluru-Mysuru road project has been developed at a total cost of around Rs 8,480 crores. It will reduce the travel time between Bengaluru and Mysuru from around 3 hours to about 75 minutes and will act as a catalyst for socio-economic development in the region,
- He also laid the foundation stone for Mysuru-Kushalnagar 4-lane highway. Spread over 92 kilometres, the project will be developed at a cost of around Rs 4,130 crores and will help halve the travel time from about 5 to only 2.5 hours.

Divya Kala Mela showcasing products & craftsmanship of Divyang entrepreneurs to open at Bhopal

- Divya Kala Mela is being organised from 12 March, to showcase the products and craftsmanship of Divyang entrepreneurs and artisans from across the country. Governor Mangubhai Patel and Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr. Virender Kumar and Minister of State Kumari Pratima Bhowmick will inaugurate the fair,
- About 150 Divyang artisans, artists and entrepreneurs from 21 states and union territories are participating in the Divya Kala Mela. Home decor, lifestyle, clothing, stationery, eco-friendly products, packaged food, toys, gifts, personal accessories, jewelry, bags, organic products, etc. will be available at the fair. There will also be cultural programs by Divyang and other artistes during the Mela. For the first time after Delhi and Mumbai, Divya Kala Mela is being organized in Madhya Pradesh.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates world's longest railway platform in Hubballi-Dharwad

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday : 12 March inaugurated several development projects in Karnataka including the longest railway platform in the world in Hubballi-Dharwad. With the inauguration of the Hubballi railway platform, the city has registered its name in the Guinness Book of World Records for having the longest



railway platform in the World at Shree Siddharoodha Swamiji station. The 1,507-metre-long platform has been built at a cost of about ₹20 crore

- The Hubballi station is an important junction in Karnataka and a major hub of trade and commerce. It connects the railway lines towards Bengaluru (Davanagere side), Hosapete (Gadag side), and Vasco-Da-Gama/Belagavi (Londa side).

100 cities to bend-unbend for countdown to 9th International Day of Yoga

- The Ministry of Ayush along with Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY) is organizing Yoga Mahotsav 2023 from 13th to 14th March 2023 at Delhi's Talkatora Stadium. There will also be workshops on 15th March 2023 at MDNIY. Union Minister of Ayush Sarbananda Sonowal will inaugurate the Yoga Mahotsav 2023 and it will commemorate 100 days countdown to the 9th edition of International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2023.
- following the footprints, this year, Yoga Mahotsav-2023 is being organized to give a wider promotion and publicity to various dimensions of yoga and its utility. Mass yoga demonstrations/sessions will take place in 100 places in Delhi NCR to celebrate the countdown and it will commence 100 Days, 100 cities, and 100 organizations activities across the nation.

Surekha Yadav, Asia's 1st woman loco pilot who now becomes first female to operate Vande Bharat

- Asia's first woman loco pilot Surekha Yadav has added another feather to her cap as she became the first female to operate the newly-introduced semi-high speed Vande Bharat Express train, She piloted the semi-high speed train between Solapur station and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in Mumbai on Monday.
- The train departed Solapur station at right time on March 13 and reached CSMT five minutes before the scheduled arrival, a Central Railway release said, adding that on completion of a more than 450-km long journey, Yadav was felicitated at platform number 8 at CSMT

Exercise La Perouse between navies of India, US, Japan, France, UK and Australia begins

- The two-day multi-lateral maritime exercise 'La Pérouse', involving the participation of personnel, ships and integral helicopters of Royal Australian Navy, French Navy, Indian Navy, Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, Royal Navy and the United States Navy, kick-started in the Indian Ocean Region on March 13. "The third edition of the multilateral exercise La Perouse is scheduled to be conducted in the Indian Ocean Region from 13 to 14 March 2023," the Ministry of Defence said in a press release.
- The biennial exercise La Perouse is conducted by the French Navy and aims to enhance maritime domain awareness and optimise maritime coordination amongst the participating navies in the Indo-Pacific region, the release stated.

Nitin Gadkari unveiled first methanol run buses in Bengaluru

- The first methanol-powered buses in Bengaluru unveiled by Union Minister for Road and Transport, Nitin Gadkari. The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL), NITI Aayog, Indian Oil Company (IOC), and Ashok Leyland are working together to carry out the initiative, which aims to lower the level of pollutants. Methanol can be produced through the reaction of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen, which are also known as syngas. The syngas can be produced from various sources such as natural gas, coal, or biomass.

DRDO successfully conducts flight test of indigenous PTO,Shaft on LCA Tejas

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted a maiden flight-test of the Power Take off (PTO) Shaft on Light Combat Aircraft (LCA Tejas) Limited Series Production (LSP) -3 aircraft in Bengaluru. The PTO shaft is indigenously designed and developed by the Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (CVRDE), Chennai Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The PTO shaft was designed with a unique innovative patented 'Frequency Spanning Technique' which enables it to negotiate different operating engine speeds. The lightweight high speed, lubrication free PTO shaft transmits higher power between the aircraft engine gear box and Aircraft Mounted Accessory Gear Box while accommodating misalignments that arise in the drive line.

NMDC celebrates International Year of Millets at Business Women Expo 2023

- At the forefront of popularizing Millets, NMDC distributed the Superfood at the Business Women Expo 2023 in Hyderabad. In the backdrop of the International Year of Millets 2023, NMDC inspired women entrepreneurs to build Millet businesses and contribute to the food security of the nation. On behalf of the company, Shri K Praveen

Kumar, ED (Personnel and Law) and Shri K Mohan, CGM (Personnel) distributed the Millets and interacted with the participants on its benefits for a healthier future

- The United Nations (UN) General Assembly at its 75th session declared 2023 the International Year of Millets.

India 8th most polluted country in world, Swiss firm IQAir Report.

- The Swiss firm IQAir released the 'World Air Quality' report which says that India is the world's eighth most polluted country in 2022, dropping from the fifth spot the previous year. The PM_{2.5} level of most polluted Indian cities stands at 53.3, according to the data. The two Indian cities in the ranking of the world's most polluted city are---Bhiwadi, on Delhi's outskirts, which had pollution levels at 92.7, and Delhi followed close behind at 92.6.
- The report said India and Pakistan experienced the worst air quality in the Central and South Asian region, where nearly 60% of the population lives in areas where the concentration of PM_{2.5} particles is at least seven times higher than WHO's recommended levels.

13th edition of India-Singapore Bilateral Armour exercise 'Bold kurukshetra' held in Jodhpur

- The Singapore Army and Indian Army participated in the 13th edition of Exercise Bold Kurukshetra, a bilateral armour exercise from 06-13 March 2023 at Jodhpur Military Station, India.
- For the first time in the exercise series, both armies participated in a command post Exercise, which involved Battalion and Brigade level planning elements and computer wargaming. Hosted by the Indian Army, the exercise involved soldiers from the 42nd Battalion, Singapore Armoured Regiment and an Armoured Brigade of Indian Army.
- The ten-day long joint training that commenced on 05th March fostered common understanding of mechanised warfare in emerging threats and evolving technologies, developing inter-operability through a computer simulation-based Wargame using joint operational and tactical procedures controlled through a joint command post. Both contingents not only learnt about each other's operating drills and procedure, but also exchanged ideas and best practices being followed in a modern combat zone

Indian Navy To Participate In US Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise Sea Dragon 23

- The Indian Navy's P8I aircraft will be participating in the US-led anti-submarine warfare exercise (ASW), called the 'Sea Dragon', from March 15-30. The exercise will see more complex drills compared to the previous editions. The P8I aircraft of the Indian Navy arrived at Guam, US on March 14. Along with this aircraft, the multilateral ASW will also witness participation from P8A of the US Navy, P1 from the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, CP 140 from the Royal Canadian Air Force and P3C from the Republic of Korea Navy (RoKN).
- This year, the 'Sea Dragon 23' exercise will test the capabilities of participating aircraft in tracking simulated and live underwater targets and simultaneously share mutual expertise, the Indian Navy

AAHAR 2023: Asia's biggest International Food and Hospitality Fair begins in Delhi

- Aahar 2023 organized with the support of the Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), and other bodies, will focus on unveiling the potential of the hospitality sector and exhibiting technologies, products and services to domestic and international buyers. Aahar is India's largest four-day culinary show where hoteliers and restaurateurs, caterers and distributors come to source the best in culinary, hospitality and equipment and also gauge the market trends.

Bengaluru honoured with 2023 Partnership for healthy cities award for Tobacco control efforts

- Bengaluru is among five global cities that have been recognised for achievements in preventing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and injuries, with the Indian tech city's efforts in tobacco control winning a \$150,000 award by a leading global initiative supported by the WHO.
- Bengaluru was honoured with the 2023 Partnership for Healthy Cities Award, along with Montevideo in Uruguay; Mexico City, Mexico; Vancouver, Canada and Athens, Greece, at the inaugural Partnership for Healthy Cities Summit held in London, a statement by the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. The cities were recognised for positively impacting the health of their population and making sustainable and lasting strides toward NCD and injury prevention that can be replicated in other jurisdictions.

Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport adjudged best airport in South Asia: Skytrax

- Delhi airport has been adjudged the best airport in India and South Asia, according to international air transport rating organisation Skytrax. The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in the national capital has also moved up to the 36th position this year from 37th in 2022, according to a release.
- The Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), a GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd-led consortium, is operating IGIA, which is also the country's largest airport. A release on Thursday said Delhi airport is the only Indian airport to feature on the prestigious list of top 50 airports across the world since 2020. Regionally, it has topped the list of best airports in South Asia as per Skytrax.

After BSF, ex-Agniveers will now get 10% reservation in CISF job

- Former Agniveers will now get a 10% reservation in the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) job vacancies, the Union Home Ministry made the announcement after a week it notified a similar quote for them in BSF. After amending the rules under the CISF Act, 1968 (50 of 1968), the ministry also announced relaxation in the upper age limit depending on whether they are part of the first batch or subsequent batches of Agniveers.
- The upper age limit shall be relaxable up to five years for candidates of the first batch of former Agniveers and up to three years for candidates of other batches, the ministry said, adding that ex-Agniveers will also be exempted from the physical efficiency test, PTI reported.

PM Modi with Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina to inaugurate first cross-border energy pipeline

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina, will inaugurate the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline today via video conference.
- This is the first cross-border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh, built at an estimated cost of 377 crore rupees. Out of this, the Bangladesh portion of the pipeline, built at a cost of approximately 285 crore rupees, has been borne by the Government of India under grant assistance.
- The Pipeline has the capacity to transport 1 Million Metric Ton Per Annum (MMTPA) of High-Speed Diesel (HSD). It will supply HSD initially to seven districts in northern Bangladesh.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar inaugurates "Geoffrey Bawa: It is Essential To be There" Exhibition

- The historic exhibition which features the works of Sri Lanka's iconic architect the late Geoffrey Bawa, is jointly organized by the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, the High Commission of Sri Lanka in New Delhi and the Geoffrey Bawa Trust to mark the 75th anniversary of Indo-Lanka diplomatic relations, which falls this year.
- A large number of invitees including diplomats, senior officials of the Government of India, academics, journalists, art lovers and professionals attended the ceremonial opening of the exhibition. Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India Milinda Moragoda, Director of the National Gallery of Modern Art Tamsunaro Tripati, and Trustee of the Geoffrey Bawa Trust Sanjay Kulatunga joined External Affairs Minister Jaishankar in inaugurating the exhibition.

Bihar the lowest literacy rate , Kerala manages to be on top with 94%

- According to the data shared by the Ministry of Education, Bihar has the lowest literacy rate of 61.8% , followed by Arunachal Pradesh at 65.3 % and Rajasthan 66.1 % , Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India at 94%, followed by Lakshadweep at 91.85% and Mizoram at 91.33%.
- The literacy rate of women in India has increased by 68 per cent - up from 9 per cent at the time of Independence to 77 per cent at present, LiveMint reported. As per World Bank estimates, only 1 of 11 girls was literate during the period surrounding India's Independence, and
- Currently, only 84.7 per cent of males are literate in India.

J&K L-G lays foundation stone of 1st direct foreign investment project

- J&K Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha laid the foundation stone of a mega-mall on Sunday in Sempora area of Srinagar district which is the first direct foreign investment project in the UT. The construction of the mega-mall will cost Rs 250 crore, Sinha told reporters.
- The Mall of Srinagar and allied projects with the Government of Dubai will fuel the economic growth of J&K and bring us closer to achieving the shared vision of strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties between India and UAE. This is a new dawn of limitless possibilities. We are taking forward Hon'ble PM's vision for development of J&K. Mall of Srinagar will have transformative impact on UT & boost infrastructure, employment generation and

ease of living. This is to be one of the largest malls in the region, the mall will have over 500 shops," Sinha said while congratulating the people of J&K on the historic occasion.

Rajasthan CM announces creation of 19 new districts, 3 new divisions

- Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot announced his government's decision to form 19 new districts and three new divisions in the state, earmarking Rs 2,000 crore for development of infrastructure for them. This is the first time since 2008 that new districts are being carved out, taking the number of districts to 50 in the state. The three new divisions will be in Banswara, Pali and Sikar,
- He said a high-level committee was formed to study the formation of new districts and the state government has received a report. "In this way, the state will now have 19 new districts," the chief minister said during a discussion on the Budget.

Asia's largest Tulip Garden opens for public at Srinagar in J&K

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Asia's largest Tulip Garden was thrown open to public at Srinagar yesterday. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha attended the opening ceremony and invited people from all over the world to visit J&K and discover the mesmerising beauty of 16 Lakh tulip flowers and enjoy the warm hospitality of the people of Jammu Kashmir. The Lieutenant Governor said that last year, an unprecedented 3.60 lakh tourists visited the Tulip Garden and believed that the number will further increase this year.

Varanasi to home UP's Third International Cricket Venue

- Following Lucknow and Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh will now get its third international cricket stadium. The stadium will be constructed in Varanasi, which will begin in May-June of this year. Further, the construction of the stadium is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.
- According to authorities, the state government has bought 31 acres of land in Varanasi's Rajatalab region for the international cricket stadium, which would be given over to the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (UPCA) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) by the end of this month. In this context, BCCI Honorary Secretary Jay Shah and BCCI Vice President Rajeev Shukla visited Varanasi earlier this week. Furthermore, the projected cricket stadium will cost roughly around Rs 300 crore to take shape and be built as per international standards. It is projected to have a seating capacity of 30,000 guests.

Most silent ship INS Androth launched in Kolkata

- INS Androth, the second in the series of eight anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft (ASW SWC) built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) was launched at a function on Tuesday.
- Vice-Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command was the chief guest. The primary role of the 77 metres long, waterjet propelled ASW shallow water craft, capable of 25 knots speed is to conduct anti-submarine operations in coastal water, low intensity maritime operations and mine laying operations. These ships are also capable of full-scale sub-surface surveillance of coastal waters and various surface platforms. These ships can carry lightweight torpedoes, ASW rockets and mines, close-in weapons system (30mm gun) and 16.7mm stabilized remote controlled guns. Vice Admiral Tripathi stated, "The construction of specialized ships such as these for anti-submarine warfare is indeed in sync with the provisioning of a combat ready, credible cohesive and futureproof force, which is ready to face the existing and future challenges. I take this opportunity to congratulate GRSE for being the only DPSU shipyard for receiving the Raksha Mantri Award 2022, for designing the ASW Shallow Water Craft."

Asia's largest 4-metre liquid mirror telescope inaugurated in Uttarakhand

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh today - March 22, inaugurated Asia's largest 4-metre International Liquid Mirror Telescope at Devasthal in Uttarakhand in the presence of the Governor of Uttarakhand Lt. Gen (Retd.) Gurmeet Singh
- Speaking after the launch, Dr Jitendra Singh said, it is primarily the patronage, promotion and prioritization from Prime Narendra Narendra Modi that has enabled and emboldened the scientific fraternity to successfully try new initiatives, one after the other, in the field of science, technology and innovation, which are being rated as world class. Not only PM Modi has given us the motivation to move ahead but also given the freedom to explore hitherto

lesser explored areas like Space which has been opened up for private players or India's oceans whose vast resources are waiting to be unfolded.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates new ITU Area office & Innovation Centre in New Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates the new International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Area office and Innovation Centre in India in New Delhi today afternoon (22 March) . ITU is the United Nations specialised agency for information and communication technologies and its Headquarters is in Geneva.
- India had signed a Host Country Agreement in March last year with ITU for the establishment of Area Office. The Area Office in India also envisaged to have an Innovation Centre, making it unique among other area offices of ITU. The Area Office, which is fully funded by India, is located on the second floor of the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT) building at Mehrauli in the national capital. The programme will witness the participation of IT and Telecom Ministers of various Area Offices of ITU, the Secretary General and other senior officials of ITU, Heads of United Nations and other international bodies in India, Ambassadors, Industry Leaders, Start-up and MSME, leaders of Academia, students and other stakeholders.
- The ITU Area Office will serve India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan and Iran, enhancing coordination among nations and fostering mutually beneficial economic cooperation in the region. During the programme, the Prime Minister will also unveil Bharat 6G Vision Document and launch the 6G Research and Development Test Bed. Bharat 6G vision document is prepared by the Technology Innovation Group that was constituted in November 2021 with members from various Ministries and Departments, research and development institutions, academia and Telecom Service Providers and industry to develop a roadmap and action plans for 6G in India. 6G Test bed will provide academic institutions, industries, start-ups, MSMEs and industry a platform to test and validate the evolving ICT technologies.

Africa-India joint exercise AFINDEX- 2023 commences in Pune

- The inaugural event of the second edition of the Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX 2023) began at the Foreign Training Node (FTN) of the Indian Army located at Aundh Military Station in Pune Tuesday. The 10-day exercise will focus on Humanitarian Mine Assistance and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.
- The multinational military drill will promote the idea of Africa-India Militaries for Regional Unity (AMRUT) and will focus on incorporating the current dynamics of UN Peacekeeping Forces (UNPKF) through practical and comprehensive discussions and tactical exercises, the Army has said. As many as 24 African militaries are being represented by their contingents or teams of observers in the exercise.

HM Amit Shah to inaugurate Vedic Heritage Portal in New Delhi today

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate the Vedic Heritage portal today (23 March) with the twin agenda of helping researchers in deeper understanding of the Vedic knowledge tradition and help the common people to have a general understanding of the ancient scriptures. The portal hosted by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts will be launched during the week-long IGNCA Foundation Day celebrations that began on Sunday.
- Member Secretary, IGNCA, Dr Sachchidanand Joshi said this portal will not only help researchers to develop a deeper understanding about our Vedic knowledge tradition, but also help common people to have a general understanding about the Vedas.
- Vedas and Indian Knowledge system is not static but contemporary, Dr Joshi said. He also informed that IGNCA is working on a project "Vrihattar Bharat" wherein the cultural linkages of India with 40 other countries is being compiled. Some of the countries of this project are SouthEast Asian Nations like Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Mongolia and others.

Under U2o, Urban Climate Film Festival to be held from today: March 24

- With the support of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the French Development Agency (AFD), and the European Union, the Urban Climate Film Festival is to be held from March 24 to 26, 2023. The Urban Climate Film Festival will be inaugurated on March 24 in New Delhi. The inaugural session will be chaired by Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa. Notably, the Ambassadors of France and the European Union to India will also deliver the inaugural addresses.

- Through the CITIIS programme and U2o engagement events, the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is organising the first Urban Climate Film Festival. A curated selection of 11 films from 9 countries will be shown to create wider awareness of the impact of climate change on life in cities and engage the public in the dialogue on sustainable urban development.

Objectives -

- Incorporate the powerful medium of film to enlighten audiences about the environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change on urban settlements
- Initiate conversations about building climate-resilient cities and invite inputs from the public
- Encourage citizens to undertake "environmentally responsible behaviours" in line with the U2o Priority Areas and the Prime Minister's clarion call through the LiFE Mission.

Indian Navy Conducts Maritime Exercise 'Konkan 2023' With UK Navy

- Konkan 2023, a joint naval drill between the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy of Britain was organised over three days, from March 20 to 23, 2023. The maritime exercise demonstrated operational readiness, improved interoperability, and joint operations. The drill was conducted off the coast of Konkan in the Arabian Sea, and demonstrated the close ties and high operational readiness of both navies.
- This exercise yielded excellent training value to personnel of both navies. During the exercise, a high degree of professionalism and zeal was demonstrated. The UK has been extended an offer to join India's Information Fusion Centre in Gurugram, and the two countries have agreed to significantly expand their maritime domain awareness cooperation. This workout regimen is extensive and trilateral joint movements are also part of it.

Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurates 'Sagar Manthan', the Real-time Performance Monitoring Dashboard of MoPSW

- Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Ayush Shri Sarbananda Sonowal virtually launched Real-time Performance Monitoring Dashboard of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways 'Sagar Manthan' – Digital platform having all the integrated data related to the ministry and other subsidiaries. It was inaugurated in the presence of Shri Shripad Y. Naik, MoS, MoPSW; Shri Shantanu Thakur, MoS, MoPSW and other officials from the ministry.
- This dashboard will transform the workings of various departments by improving well-coordinated real time information. This platform has been developed completely in-house under the guidance of Shri Sudhanshu Pant, IAS, Secretary, MoPSW in the span of less than 1.5 months efficiently. Speaking on the occasion Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said the launch of Sagar Manthan dashboard is a positive development towards Digital India vision of our Prime Minister. He said it will have a significant impact on the overall performance of organizations

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated and lay the foundation stone for various development projects in Karnataka: 25 March 2023.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a day's visit to Karnataka on 25th of March 2023, Saturday where he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for various development projects. After arrival in Bengaluru, the Prime Minister will inaugurate Sri Madhusudan Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research at Muddenahalli in Chikkaballapur district.
- Established by Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence, the Institute will provide free medical education and offer free medical treatment to the poor. The Medical college has 100 MBBS seats. Later in the day, the Prime Minister will take part in a road show in Bengaluru and inaugurate a new metro line between Whitefield and K R Puram covering 13.71 kms built at a cost of around 4250 crore rupees. In the afternoon the Prime Minister will attend the closing ceremony of Vijaya Sankalpa yatra in Davangere. BJP state unit had taken up around 8000 kms long yatra across 224 assembly segments around the state as part of its pre poll campaign.

Agriculture minister launches 'DigiClaim' for claim disbursement through National Crop Insurance Portal

- Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar launched National Crop Insurance Portal's digitised claim settlement module namely DigiClaim under the ambit of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) today at Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi. "With the launch of the module, claims will be disbursed electronically, which will benefit the respective farmers of six states. Now, the automated claim settlement process

will be an ongoing activity to ease all insured farmers' lives and provide them with a sustainable financial flow and support," the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare said,

- With the launch of a DigiClaim Module, insurance claims totalling Rs 1260.35 crore have been disbursed on March 23, 2023, to insured farmers in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Haryana, and the process will continue as and when the claims are released," the ministry said. The minister also mentioned that to date Rs 1.32 lakh crore claim amount has been disbursed to the insured farmers under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. He also took special note of 'Meri Policy, Mere Haath' ongoing campaign and observed that the campaign has been monumental in enhancing the awareness around PMFBY at the grassroot level.

Tamil Nadu's 18th wildlife sanctuary to come up in Erode

- The Tamil Nadu Government will notify Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, spread over 80,567 hectares in the forest areas of Anthiyur and Gobichettipalayam taluks in Erode district, as the 18th wildlife sanctuary in the state. It will include reserve forest areas in Anthiyur, Bargur, Thattakarai and Chennampatti.
- Home to wild animals including tigers, elephants, leopards, wild boars, gaurs and deer, the sanctuary is close to Malai Mahadeshwara wildlife sanctuary, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Cauvery wildlife sanctuary in Karnataka and also act as a connecting point between Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve and Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary.
- "The announcement is a big push to the ongoing conservation efforts," environment, climate change and forests additional chief secretary Supriya Sagu said, adding that 21 species of mammals, 136 species of birds and 118 species of butterflies are found in the new sanctuary. Forest department officials have clarified that tribal people won't face any restrictions in doing their job in these areas.

Haldwani to get a sports university: Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami announced the government will set up a sports university in the Kumaun region's Haldwani town. Dhami, who made the announcement on the occasion of completion of one year of the formation of his government, said there had been longstanding demands from several sports associations for such a university.
- The international stadium of Haldwani will be upgraded into a sports university, he said. Earlier, the chief minister also held a meeting with the officials and discussed the proposed university. Dhami said there is no dearth of sporting talent in the state, and the university will give such talented people a chance to hone and display their skills further. Uttarakhand will hold several national level sports event in the coming year, he also said.

Shri Bhupender Yadav launches Aravalli Green Wall Project

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav said that under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi India is moving to revive the Aravallis through various initiatives like single-use plastic ban, water conservation efforts and natural resources protection. Shri Yadav launched the Aravalli Green Wall Project, a major initiative to green the 5 km buffer area around the Aravalli Hill Range in four states at a function organised to celebrate the International Day of Forests at Tikli Village in Haryana. At the event, Shri Yadav unveiled the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Through Forestry Interventions and a FAQ on Agro-forestry published by Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education. The Union Minister also participated in a plantation drive
- Speaking on this occasion, the Union Minister said that the Aravalli Green Wall Project will not only increase the green cover and biodiversity of the Aravalli through afforestation, reforestation and restoration of water bodies, but also improve the soil fertility, water availability and climate resilience of the region. He said that the project will benefit the local communities by providing them with employment opportunities, income generation and ecosystem services. He appreciated the efforts of the Haryana Forest Department and other stakeholders for their cooperation and support in implementing the project and reiterated the government's commitment to achieve the national goal of creating an additional 2.5 billion tonnes of carbon sink by 2030.

AFINDEX 2023: Second Africa-India joint military exercise another step towards Modi's idea of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"

- The second Africa-India joint military exercise from 21-29 March is a key element to India's diplomatic ties with African countries. 24 African militaries were represented by their contingents or teams of observers. The inaugural



event of the second edition of the Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX 2023) began at the Foreign Training Node of the Indian Army located at the Aundh Military Station in Pune on March 21. The ten-day exercise focused on Humanitarian Mine Assistance and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKF). The multinational military drill will promote the idea of Africa-India Militaries for Regional Unity (AMRUT) and will focus on incorporating the current dynamics of UNPKF through comprehensive discussions and tactical exercises.

- The collective effort will also focus on achieving the desired interoperability and cohesive operational ability of the troops from all participating nations. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Sanskrit: वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्) or "The World Is One Family" or all living beings on the earth are a family has been the favourite theme of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi all along. The theme and the logo for India's G20 Presidency are "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth-One Future". The Bhagvad Gita, calls the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam the "Loftiest Vedantic Thought." This is what is expected to be achieved through the Second Africa-India joint military exercise.

Sasha, one of the female cheetahs brought to India from Namibia, has died

- Sasha was part of the first lot of eight cheetahs brought to India from Namibia last year, which were released into Kuno National Park by prime minister Narendra Modi on September 17. On January 22 this year, Sasha had been diagnosed with a kidney infection and had been treated by a global team of veterinarians. She initially showed signs of recovery, but continued to be kept in the quarantine enclosure to which she had regressed to after having spent a few weeks in a larger enclosure.
- Though Sasha had shown signs of recovery, she was being fed within the quarantine enclosure. However, her condition suddenly deteriorated, and she died on Monday (27 March) morning. Sources from the Cheetah Conservation Fund say that they suspect renal failure to be the cause of her death,

India welcomes four cubs - born to Cheetah translocated from Namibia

- Happy news from the world of wildlife! India has been blessed with four cheetah cubs. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Wednesday, March 29 shared that four cubs have been born to one of the cheetahs translocated to India on September 17, 2022. Cheetah Siyaya delivered the four cubs at Kuno National Park
- The Union Environment Minister called the occasion a 'momentous event' in our wildlife conservation history during Amrit Kaal. Further, the Union Minister also congratulated the entire team of Project Cheetah for their relentless efforts in bringing back cheetahs to India and for their efforts in correcting an ecological wrong done in the past.
- It is noteworthy that cheetah got extinct from India about 70 years ago. The wild cat was declared extinct from India in 1952.

Government of India launches National Rabies Control Programme (NRCP) for prevention and control of Rabies

- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Ministry of Fisheries Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India jointly launched 'National Action Plan For Dog Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE) from India by 2030'. The stray dog population control and management of the stray dogs is the mandate of the local bodies. The Central Government has framed the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2023 which is to be implemented by the local authority to control the population of stray dogs. The main focus of the rules is on anti-rabies vaccination of stray dogs and neutering of stray dogs as means of population stabilization.
- Further, as per the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in its interim orders dated 18.11.2015 & 9.3.2016 in SLP No.691 of 2009, AWBI Vs P.E.S.T & Ors directed all the State Governments to implement the ABC (Dogs) Rules, 2001 diligently to control the stray dog population, to constitute the State Level Monitoring Committee & District Level Monitoring Committee to address the issues related to stray dogs in the respective local bodies. Accordingly, the Animal Welfare Board of India has also forwarded a revised module to all the State Governments regarding the proper implementation of the Animal Birth Control programme. In addition, the Animal Welfare Board of India has issued following advisories / guidelines for proper implementation of the Animal Birth Control Rules.

Odisha's historic Gandhamardan Hills declared as biodiversity heritage site

- Odisha's Gandhamardan Hill range, known as the "ayurvedic paradise," has been designated a "biodiversity heritage site." The hill system that spans both Bargarh and Bolangir districts was designated a biodiversity heritage site by

the Department of Forestry, Environment, and Climate Change. Gandhamardan is home to 1,200 plant species, 500 animal species, and several varieties of trees, shrubs, herbs, and medicinal plant species. The tag will aid in the long-term protection, conservation, and management of the species that are classified as endangered and endemic. After the Mahendragiri Hills in Gajapati and the Mandasaru Hills in the Kandhamal district, this is the third such hill to get the designation of a biological heritage site.

- According to a notification from the state forest and environment department, the designation was made in accordance with Rule 20(2) of the 2012 Odisha Biodiversity Regulations and Section 37 of the Biodiversity Act.

INTERNATIONAL

Singapore Airlines to get 25.1% stake in Air India Group.

- Singapore Airlines' (SIA) deal with Tata Sons will inject a further \$267 million into Air India. It will give SIA a 25.1% stake in the Air India Group following its takeover by Tata and merger with Vistara Airlines. The November 2022 deal between SIA and Tata Sons to further inject \$267 million into Air India is one of the key strategic initiatives for future growth mentioned in the quarterly financial report.

NASA And SpaceX Launch Crew-6

- NASA's SpaceX Crew-6 was launched into space on March 2, 2023, at 5:34 UTC (11:04 am IST), for a long-duration mission on the International Space Station (ISS). Crew-6 includes NASA astronauts Stephen Bowen and Warren "Woody Hoburg", United Arab Emirates (UAE) astronaut Sultan AlNeyadi, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Andrey Fedyayev. They were launched to the ISS aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft, atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Launch Complex 39-A at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

UK disappointed as Argentina withdraws from Falklands pact

- The UK government on Thursday insisted the Falkland Islands remained British as Argentina walked away from a cooperation pact and demanded new talks over their sovereignty.

Known as the Malvinas in Spanish, the UK-ruled islands were the subject of a short, but brutal war after Argentina invaded in 1982. Britain drove out the invading force after dispatching a naval armada.

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China sets its lowest GDP growth target of around 5% for the year 2023

- China projected GDP growth target for year at 'around 5%' as the National People's Congress (NPC) – China's national legislature started Sunday, making a modest forecast in an effort to revive an economy battered by COVID-19 and Beijing's controversial zero-covid policy.
- This was announced by the outgoing Premier Li Keqiang, as he delivered a government work report at the opening session of the 14th NPC, laying out economic priorities and a new budget, including plans for defense amid continued tensions with the West including in Taiwan strait and the war in Ukraine.

China to increase defense spending by 7.2%

- China is set to increase defense spending this year by 7.2% to 1.56 trillion yuan (\$230 billion), according to a draft released Sunday by the Ministry of Finance. China's defense budget grew by 7.1% last year to 1.45 trillion yuan, faster than the 6.8% increase in 2021 and 6.6% climb in 2020, according to official data.

China Gives Assurances For Sri Lanka's Debt Recast, Paves Way For \$2.9-Billion IMF Bailout

- China has given assurances that it will support Sri Lanka's debt restructuring, according to Bloomberg. This development has cleared the biggest hurdle for the island nation to secure a \$2.9-billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Sri Lanka's largest bilateral creditor gave written support for the debt



restructuring via the Export-Import Bank of China on March 6, according to sources privy to the development. The letter meets the requirements of the IMF,

Xi Jinping's right hand, Li Qiang to become China's next premier

- Xi Jinping has consolidated his power since the resignation of Premier Li Keqiang, who had served the maximum two terms allowed. Li had been sidelined in recent years by Xi, who elevated military and security services in support of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”. Now, all eyes are now on Li Qiang, who is the favourite to replace Keqiang as Premier. Li is a crony of Xi's from his days in provincial government, having served as Xi's de facto chief of staff in Zhejiang province.

Arun Subramanian becomes first Indian-American to be Judge of Manhattan Federal District Court in New York

- Indian-American Arun Subramaniam has been confirmed as first South Asian District Judge for the Southern District of New York. Senate Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer confirmed the nomination of Mr. Subramanian by a vote of 58-37. Senator Schumer said that Subramanian dedicated his career to fighting for people. South District New York notably has one of the largest South Asian-American populations in the country.

White House backs bipartisan Bill that could lead to TikTok ban

- The White House endorsed a bipartisan bill that could give the President authority to ban or force a sale of TikTok, support that could hasten its passage and break a deadlock over how to handle privacy concerns around the popular Chinese-owned app.
- The bill introduced would give the President the ability to force the sale of foreign-owned technologies, applications, software or e-commerce platforms if they present a national security threat to US users.

Xi Jinping begins historic third term as China's president

- Chinese President Xi Jinping has been handed a norm-busting third term as President, making him China's most powerful leader in generations. The appointment by Beijing's rubber-stamp parliament comes after he locked in another five years as head of the Communist Party and the military.
- China's Parliament on Friday unanimously endorsed an unprecedented third five-year term for President Xi Jinping,

Indonesia is moving its capital from Jakarta to Borneo.

- The city of Jakarta in Indonesia is facing issues such as congestion, pollution, earthquakes, and sinking into the Java Sea. Therefore, the Indonesian government is currently in the process of relocating the capital to the Island of Borneo. Indonesia plans to relocate its capital from Jakarta to Borneo, creating a “sustainable forest city” that aims to be carbon-neutral by 2045.
- However, environmentalists warn that the development will lead to deforestation, threaten the habitat of endangered species such as orangutans and harm the homes of Indigenous communities. While the site is typically restricted, The Associated Press was granted access in early March to witness the construction progress. This article examines the reasons behind the relocation, the government's plans, and the concerns of activists regarding the impact on the environment, endangered species, and Indigenous communities.

Ram Chandra Paudel elected as new President of Nepal

- Nepal: Ram Chandra Paudel was elected as the new president of Nepal on Thursday. Paudel secured 33 thousand 8 hundred and 2 electoral votes while his rival Subash Chandra Nembwang secured 15 thousand 5 hundred and 18 electoral votes, according to Nepal's Election Commission.
- Poudel, a common candidate of the eight-party alliance that included Nepali Congress and Prime Minister 'Prachanda'-led CPN (Maoist Center), received the vote of 214 lawmakers of parliament and 352 provincial assembly members. With the support from eight political parties, 78-year-old Poudel's victory was certain. His rival Subas Chandra Nebmang had support of former prime minister KP Sharma-led CPN-UML

Indonesia's Mount Merapi volcano erupts, covering villages in ash

- Indonesia's Mount Merapi, one of the world's most active volcanoes, erupted today, spewing out smoke and ash that blanketed villages near the crater. The volcano is located on Java Island, near Indonesia's cultural capital Yogyakarta. The volcano's last major eruption in 2010 had claimed more than 300 lives and forced the evacuation

of some 280,000 people. Indonesia, which has nearly 130 active volcanoes, sits on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity.

Silicon Valley Bank collapse, causes shockwaves across world

- The sudden collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) in the United States has caused shockwaves around the world. California-based Silicon Valley Bank, the 16th largest bank in the US, was closed on Friday (March 10) by the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation which later appointed the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as its receiver.
- From Californian winemakers to startups on the other side of the Atlantic, businesses are attempting to handle their accounts after their bank abruptly closed down Friday. According to reports, the financial crisis is causing anxiety for corporations as well as for all their employees whose paychecks can be affected by the commotion.

SpaceX Launches 40 OneWeb Satellites To Orbit From Florida

- SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket launched 40 OneWeb satellites to low-Earth orbit from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida. This was the penultimate mission to complete the first generation (Gen 1) low-Earth orbit satellite constellation of OneWeb, a London-based satellite communications company backed by Bharti Enterprises. OneWeb aims to enable global coverage in 2023, and its latest launch was the penultimate mission that would complete OneWeb's Gen 1 constellation to fulfil the goal. The launch of 40 satellites by SpaceX on March 9 was OneWeb's 17th mission to date. Later this month, OneWeb will launch more satellites with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and New Space India Limited (NSIL), in order to complete the UK-based company's global footprint of Gen 1 satellites. If the launch with ISRO and NSIL is successful, there will be 582 OneWeb satellites in orbit.

Saudi Arabia launches new national airline

- Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman formally announced on Sunday the creation of a new national airline, Riyadh Air, with industry veteran Tony Douglas as its chief executive, as the kingdom moves to compete with regional transport and travel hubs.
- Riyadh Air will serve more than 100 destinations around the world by 2030, making use of the kingdom's location between Asia, Africa and Europe,

Singapore Changi Airport is named the World's Best Airport 2023 : Skytrax World Airport Award

- Singapore Changi Airport has been named as the World's Best Airport in 2023 in the World Airport Awards held at Passenger Terminal EXPO in Amsterdam, Changi Airport also won the awards for the World's Best Airport Dining and World's Best Airport Leisure Amenities.
- The Hamad International Airport, Doha, in 2nd place and Tokyo Haneda Airport ranked 3rd.

Ram Sahaya Prasad Yadav elected Nepal's Vice-President

- Ram Sahaya Yadav, a leader from the Madhes region, was elected the third Vice-President of Nepal, as voting for the top post concluded on Friday. Yadav secured 30,328 votes. The tenure of Nepal's outgoing Vice President, Nanda Bahadur Pun ended on March 18. Yadav, a candidate who had the backing of Nepal's eight-party ruling alliance, defeated Ashta Laxmi Shakya of the CPN-UML and Mamata Jha of the Janamat Party. The President's office announced that Nepal's newly-elected Vice President, Ram Sahaya Prasad Yadav, is scheduled to take the oath of office and secrecy on March 20 at 10 am - local time.

Egypt Becomes A Member Of The BRICS New Development Bank

- Egypt on Wednesday, officially became a member of BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB) which includes India, Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa as member countries. According to an update posted on the bank's official website, Cairo completed all the necessary procedures to become an eligible member on February 20, 2023
- BRICS' New Development bank was established in July 2014, after an intergovernmental agreement was signed by the partner nations at the sixth BRICS summit in Fortaleza. “The membership shall be open to members of the United Nations, in accordance with the provisions of the Articles of Agreement of the New Development Bank.
- Bank's aim is to provide funding and finance to the BRICS member states for infrastructure and sustainable development projects. New Development Bank drafted the General Strategy until 2022–2026 titled “Scaling Up



Development Finance for a Sustainable Future." The vision of the bank is to evolve into a leading provider of solutions for infrastructure and sustainable development for emerging market economies and developing countries.

First Citizens Bank to Acquire Failed Silicon Valley Bank

- First Citizens BancShares will acquire Silicon Valley Bank, the California lender whose collapse this month sent shock waves across the financial sector.
- The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation seized control of Silicon Valley Bank on March 10, after a run on deposits had left it insolvent. The F.D.I.C., which announced the deal late Sunday, has since been looking for a buyer for the bank, either in its entirety or in pieces.
- Silicon Valley Bank was the country's 16th-largest bank when the government took it over. Its collapse was the largest bank failure in the United States since the 2008 financial crisis.
- The deal for the bank, which became Silicon Valley Bridge Bank after the F.D.I.C. seized it, included the purchase of about \$72 billion in loans, at a discount of \$16.5 billion, and the transfer of deposits worth \$56 billion. Roughly \$90 billion in Silicon Valley Bank's securities and other assets were not included in the sale, and remained in the F.D.I.C.'s control.

Humza Yousaf Elected Leader Of Scottish National Party

- Pakistani-origin Humza Yousaf has won the Scottish National Party leadership contest and is set to become Scotland's First Minister replacing Nicola Sturgeon. The 37-year-old son of Asian immigrants is set to become the first person of colour to serve as Scotland's first minister,
- The Scot of Pakistani heritage, a Sturgeon loyalist, defeated Kate Forbes, the country's finance minister and Ash Regan, who quit the government in opposition to proposed changes to gender recognition,
- "I will be a First Minister for all of Scotland. I will work every minute of every day to earn and to re-earn your respect and your trust," Yousaf said in his acceptance speech.
- Yousaf won 52% of the final votes cast, running on a platform dedicated to delivering Scottish independence, combating the cost-of-living crisis.

IAEA Board reappoints Rafael Grossi as director general

- The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Friday reappointed Rafael Grossi as the agency's director general for a second four-year term.
- The IAEA said in a statement that its 35-nation Board adopted the decision by acclamation at its quarterly meeting. The reappointment is subject to approval by the annual General Conference of the agency's all 176 member states in September. Grossi is slated to begin his second term in early December 2023 .
- "I'm deeply honored by the Board's unanimous decision to appoint me for another term in office, and very grateful for the confidence and trust member states continue to place in me as head of this truly remarkable organization," Grossi said.
- "It comes at a time when we face many major challenges, and I'm fully committed to continue to do everything in my power to implement the IAEA's crucial mission in support of global peace and development," he added. Grossi has served as head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog since December 2019

Africa Announces Its Second Marburg Outbreak in Tanzania This Year

- On March 21, health officials announced a Marburg outbreak after the continent's first outbreak on February 25 reported by the World Health Organization. Marburg virus, a hemorrhagic fever virus, is often referred to as the 'cousin' of ebola which caused around 11,325 deaths from 2014 to 2016 in West Africa. According to the WHO, Equatorial Guinea's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare announced the mortality of several people with probable hemorrhagic fever on February 7, 2023. Real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing on one sample yielded affirmative results for the Marburg virus on February 12, 2023, at the Institute Pasteur in Dakar, Senegal.
- Tanzania's national public health laboratory has declared that the outbreak first reported last week was caused by Marburg, according to Ummu Mwalimu, the country's health minister. One of the instances involves a household of five, and at least 161 individuals in close contact are being watched.
- "We are working with the government to rapidly scale up control measures to halt the spread of the virus and end the outbreak as soon as possible," says WHO's regional director for Africa Matshidiso Moeti in a statement.

Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan appointed as the Vice-President of UAE

- The United Arab Emirates President, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has made a significant announcement regarding the country's leadership. With the approval of the UAE Federal Supreme Council, Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan has been appointed as the UAE Vice-President. The incumbent Vice president Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, will also continue in the same role. Sheikh Mansour has been a vital part of the UAE's political landscape since 2004, when he was appointed as Minister of Presidential Affairs. He has played a key role in overseeing the Presidential Court and the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, as well as chairing several government institutions, including the Ministerial Development Council and the Emirates Investment Authority.
- The new Vice-President is also the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and a member of the Abu Dhabi Supreme Petroleum Council. He has served on the boards of numerous investment institutions, including the National Archives, Abu Dhabi Development Fund, Board of Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, and the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Twitter Co-Founder Jack Dorsey's Bluesky Social Media App Turns Up On Apple App Store.

- Jack Dorsey, the co-founder and former CEO of Twitter, has launched a new social media platform called Bluesky. The new app, currently in the testing phase, is available to download for iOS users via Apple's App Store. The Twitter-funded microblogging platform is available as an invite-only beta as of now, and a public launch is expected to be announced soon.

2023 DW : This Asteroid Has A 'Small Chance' Of Impacting Earth In 2046, NASA Says.

- A new asteroid which NASA has been tracking has a "very small chance" of impacting Earth in 2046, according to the space agency's Planetary Defense Coordination Office. The asteroid, called 2023 DW, might hit Earth on Valentine's Day in 2046.
- Asteroid 2023 DW has an average estimated diameter of 49.29 metres, and a mass of about eight kilograms, according to Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Center for Near Earth Object Studies. The velocity of the asteroid at the time of the likely impact will be 15.43 kilometres per second

Google unveils 'magic wand' for emails and documents

- Alphabet's Google on Tuesday unveiled a flurry of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for its email, collaboration and cloud software, taking aim at Microsoft days before its rival is expected to make a similar announcement. In a replay of last month's duelling chatbot launches by the tech giants, Alphabet touted a "magic wand" for its popular Google Docs software that can draft a marketing blog, training plan or other text, then revise its tone at users' discretion, a company official demonstrated to reporters. Alphabet also said its AI will be able to summarise message threads in Gmail, craft slide presentations, personalise customer outreach and take meeting notes as part of its upgrade to Google Workspace, a product suite with billions of users on free and paid accounts.

'Ab-CoV' to help with development of drugs against new variants of COVID19

- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Madras have developed an online open-source database of coronaviruses' neutralizing antibodies that can also aid in the development of drugs against new variants of SARS-CoV-2.
- The database, called Ab-CoV, contains detailed information about all COVID-related antibodies identified so far, including the source of each antibody, and the viral protein(s) and virus strains they recognize. It also encompasses crucial features such as binding affinity and neutralization profiles (IC₅₀ and EC₅₀) of antibodies.
- Ab-CoV database includes 1,780 coronavirus-related antibodies including 211 nanobodies and contains more than 3,200 data points on half maximal inhibitory concentration (IC₅₀), half maximal effective concentration (EC₅₀) & binding affinity (KD).

NASA-ISRO Jointly Manufactures NISAR Earth Science Satellite

- In a significant development in the field of earth science, NASA and ISRO have come together to manufacture a satellite named NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar). This earth science satellite has been designed to cater to various mission objectives, such as designing, developing, and launching Dual Frequency (L and S band) Radar Imaging Satellite, and exploring newer application areas using L & S Band microwave data, especially in

surface deformation studies, terrestrial biomass structure, natural resource mapping, and monitoring and studies related to the dynamics of ice-sheets, glaciers, forests, oil slick, etc. According to Dr Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State Science & Technology, NISAR satellite is configured with I-3K bus, and the instrument identified for SAR is based on the innovative Sweep SAR technique configured in both L and S band in polarimetric configuration for wide swath and high resolution. The satellite will orbit the Earth in a sun-synchronous orbit of 747 Km with an inclination of 98.4 degrees for a 12-day repeat cycle.

- While NASA is delivering the L-Band SAR payload, high-precision GPS, and 12m unfurlable antenna, ISRO is delivering S-band SAR payload, spacecraft bus, and facilitating the launch. The total expenditure incurred on realization of NISAR satellite by ISRO as on February 2023 is Rs. 469.40 Crore, excluding launch cost.

Twitter Co-Founder Jack Dorsey's Bluesky Social Media App Turns Up On Apple App Store.

- Jack Dorsey, the co-founder and former CEO of Twitter, has launched a new social media platform called Bluesky. The new app, currently in the testing phase, is available to download for iOS users via Apple's App Store. The Twitter-funded microblogging platform is available as an invite-only beta as of now, and a public launch is expected to be announced soon.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Godrej Industries appoints Vishal Sharma as CEO-designate of its chemicals business.

- Godrej Industries has announced the appointment of Vishal Sharma as CEO-designate of its chemicals business effective 1 March 2023. "As a part of the Leadership Team - Succession Planning, we are pleased to inform that we are announcing appointment of Mr. Vishal Sharma as the "Chief Executive Officer- Designate" (CEO-Designate) of GIL-Chemicals Business with effect from March 1, 2023,

Rajesh Malhotra appointed as Principal DG of PIB.

- Senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer, Rajesh Malhotra has been appointed as the principal director general of the Press Information Bureau (PIB), according to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. He succeeds Satyendra Prakash, who superannuated on Tuesday. He will be the principal spokesperson of the government of India.

Jishnu Barua becomes new chairperson of power regulator CERC

- Jishnu Barua has become the new chairperson of power regulator Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC). "Union Minister for Power R K Singh administered the oath of office and secrecy to Jishnu Barua, chairperson, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), here today,"
- Barua was chief secretary of Assam from October 2020 to August 2022. Prior to this, he had been additional chief secretary to Assam looking after various departments of the state from August 2017 to October 2020.

IPS officer Rashmi Shukla appointed Director-General of Sashastra Seema Bal

- The Central government has appointed Rashmi Shukla, an IPS officer of the Maharashtra cadre as the Director General (DG) of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), she will be replacing Anish Dayal Singh.
- The 1988 batch officer has previously headed the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) as Additional Director General and has been the former Chief of Maharashtra Intelligence Department.

Godrej Industries appoints Vishal Sharma as CEO-designate of its chemicals business.

- Godrej Industries has announced the appointment of Vishal Sharma as CEO-designate of its chemicals business effective 1 March 2023. "As a part of the Leadership Team - Succession Planning, we are pleased to inform that we are announcing appointment of Mr. Vishal Sharma as the "Chief Executive Officer- Designate" (CEO-Designate) of GIL-Chemicals Business with effect from March 1, 2023,

Rajesh Malhotra appointed as Principal DG of PIB.

- Senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer, Rajesh Malhotra has been appointed as the principal director general of the Press Information Bureau (PIB), according to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. He succeeds Satyendra Prakash, who superannuated on Tuesday. He will be the principal spokesperson of the government of India.

Manisha Saxena appointed director general of tourism

- Senior bureaucrat Manisha Saxena has been appointed as director general of tourism in the Union tourism ministry. Ms. Saxena is a 1996 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Arunachal Pradesh-Mizoram-Goa-Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre.

Pramerica Life Insurance appoints Pankaj Gupta as MD and CEO

- Pramerica Life Insurance appointed Pankaj Gupta as the managing director and chief executive officer. Gupta was Group Head – Distribution Strategy & Alliances of HDFC Life. Pankaj succeeds Kalpana Sampat, who was the previous MD & CEO.

S.S. Dubey takes charge as Controller General of Accounts (CGA)

- Shri S.S. Dubey took charge as the Controller General of Accounts (CGA). Shri Dubey is the 28th Controller General of Accounts (CGA), Ministry of Finance, Government of India. Shri Dubey, a 1989-batch Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) officer, is appointed by the Government of India as the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) with effect from 6th March, 2023. Prior to taking charge as the CGA, Shri Dubey was Additional Controller General of Accounts, Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

B Gopkumar takes over Axis Mutual Fund as CEO Chandresh Nigam steps down

- Axis Asset Management Company has appointed B Gopkumar, the managing director and chief executive officer at Axis Securities, as the new CEO of leading fund house Axis Mutual Fund. Gopkumar takes over from Chandresh Nigam who has stepped down as the CEO of the company.
- Axis MF has been plagued by the front-running scandal that came to light when the fund house sacked its chief dealer Viresh Joshi in May 2022 in a shocking case of suspected front-running. This was followed by income tax raids at Joshi's premises and Joshi suing his former employer for wrongful termination.

Hindustan Unilever names Rohit Jawa as MD, CEO

- Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) major Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) announced Rohit Jawa as the new Managing Director and CEO of the company taking over from June 27, 2023. The present managing director & CEO Sanjiv Mehta will retire after a tenure of 10 years by the end of June the company stated. Rohit Jawa will join as CEO designate and whole-time director for HUL from April 1, 2023, and take over as the president of Unilever South Asia from the present Chief of Transformation based in London. He will join the Unilever Leadership Executive (ULE) on April 1, 2023.

RBI approves reappointment of Sumant Kathpalia as MD, CEO of IndusInd Bank

- IndusInd Bank said the central bank has approved the re-appointment of Sumant Kathpalia as MD and CEO for a period of two years from 24 March, 2023. The nod by RBI comes nearly six months after the IndusInd Bank's board of directors had cleared another term for Kathpalia, who has been the lender's MD & CEO since March 2020.
- At IndusInd Bank, he has been part of the management team for 15 years ago. He has been a key member of the top-level executive committee looking at IndusInd Bank-wide financial management, managing investor relations and evaluating inorganic growth opportunities.

Tech Mahindra appoints Mohit Joshi as MD & CEO

- Tech Mahindra announced Mohit Joshi, the former president of Infosys, as its managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) designate for a period of five years, effective from 20 December 2023.
- Mohit Joshi will take over as MD & CEO when CP Gurnani retires on 19 December 2023. However, he will join Tech Mahindra well before that date to allow for sufficient transition time, said the company.

Govt appoints Siddhartha Mohanty as interim chairman of LIC

- Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) on Monday said that M R Kumar has completed his term as the Chairman. The government has approved the appointment of Siddhartha Mohanty as the interim Chairman of LIC for three months with effect from March 14, the insurer said last week.
- The government is set to appoint a full-time chairman at LIC by June, a finance ministry official said, Mint reported. The official said the chairman would be selected from among candidates available within the life insurer and would serve a term of around a year.

FDIC names former Fannie Mae chief Tim Mayopoulos as CEO of Silicon Valley Bank

- The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation on Monday named former Fannie Mae head Tim Mayopoulos as the chief executive officer of Silicon Valley Bank, a subsidiary of the defunct SVB Financial Group. He steps in after regulators shuttered the startup-focused lender on Friday after a run on its deposits that left it with a dearth of capital. Mayopoulos served as the chief executive officer of mortgage financier Fannie Mae for more than six years before he joined fintech Blend. The collapse of SVB, the biggest bank to fail since the financial crisis of 2008, has crippled stocks and triggered concerns of a contagion throughout global markets.

Deepak Mohanty appointed as PFRDA Chairperson

- The Central government has appointed Deepak Mohanty, a former whole-time member of the Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority (PFRDA), as the new Chairperson of the PFRDA. Mohanty, also a former executive director of the Reserve Bank of India, will hold the top PFRDA post till attaining the age of 65 years or until further orders. It also appointed Mamta Shankar, an Indian Economic Service Officer (1993) to the post of Whole-Time Member (Economics) in PFRDA.
- PFRDA regulates the National Pension System (NPS) which is mandatory for the Central government staff joining service since 2004. Most state governments have also made it mandatory for their staff joining the service since 2004 or 2005. Later, corporates and the general public were allowed to subscribe to NPS.

Honeywell (HON) Appoints Veteran Vimal Kapur as New CEO

- Honeywell International HON announced that company veteran and current president and chief operating officer, Vimal Kapur, will succeed Darius Adamczyk as the new chief executive officer ("CEO"), effective Jun 1. Mr. Kapur was named the president and chief operating officer of Honeywell last July. As COO, he oversaw the Honeywell Accelerator program, which uses certain frameworks and toolkits to improve end-to-end processes, digital transformation and business outcomes. As CEO, Kapur will focus on "the incorporation of Accelerator and standardization of global business models to enable maximal performance in each business segment."

Indian-American Ravi Chaudhary to be the new Assistant Secretary of US Air Force

- The United States Senate has confirmed Indian-American Ravi Chaudhary as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Air Force, one of the top civilian leadership positions in the Pentagon. He previously served as a Senior Executive at the US Department of Transportation where he was Director of Advanced Programs and Innovation, Office of Commercial Space at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). He was responsible for the execution of advanced development and research programs in support of the FAA's commercial space transportation mission. While at the transportation department, he also served as the executive director of the regions and centre operations, where he looked over the integration and support of aviation operations in nine regions.

India's KR Parvathy appointed as UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan

- India's Kavilmadam Ramaswami Parvathy, who has served in leading roles at the World Food Programme in Türkiye and Afghanistan, has been appointed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan,
- Parvathy took up her new post as Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan Wednesday, following the appointment by the Secretary-General and confirmation from the host Government, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said at the daily news briefing. "We remain with full gender parity among our 130 Resident Coordinators," Dujarric said.
- Parvathy brings more than 30 years of experience in development and humanitarian sectors, focusing on strategic planning, performance, risk management, people management, conflict analysis and humanitarian access negotiations,

Rajesh Gopinathan resigns from TCS, Succeeded by K Krithivasan.

- Rajesh Gopinathan, CEO of TCS for six long years has resigned from the post. He is succeeded by TCS' BFSI unit president K Krithivasan.
- Tata Consultancy Services, an Indian provider of IT services, announced in a regulatory filing that Rajesh Gopinathan, its chief executive officer, has resigned. He is succeeded by K Krithivasan, who was named CEO-designate on and stated that, subject to shareholder approval, he will take on the roles of CEO and managing director in the coming fiscal year.

G Krishnakumar takes over as BPCL Chairman & Managing Director

- G Krishnakumar has taken over as the new chairman and managing director of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL). G Krishnakumar, an electrical and electronics engineer from National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli and a postgraduate in finance management from Jammalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai, was executive director in the company before his elevation.
- Government headhunter, the Public Enterprise Selection Board (PESB) had, in December last year, picked up Krishnakumar over company's Director (Finance) Vetsa Ramakrishna Gupta, Director (Refineries) S Khanna, and Director (Marketing) Sukhmal Kumar Jain.

Lalit Kumar Gupta appointed as CMD of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Lalit Kumar Gupta as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), a PSU under the Ministry of Textile. According to an order issued from the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Gupta has been appointed as CMD of CCI with effect from the date of his assumption of charge of the post for a period of five years, or till the date of his superannuation, or until further orders, whichever is the earlier.
- Mr. Gupta has completed his MBA in Marketing from ITM Business School of Navi Mumbai. He is a Chartered Accountant (CA) of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). He is also a member of the Institute of the Company Secretaries of India (ICSI). He has a rich experience in the Finance and related sector. Gupta has a very long association with Cotton Corporation of about 25 years. He joined CCI in August 1994.

ICICI Bank veteran Anup Bagchi to take over as new MD and CEO of ICICI Prudential Life

- The life insurance company, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has named Anup Bagchi as MD and CEO for 5 years, effective June 19, 2023. He will replace NS Kannan, who will superannuate from the services of the company on the completion of tenure of his appointment on June 18, 2023.
- Anup Bagchi is presently Executive Director, ICICI Bank and non-executive director of the company. And, to ensure a seamless transition, Bagchi has been appointed Executive Director & Chief Operating Officer with effect from May 1, 2023. He is also on the board of ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company and Commerce Trade Services. Prior to this, Bagchi was the Managing Director and CEO of ICICI Securities.

Rahul Roy-Chowdhury, Grammarly's new Indian-origin CEO

- Rahul Roy-Chowdhury has been appointed as the CEO of Grammarly, the San Francisco-headquartered online text editing platform based on artificial intelligence.
- The Indian-origin executive, who is currently serving as the global product head at the company, will take over as CEO from May 1.
- On LinkedIn, Rahul Roy-Chowdhury said, "I joined Grammarly two years ago because of a deep belief in our mission to improve lives by improving communication. I'm honored to serve that mission in a new capacity as Grammarly's CEO, starting May 1." Before joining Grammarly in May 2021, Rahul Roy-Chowdhury worked at Google for 14 years where he served in multiple capacities, including vice-president of product management. He also spent two years as a product manager at Google's office in Bengaluru between 2007 and 2009, following which he moved to California.
- Rahul Roy-Chowdhury has an MBA from Stanford University and a Master's degree in computer science from Columbia University. He has a BA in mathematics from Hamilton College in New York as well.

Indian Woman Hockey Player Salima Tete Appointed AHF Athletes Ambassador

- National women's hockey team midfielder Salima Tete was appointed as the AHF Athletes Ambassador from India for a term of two years, starting March 25.
- Tete accepted the certificate and the position during the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) Congress in Mungyeong, Korea.
- Tete, who led the Indian women's junior hockey team to a fourth-place finish at the 2021 FIH Women's Junior World Cup in Potchefstroom, South Africa, is among four players from Asia to be appointed for the position.
- As the AHF Athletes Ambassador, Tete, along with the other selected athletes from Asia, will play a leadership role in international representation, development, and advocacy of athletes.

- She will also be working towards promoting awareness about athletes' rights and welfare from the region. "I am honoured to be selected as one of the AHF Athletes Ambassadors. As athletes from Asia, we face a lot of challenges in our careers. This position will allow me to bring our voices to the front. I hope to make a positive impact on the lives of athletes from the region with this position," Tete said in a Hockey India statement.

NDTV Appoints Former SEBI Chairman U.K. Sinha And Business Leader Dipali Goenka As Independent Directors

- In line with the Adani Group's objective to ensure NDTV's independence and professionalism, U.K. Sinha and Dipali Goenka have been appointed Independent Directors of NDTV for a period of two years effective March 27, 2023, based on the recommendations of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, and subject to the approval of shareholders and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. U.K. Sinha has also been designated as Non-Executive Chairperson of NDTV.

SpiceJet CMD Ajay Singh Takes Over As ASSOCHAM President

- SpiceJet's Chairman & Managing Director Ajay Singh has assumed charge as the President of Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) replacing Renew Power MD Sumant Sinha after the completion of his tenure. Sanjay Nayar, founder and Chairman of Sorin Investment Fund is the new Senior Vice-President of Assocham,
- "I am taking over at times which are both exciting and challenging. As an economy, India stands out as a robust economy in the midst of global headwinds. Even when major economies of the world are facing the threat of recession, the Indian economy is growing between 6.5-7 per cent," Singh said.
- He emphasised that the chamber would stay engaged with the government, Centre and states, leading academicians, economists besides corporate leaders to find solutions to the issues, which may crop up in a fast-changing global economic and political landscape.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

India Wins GSMA Government Leadership Award 2023 for Telecom Policy Implementation

- India has been awarded the Government Leadership Award 2023 by Groupe Speciale Mobile Association (GSMA) for implementing best practices in telecom policy and regulation. The GSMA represents more than 750 mobile operators and 400 companies in the telecom ecosystem and recognizes one country every year. India was declared the winner in the ceremony held at Mobile World Congress Barcelona.

ACF confers Grandmaster D Gukesh with Player-of-the-Year award

- Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh has been honoured with Player-of-the-Year award by the Asian Chess Federation (ACF) for clinching the gold medal with a record-breaking score of 9/11 in the 44th Chess Olympiad at Mahabalipuram last year. In March last year, Gukesh became only the sixth Indian to break the 2700 Elo-rating mark, and the youngest Grandmaster from the country to be rated above 2700.

Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu wins BBC Indian Sportswoman Of The Year award 2022

- Tokyo Olympic Games silver-medallist weightlifter Mirabai Chanu has bagged the 2022 'BBC Indian Sportswoman Of The Year' award after a public vote. The 28-year-old weightlifter from Manipur became the first athlete to win the award twice in a row after bagging it in 2021 as well.
- At the Tokyo Games, she had become the first Indian to win a silver in the sport. Last year, she went on to secure gold at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. She also won a silver medal at the World Weightlifting Championships in 2022.

Sipra Das gets Lifetime Achievement honour in National Photography Awards ceremony

- Thirteen photographers including senior photojournalist Sipra Das have been conferred with National Photography Awards in various categories at a function in New Delhi. Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Dr L Murugan today gave away the awards in presence of Secretary, Information and Broadcasting Apurva Chandra. Photojournalist Sipra Das has been honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Six photographers each were conferred in the category of Award for Professional Photographers and Award for Amateur Photographers.

BHEL bags CBIP Award 2022

- BHEL has been awarded the CBIP Award 2022 for 'Best Contribution in Solar Energy'. The award was received by Dr. Nalin Shinghal, CMD, BHEL, along with Ms. Renuka Gera, Director (IS&P), BHEL from Sh. R.K. Singh, Hon'ble Union Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy, on CBIP Day. CBIP awards are conferred for outstanding contribution to the development of water, power and renewable energy sectors.

Second Meeting of Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion concludes in Hyderabad

- The second Meeting of Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion, GPFI under G20 India Presidency concluded on Tuesday in Hyderabad. The two-day meeting was led by GPFI Co-Chair and G20 India Presidency and saw participation from Ministry of Finance and Central Bank representatives from G20 and non-G20 countries and International Organisations. During the Plenary, the GPFI members discussed and agreed on the way forward for important deliverables for the year including those on Digital Financial Inclusion, SME Finance. A Symposium on Digital Innovations in Payments and Remittances was also organised on the sidelines of the GPFI meeting for both G20 and non-G20 countries.

'Naatu Naatu' from 'RRR' won Oscars for Best Original Song

- 'Naatu Naatu' from SS Rajamouli's hit 'RRR' won Oscars for Best Original Song. The audience was captivated as they watched Ram Charan and Jr NTR's spectacular dance moves in the song. The crowd cheered wildly when MM Keeravani (composer of the song) walked up to the stage to accept the prestigious award.
- There has never been an Oscar nomination in this category from an Indian production before RRR's 'Naatu Naatu'. AR Rahman's 'Jai Ho', written for the 2008 film Slumdog Millionaire, was awarded the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 2009. However, Slumdog Millionaire was made by British production whereas RRR is an Indian production.
- While 'Naatu Naatu' was nominated for Best Original Song, 'All That Breathes' and 'The Elephant Whisperers' were nominated for Best Documentary Feature and Best Documentary Short Film, respectively. 'The Elephant Whisperers' took home the trophy while 'All That Breathes' lost to 'Navalny'.

Indian film The Elephant Whisperers wins Academy Award for Best Documentary Short

- Kartiki Gonsalves and Guneet Monga's Netflix documentary short, The Elephant Whisperers, has won the Oscar for Best Documentary Short category at the 95th Academy Awards. The film was competing against Haulout, How Do You Measure a Year?, The Martha Mitchell Effect and Stranger At The Gate. Director Gonzalves dedicated the award to 'my motherland, India'. Guneet, in an Instagram post, wrote, "Tonight is historic as this is the first ever Oscar for an Indian production..."
- Produced by Achin Jain and Guneet Monga, and directed by Kartiki Gonsalves, the 41-minute short follows the family from Tamil Nadu's Mudumalai Tiger Reserve who end up adopting two orphan baby elephants. What was special about this India short was that it happened to be filmmaker Gonsalves' directorial debut.

Gyan Chaturvedi awarded with the 32nd Vyas Samman, 2022

- Noted Hindi writer Dr Gyan Chaturvedi's 2018 satirical novel, Pagalkhana, has been selected for the 32nd Vyas Samman, 2022. Instituted by the KK Birla Foundation in 1991, the annual Vyas Samman is given to an outstanding Hindi literary work by an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years.

Hello Ujjivan app wins the prestigious 13th Aegis Graham Bell Awards

- Ujjivan Small Finance Bank is proud to announce that its Hello Ujjivan app has won the 13th Aegis Graham Bell Awards (AGBA) in the "Innovation in Consumer Tech" category. The thirteenth edition of the prize is an initiative of Aegis School of Data Science, backed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; NITI Aayog and Skill India to foster an innovative culture in India. Hello Ujjivan, is the first mobile banking app in India that enables speech, visual, and vernacular features to give bank's MicroBanking and Rural customers access to banking financial services who have limited reading and writing abilities. The app has intuitive AI and machine learning capabilities, to enable customers transact conveniently and safely in the language of their choice

BI Governor Shaktikanta Das Named 'Governor Of The Year' At Central Banking Awards 2023

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das has been selected as the 'Governor of the Year' for 2023 by Central Banking, an international economic research journal.

- Mr Das has been praised by the publication for his leadership role at the Central bank during his tenure, which began in December 2018, and has been marked by a series of grave challenges, starting with the collapse of a major non-bank firm, moving through the first and second waves of the coronavirus, and then, in 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its inflationary impact.

Bombay Jayashri chosen for Sangita Kalanidhi Award 2023 by Music Academy

- Renowned Carnatic vocalist and Padma Shri awardee Bombay Jayashri has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award for 2023 by the Music Academy.
- In a press release, the Music Academy said, Jayashri is one of the foremost among today's Carnatic musicians, who initially trained under her parents and later under TR Balamani and violin maestro Lalgudi G Jayaraman. Besides Carnatic music, Jayashri is also trained on the veena, classical dance and Hindustani music.
- 'She is known for her melodic and meditative style of singing. She has also been training underprivileged children in music and contributing through her art to social causes,' the release noted.

M T Vasudevan Nair awarded state's highest civilian honour

- The "Kerala Jyothi," the highest civilian honor in Kerala was awarded to the writer M T Vasudevan Nair. The second-highest award, "Kerala Prabha," was shared by actor Mammooty, former civil service officer T Madhava Menon, and writer Omchery NN Pillai. Arif Muhammad Khan, the Governor of Kerala, has presented the inaugural edition of the "Kerala Puraskarngal" awards, which recognize individuals who have made notable contributions to various aspects of social life. The awards were presented in three categories – "Kerala Jyothi," "Kerala Prabha," and "Kerala Shri."

Mumbai to host 1st Trade & Investment Working Group meeting Under G20

- Investment and trade are key drivers of growth and employment creation and in order to find common solutions, it is important to create a shared knowledge of the difficulties that come while accelerating global trade and investment. With this aim, the 1st Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) meeting under India's G20 Presidency is scheduled to be held in the financial capital of India, Mumbai, from March 28–30, 2023. Over 100 representatives from G20 member nations, invitee nations, regional groups, and international organisations will participate in this three-day meeting to discuss ways to speed up international trade and investment.
- On the first day, a seminar on 'Trade Finance' will be conducted by the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) and India EXIM Bank. The two-panel talks will take place to discuss the role of banks, financial institutions, development finance institutions, and export credit agencies in closing the trade finance gap. The seminar will also focus on how digitalisation and fintech solutions can improve access to trade finance.
- Key agendas that will be discussed during the first sessions:-
- Current trends in international trade and trade finance amidst the pandemic and growing import bills in developing countries.
- Cause of trade finance gaps, including reduced credit line support in the private sector and inflation cuts into bank lending limits.
- The role of export credit agencies in bolstering trade finance

India-Africa Army Chiefs Conclave On March 28 And 29

- Pune will also host the strategically significant India-Africa Army Chiefs Conclave, on March 28 and 29. The conclave will include talks by renowned speakers on the India-Africa Defense partnership, the Indian defence industry's potential and contribution towards regional security.
- There is a natural feeling of partnership between India and Africa," remarked Defence Minister Rajnath Singh today (March 28) while addressing the first India-Africa Army Chiefs' Conclave. The event is being organised on the sidelines of the second Africa-India Joint Exercise 'AFINDEX'
- India has been one of the biggest contributors of troops to UN Peacekeeping Operations all over the world and the country's Army is considered to be among the expert agencies in the world in mine removal operations.

Gentari signs pact (MoU) with Tata Motors for 5,000 e-commercial vehicles

- Clean energy solutions provider Gentari on Monday said it has signed an agreement with Tata Motors for the delivery of 5,000 units of e-commercial vehicles.
- The memorandum of understanding (MoU) through its affiliate entity is for three years, Gentari said in a statement. "Gentari, through its affiliated entity Amplus Power Supply Private Limited, signed an MoU with Tata Motors, India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, in 2022, whereby the latter will deliver 5,000 units of Tata Ace EV, over three years. The MoU includes delivery of 1,000 units in the first year for deployment in cities, such as Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Kolkata," it said.
- High-quality electric four-wheelers coming into the market opens a whole new segment to electrify in the urban delivery ecosystem, MoEVing CEO Vikash Mishra said.
- "We are excited to work with Gentari to deploy three- and four-wheeler commercial electric vehicles across India to reduce the carbon footprint of deliveries. With our operations, charging and maintenance footprint spanning across India, we hope to bring change on-ground and electrify deliveries for e-commerce, e-grocery, the logistics segment and now also large FMCG and traditional companies,"

Telangana signs three MoUs with Western Australia government

- A total of three MoUs were signed between the governments of Telangana and Western Australia when a delegation led by Western Australia's Minister for Emergency Services, Innovation and Digital Economy, Stephen Dawson visited State-led startup incubators T-Hub and WE-Hub.
- The MoUs signed include one between Hyderabad's Cyber Security Centre of Excellence DSCI and Western Australia's CyberWest, a government-funded innovation hub, which will harness the expertise of both organisations using innovation, design, workshops and industry engagement. The second MoU was between Cyber Security Centre of Excellence DSCI and Edith Cowan University, through this there will be a collaboration for mutual benefit including research, education, innovation, incubation, marketing, hackathons, corporate innovation and training programs.
- The third MoU was a Letter of Intent between WE-Hub and CyberWest which will accelerate growth in the local and international ecosystem and support goals of diversity and inclusion within the cyber security sector. This collaboration will also help in seeding female-led cyber security startups and also integrating cyber safety into all cohorts. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Dawson said: "Western Australia is at the forefront of cyber security research and innovation with leading organisations. The purpose of this visit is to engage with the Telangana ecosystem and understand the priorities as well as convey."

Aaliya Mir Becomes The First Woman From J&K To Receive Wildlife Conservation Award

- Jammu and Kashmir's only female wildlife rescuer, Aaliya Mir who works as a project manager with Wildlife SOS, a non-governmental organisation established in 1995 to protect and conserve India's natural heritage, forests and wildlife, has been awarded by the administration for her work and conservation efforts.
- Aaliya, a wildlife conservationist has become the first woman from J&K to be felicitated with an award for her conservation efforts in the region.
- Despite having rescued Asiatic black bears, Himalayan brown bears, birds, leopards and other mammals, Aaliya is best known for her work with snakes.
- Over the years, she has rescued snakes from the most unlikely places like kitchens, lawns, gardens and toilets of residences, government buildings and offices, school and university premises, and from tyres and engines of vehicles.

NGO from Assam honoured with Children's Champion Award

- Students' Welfare Mission, an NGO from Assam's Pathsala which has been working for special and autistic children, has been conferred with the Children's Champion Award 2023 here. Instituted by the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights last year to recognise individuals and institutions that have championed the cause of children across education, justice, health, nutrition, sports and artistic expression categories, the Mission, which is popularly known as Tapoban, has been awarded in the health and nutrition category,
- The awards were handed out by Justice P S Narasimha of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court S Muralidhar and Delhi Education Minister Atishi Marlena at a function held here on Saturday. Founder president of the Mission, Kumud Kalita, received the award that carries Rs 75,000, a certificate and a plaque. A jury comprising eminent and accomplished individuals decided to confer the Children's Champion Award on the NGO in health

and nutrition category for their “consistent efforts to provide quality care to the children with special needs”, the release said.

- The NGO is the only organisation from the Northeast to be selected for the award. The DCPCR received altogether 1,100 nominations from organisations and individuals across the country. Set up in 2005, Tapoban has been working for the specially-abled children providing speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, music and other skills besides awareness

BOOKS & AUTHOR

“The Book of Bihari Literature” A short Stories collection : by Abhay Kumar

- Bihar Minister of Industry, Samir Kumar Mahaseth has recently released a book titled “The Book of Bihari Literature”, edited by Abhay Kumar, an Indian poet- diplomat, during Grand Trunk Road Initiatives 3.0 (GTRI 3.0). The book is a collection of short stories and poems written over a period of 2600 years, translated into English from various languages such as Angika, Bajjika, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithili, Hindi, Urdu, Pali, Sanskrit, and Farsi.

Piyush Goyal to chair sixth meeting of National Startup Advisory Council

- Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal will chair the sixth meeting of the National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC) in New Delhi today, March 11. According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, NSAC will deliberate upon matters important for the evolution of the Indian startup ecosystem and will cover important topics such as Tech Landscape and the Way Ahead, Innovation in Logistics, Making India the Global Skill Market, Innovation Hub,

IMPORTANT DAYS

World Civil Defense Day.

- On World Civil Defense Day on March 1 every year, the world's attention is on civil protection and preparedness. People need to learn how to prevent, prepare for, and manage emergency situations such as accidents and disasters. The day celebrates the honor and prestige of those in civil protection. It calls on more people to learn about safety measures and protection skills they would need in the case of any form of emergencies, natural or man-made. A famous Civil Defense Day quote is, “We can only hope for the best as long as we are satisfyingly prepared for the worst.” Civil Defense Day is all about raising awareness of the need to plan ahead.

World Compliment Day.

- World Compliment Day is celebrated every March 1 to spread joy through simple verbal affirmations of appreciation. With less focus on providing material representations of appreciation, this day is meant to cost absolutely nothing at all, so everyone can participate! Giving a compliment is easy, whether it's telling someone you like their shoes, or letting them know they're doing a great job — whatever it is, it can change someone's whole day around.

World Music Therapy Day

- World Music Therapy Day on March 1 every year is a day for people all around the world to celebrate the healing power of music. People have always known and spoken about the power and benefits of music. Music therapy exists as a clinical field. Music therapists use music to help people, especially children, people with disabilities, people with mental issues, and the elderly. Music therapy is an established health profession where music is used therapeutically to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs.

World Wildlife Day

- On 20 December 2013, at its 68th session, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in its resolution UN decided to proclaim 3 March, the international day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on the planet raise awareness and benefits fauna and flora in 1973, as World Wildlife Day. The commemoration was proposed by Thailand to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora.
- As this year's theme – 'Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation' – highlights, we need to work across governments, civil society, and the private sector to turn commitment into action. And we need much bolder actions now to cut emissions, accelerate renewables, and build climate resilience.

International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness

- Observed on 5 March, the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness plays a role in deepening the global public's understanding about how disarmament efforts contribute to enhancing peace and security, preventing and ending armed conflicts, and curbing human suffering caused by weapons.

National Pharmacy Education Day

- The Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) has announced 6th March as the National Pharmacy Education Day to commemorate the birth anniversary of Professor Mahadeva Lal Schroff and to recognise his contribution to establishing pharmacy education in India.
- Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar, Minister of State inaugurates Pharma Anveshan-2023 on the occasion of National Pharmacy Education Day, It is the need of the hour to change our gears and adopt a focused approach to impart the best pharmacy education keeping our curriculum in line with the latest developments - Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar.

World Tennis Day

- We celebrate World Tennis Day on the first Monday of March every year and on this day, we are learning all there is to know about this interesting sport. This year, it takes place on March 6. It started out as a handball game, known as "jeu de paume" ("game of the palm"), and has transcended into one of the most popular sports in the world. The holiday was launched by StarGames in 2013 with the aim of encouraging participation in the sport. The sport is played by millions of people from around the world in public courts or in clubs.

3-day Cycling Race held to commemorate 72nd Air Force Day in Sri Lanka (2 March)

- An Indian Air force cycling team participated in a Cycling Race organised by Air Force of Sri Lanka. The three-day Cycling Race of 395 kilometres was held to commemorate the 72nd Air Force Day in the island nation. The visiting team interacted with High Commissioner and Commander Sri Lankan Air Force. The team also paid their respects to the martyrs of the Indian Peace Keeping Force during their visit.

International Women's Day

- Why do we celebrate women's day on March 8. - In 1917, women in Russia chose to protest and strike under the slogan "Bread and Peace" on the last Sunday in February (which fell on March 8 on the Gregorian calendar). Their movement ultimately led to the enactment of women's suffrage in Russia."
- This day on the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere was March 8. International Women's Day was marked for a first time by the United Nations in 1975.
- International Women's Day is a global holiday celebrated annually on March 8 as a focal point in the women's rights movement, bringing attention to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence and abuse against women.

Holi. - A celebration of colours, tradition, and health

- A festival of vibrant colours and love, Holi truly represents kaleidoscopic life, without caring for all human boundaries. It symbolises the inherent meaning of life and love for each other, marking the very spirit of tolerance and brotherhood in a diverse society, like ours. It is indeed an opportunity to further promote goodwill and harmony among people, who otherwise appear divided into several lines, and gives out a message to work together for the progress and prosperity of our society and nation. This helps revitalise relationships and strengthen emotional bonds.

International Day of Women Judges

- International Day of Women Judges holds every March 10 to recognize the contributions of women judges worldwide and is part of global effort to ensuring gender equality and to address gender-related judicial integrity issues. It aims to incorporate women's representation issues into judicial systems,
- On - 10 March 2022, for the very first time, we celebrated the International Day of Women Judges pursuant to the recent United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/274 of 2021.

CISF Raising Day :India

- Every year on March 10, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Raising Day is observed to mark the CISF's founding in 1969. The Ministry of Home Affairs' top-tier central armed police force, the CISF, is in charge of providing security protection for several public sector organisations, airports, seaports, power plants, and other significant infrastructure projects across the nation.

World Day Against Cyber Censorship

- Every year on March 12th, World Day Against Cyber Censorship rallies support for an unrestricted Internet that is accessible to all. The day also draws attention to ways governments around the world censor free speech online. The Internet lets people around the world gain access to vast amounts of information. Not only can people get information on nearly any topic imaginable, but they can get it quickly, and usually for little cost. Most people who have access to the internet take it for granted. They might also take for granted the idea of sharing things with others over the worldwide web. Unfortunately, however, there are people in the world who want to restrict the internet. These people don't want people to use their freedom of speech over the worldwide web.
- Each year, this issue is becoming more of a problem. Just recently, Reporters Without Borders unveiled several digital predators of freedom. According to Reporters Without Borders, these digital predators represent a clear danger for freedom of opinion and expression, and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees this right. Digital predators harass people online, censor information, spread disinformation, and use the internet to spy.

Ayya Vaikunda Swamikal birth anniversary

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today paid tribute to Ayya Vaikunda Swamikal on his birth anniversary. In a tweet, Mr Modi said, he devoted himself to serving others and nurturing a society that is inclusive and just. The Prime Minister said, Ayya Vaikunda Swamikal undertook numerous efforts to empower the downtrodden as well. Mr Modi said, his thoughts will keep inspiring people across generations.
- Ayya Vaikundar also known as Siva Narayanar or Vaikunda Swami is the first and the foremost Purna avatar of Eka-Paran as per Ayyavazhi Mythology. He was born to Lord Narayana and his consort Goddess Lakshmi at the Sea of Tiruchendur on the 20th of Masi, 1008 K.E.

World Rotaract Day

- World Rotaract Day - 13 March: is a special day dedicated to celebrating and recognizing the accomplishments of young adults who are involved in the Rotaract movement. Rotaract is a global network of young professionals who work together to promote community service, professional development, and cultural exchange. The day is observed on March 13th each year and is an opportunity to raise awareness about the work that Rotaract clubs are doing around the world.
- Rotaract was first established in 1968 in North Carolina, USA, and has since grown to become a global movement with over 250,000 members in more than 10,000 clubs around the world. Rotaract clubs are made up of young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 who come together to address community needs, develop leadership skills, and build international understanding.
- On World Rotaract Day, Rotaract clubs around the world hold events and activities to celebrate the achievements of their members and raise awareness about the impact of their work. These events can include service projects, social gatherings, fundraising activities, and more.

Commonwealth Day

- Every year, on the second Monday of March, 56 countries from around the world hold celebrations to commemorate Commonwealth Day. While this day was originally referred to as "Empire Day" and had been celebrated on Queen Victoria's birthday on May 24th since 1904, Commonwealth Day wasn't established as such until 1977, when one of its member states proposed this date for all member states of the organization to simultaneously celebrate this occasion, led by the head of the Commonwealth of Nations, the current British ruler.
- With 'Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future' as its theme, the day aims to unite 2.5 billion Commonwealth citizens in celebration of their shared values and principles, and in pursuit of a common future, centred on sustainability and peace.

International Day of Action for Rivers

- The International Day of Action for Rivers observed on 14 March is a day dedicated to solidarity – when diverse communities around the world come together with one voice to say that rivers matter. That communities having access to clean and flowing water matters. That everyone should have a say in decisions that affect their water and their lives. That it's our time to stand up for these rights, now more than ever.
- We're celebrating the 26th Anniversary of this Day for Rivers by also highlighting the importance of being a protector and voice for rivers.

International Day of Mathematics

- Every year on March 14th, people around the world gather together to celebrate the importance of mathematics and everything it's used for, Mathematics is defined as the study of such topics as quantity, structure, space, and change. This definition makes it sound like you have to be a rocket scientist to do math. But whether you realize it or not, you probably use mathematics daily. Do you balance your checkbook? When you have to drive somewhere, do you estimate out how much time it will take to arrive? Do you count calories? Have you ever measured ingredients when you're cooking? Do you do your own taxes? If you do any of these things, you're using math!

Pi Day

- Pi Day is an annual celebration of the mathematical constant π . Pi Day is observed on March 14 since 3, 1, and 4 are the first three significant figures of π . It was founded in 1988 by Larry Shaw, an employee of the San Francisco, California science museum, the Exploratorium. and it also happens to be Albert Einstein's birthday.

World Consumer Rights Day

- World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated on March 15 every year with an aim to raise global awareness about consumer rights and promote consumer protection. The day is also commemorated to be aware about the market injustices across the world. The World Consumer Rights Day is globally recognised and accredited by the United Nations. For 40 years Consumers International has run the campaign, uniting the consumer movement to celebrate together. Consumers International Members help to select the campaign topic each year to help mobilise global action on pressing issues impacting consumers.

International Day to Combat Islamophobia

- The U.N. General Assembly established the International Day to Combat Islamophobia in a resolution passed by a unanimous majority in 2022, designating March 15 as the day of the holiday's celebration. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation was represented by Pakistan in the resolution's introduction. It is in remembrance of the day in 2019 in Christchurch, New Zealand, when a shooter opened fire inside two mosques, killing 51 people and wounding another 40. The resolution was formally introduced by Pakistan's U.N. representative, Munir Akram. He said that this resolution acknowledges the widespread rise in intolerance, prejudice, and violence against members of numerous religious and other communities, regardless of who is doing it.

National Vaccination Day or National Immunization Day.

- Every year, National Vaccination Day or National Immunization Day is observed in India on March 16 with an aim to spread awareness about the importance of vaccines in the healthcare system. The day is observed to create awareness regarding how effective vaccinations are to prevent deadly diseases.
- It was first observed on 16 March 1995 when the first dose of Oral Polio Vaccine was given. It is an attempt to increase awareness for the eradication of polio from the planet earth
- Every year, the day is celebrated under a specific theme. In 2022, the theme was, 'Vaccines Work For Everyone'. However, the theme for this year is not announced yet

World Sleep Day

- World Sleep Day (the Friday before the northern hemisphere vernal equinox) is an annual event organized by the World Sleep Day Committee of the World Sleep Society, formerly World Association of Sleep Medicine (WASM), since 2008.[1] The goal is to celebrate the benefits of good and healthy sleep and to draw society's attention to the burden of sleep problems and their medical, educational, and social aspects, and to promote the prevention and management of sleep disorders.

The 6th Global Recycling Day



- Every year, the Earth yields billions of tons of natural resources and at some point, in the not too distant future, it will run out. That's why we must think again about what we throw away – seeing not waste, but opportunity. The last decade has been the hottest on record, and we are now facing a climate emergency of unparalleled proportions. If we don't make significant and rapid changes, we will see continued rising global temperatures, the melting of icecaps, continents on fire and rapid deforestation.
- This directly affects humanity with increased poverty, immigration from displaced communities, job losses, waste mountains and natural habitats disappearing. We have the power to make lasting changes to combat this, and with recycling being recognized in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 2030, we are already seeing many individuals, governments and organisations taking direct action to support the global green agenda.
- Recycling is a key part of the circular economy, helping to protect our natural resources. Each year the 'Seventh Resource' (recyclables) saves over 700 million tonnes in CO₂ emissions and this is projected to increase to 1 billion tons by 2030. There is no doubt recycling is on the front line in the war to save the future of our planet and humanity.

Ordnance Factories Day: India

- Ordnance Factories are a branch of the government that is engaged in the research and development of weapons for the military, testing, producing, performing logistics and marketing them. Ordnance Factory Day is observed on March 18, annually in India.
- It is the day on which the first Ordnance factory was set up by the British at Cossipore, Kolkata in 1801, during colonial rule. The day is celebrated by the Ministry of Defence, who hoist the Indian flag, sing the national anthem and then exhibit various artillery and other items used by the Indian Armed Forces, to the public.

International Client's Day

- The global business community celebrates International Client's Day on March 19 every year. As the name entails, it is all about the client on this particular unofficial holiday. Various organizations around the world take the time to thank and congratulate their customers, visitors, partners, and even online shoppers — basically anyone who could be labeled a 'client'.
- As , No matter what goods or services you sell, the truth is that your business would be nothing without its clients. No matter whether we're talking about those who visit the shopping mall every few weeks or those who prefer to make their purchases over the internet, the truth is that no business would make it without them.
- They're the ones who not only pay you for what you offer, but do a great amount of advertising for you as well. Remember: no celebrity paid thousands if not millions of dollars to say he or she loves a certain product could ever convince your stubborn but lovable grandparents to buy an item as well as you can, and your satisfied clients do you favors like this every single day. And that's why showing them your appreciation is so important!

Indian Embassy in Kathmandu celebrates 21st Golden Jubilee Scholarship Day

- The Embassy of India, Kathmandu celebrated the 21st Golden Jubilee Scholarship Day on March 18. On the occasion, Ambassador Naveen Srivastava announced that a special Embassy of India's roll of honour will be awarded to meritorious graduating Golden Jubilee scholars, in different categories from next year.
- The prestigious Golden Jubilee Scholarship was established in the year 2002 to mark the completion of 50 years of India-Nepal economic cooperation. At the inception of this scheme, 50 Nepali students were awarded the scholarship. In the year 2007, the numbers of scholarships were increased to 100. Since the year 2012, the numbers of scholarships have been doubled to 200. Under this scholarship scheme, an MBBS/BDS student receives NRs. 4000/- per month for five years, a BE student receives NRs. 4000/- per month for four years, and a student studying in other undergraduate courses like BA, BEd, B. Pharmacy, BSc Agriculture, BBA, BBM and BBS receives NRs. 3000/- per month for three years.

Google Doodle Today: March 19 Celebrates Nobel Laureate Mario Molina's Birth Anniversary

- The Google Doodle of March 19, 2023 is dedicated to Mexican chemist Mario Molina, who is famous for his work on the ozone layer. March 19, 2023 marks the 80th birth anniversary of Molina. Google pays tribute to him through a doodle which depicts the molecular form of ozone, O₃, as one of the 'Os' of 'GOOGLE', and replaces the other 'O' with the Sun. The ozone layer protects Earth from the Sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation.
- The doodle also shows the hole in the ozone layer, and denotes the fact that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) contributed to the formation of the ozone hole. Chlorofluorocarbons were found in air conditioners and aerosol sprays

International Day of Happiness

- It's a day to be happy, of course! Since 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness as a way to recognise the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.
- Happiness is a fundamental human goal. The United Nations General Assembly recognizes this goal and calls for "a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes the happiness and well-being of all peoples."
- In 2015, the UN launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to end poverty, reduce inequality, and protect our planet – three key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness.
- The United Nations invites each person of any age, plus every classroom, business and government to join in celebration of the International Day of Happiness.

World Oral Health Day

- World Oral Health Day is observed globally on March 20 every year with the primary aim of creating awareness about the importance of oral health. The day is celebrated to promote good oral hygiene habits, encourage people to take care of their teeth, and educate them on how to prevent dental problems. Each year, World Oral Health Day is given a specific theme. The theme for 2023 is "Be Proud of Your Mouth". It was chosen for three years as part of a campaign launched by the World Dental Federation (FDI) in 2021. The last two World Oral Health Days also had the same theme.
- Oral health is an essential part of overall health and well-being and it is important to maintain good oral hygiene to prevent dental problems. Neglecting oral health can lead to various problems such as tooth decay, gum disease, and bad breath. World Health Day is geared towards inspiring people to unite and reduce the burden of oral diseases.

National Gallery of Modern Art organizes a Painting & Pottery workshop on the occasion of "World Down Syndrome Day"

- On the occasion of World Down Syndrome Day, (21, March) the National Gallery of Modern Art has organized a Painting & Pottery workshop today at its premises in New Delhi.
- Director NGMA, Smt. Temsunaro Jamir Tripathi interacted with the participants and their parents. She addressed the gathering and said that the Gallery is organizing events and exclusively curated shows for the differently abled children. Further, she said that NGMA is actively involving civil society for public awareness and establishing a voice for people with special needs, such as "Autism Week" and sign-language tours. These events align with the revised definition of museums: "Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability".
- The workshop will give a platform to express themselves creatively and showcase their abilities and ideas. The pottery session is guided by Gurugram based Shaurya Mehrotra, potter and artist with down syndrome.

International Day of Forests

- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the International Day of Forests in 2012 to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests. Countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns.
- The organizers are - The United Nations Forum on Forests and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with Governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant organizations in the field. International Day of Forests: The theme for each year is chosen by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The theme for 2023 is 'forests and health.'



- Forests cover one-third of the Earth's landmass. Around 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihood, medicines, fuel, food, and shelter. Forests are also home to more than 80 percent of land animals, insects, and plants. There are 3 trillion trees in all the forests on Earth. Forests are defined as a large group of trees. In order to be considered an actual forest, trees have to cover at least 0.5 hectares.

World Poetry Day

- World Poetry Day is celebrated on 21 March, and was declared by UNESCO in 1999, "with the aim of supporting linguistic diversity through poetic expression and increasing the opportunity for endangered languages to be heard".
- World Poetry Day on March 21st serves as a reminder of the magnitude that reading and writing poetry has enriched and inspired the way we live our lives. Ever since humans have been recording history, poetry has challenged the norm with new ways of thinking through allegory and complex emotion. Words have always been the binding source between people and allows us to see life from a new perspective. Poetry is the artistic mastery of this phenomena, by conveying emotions within us and creating the ability to influence others. It's our poetic nature that allows words to be the bridge to our feelings.

International Nowruz Day

- Every year on March 21, the International Nowruz Day is a much-anticipated global New Year's festival that marks the spring equinox. It is celebrated as the beginning of the new year by more than 300 million people all around the world and has been celebrated for over 3,000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions.
- Inscribed in 2009 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as a cultural tradition observed by numerous peoples, Nowruz is an ancestral festivity marking the first day of spring and the renewal of nature. It promotes values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families as well as reconciliation and neighbourliness, thus contributing to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples and different communities.

World Down Syndrome Day

- World Down Syndrome Day is marked each year on March 21, beginning in 2007. The 21st day of March was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome. Every year on March 21, World Down Syndrome Day is observed to create awareness about Down syndrome.
- Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always been a part of the human condition. It exists in all regions globally and commonly affects learning styles, physical characteristics, and overall health. In order to ensure proper growth and development, social learning programs support and integrate with anyone who has Down syndrome.

World Water Day

- World Water Day is an annual United Nations observance day held on 22 March that highlights the importance of fresh water. The day is used to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. World Water Day is a chance to remind ourselves that billions of people to this day live their lives without access to safe drinking water. As a fundamental human right, it is our job to conserve the water we do have as well as ensure access to those who need it.
- As many different groups are overlooked when it comes to providing access to Earth's most precious resource, the United Nations has taken the stance that "water services must meet the needs of marginalized groups and their voices must be heard in the decision-making process." In order to guarantee no one is left behind, it is our job to educate ourselves on the laws and regulations that surround our water usage. The water challenges we face vary from region to region. By better understanding the challenges we face in conserving water, the more prepared we'll be to supply water in the future. "Accelerating the change to solve the water and sanitation crisis" will be the theme for World Water Day 2023.

Bihar Diwas or Bihar Day

- Bihar Diwas or Bihar Day is an annual commemoration on March 22, which marks the day in 1912 when the British partitioned the state of Bihar from the Bengal presidency. It is a public holiday across the state, with all offices, companies, and educational institutes under the central and state governments closed for the day.



- In order to revive pride among its citizens, the Bihar government decided to mark the formation day with multicultural activities and programmes in 2010. The official celebration of this day, including various events and programs, began in 2011 and has continued ever since.
- Each year, Bihar Diwas is celebrated with a distinct theme. In 2023, the theme of Bihar Day is "Yuva Shakti Bihar Ki Pragati," which translates to "Progress of Bihar through Youth Power." The theme highlights the crucial role that the youth of Bihar plays in driving the state's growth and development. This year's Bihar Day celebration aims to recognize and showcase the potential of Bihar's young population in transforming the state's future and creating a better tomorrow.

Martyr's Day or Shaheed Diwas: India

- Every year on March 23, India observes Martyrs' Day or Shaheed Diwas to honor the brave soldiers who gave their lives for the country. This day serves as a reminder to be grateful for the sacrifices made by these soldiers to protect the country and its people.
- Martyrs' Day has a historical significance as it marks the day in 1931 when Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar were hanged to death during the struggle for India's independence. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, is also remembered on Martyrs' Day. January 30th is observed as Martyrs' Day or Shaheed Diwas in memory of Gandhi, who was assassinated on that day.

World Meteorological Day

- World Meteorological Day takes place every year on 23 March and commemorates the coming into force on 23 March 1950 of the Convention establishing the World Meteorological Organization. It showcases the essential contribution of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services to the safety and wellbeing of society and is celebrated with activities around the world.
- Our weather and climate and the water cycle know no national or political boundaries. International cooperation is essential. This philosophy has driven the work of the world's meteorological community since 1873 and will guide us as we translate science into services for society for present and future generations.
- Since 1961, the World Meteorological Organization has been celebrating World Meteorological Day with a different theme selected for each year. The theme of World Meteorological Day 2023 is 'The Future of Weather, Climate and Water across Generations.' It underlines the impact of climate change and steps to protect the environment for the upcoming generations.

World TB Day

- Each year, we recognize World TB Day on March 24. This annual event commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacillus that causes tuberculosis (TB).
- World TB Day is a day to educate the public about the impact of TB around the world. CDC, along with our partners and colleagues around the world share successes in TB prevention and control and raise awareness of the challenges that hinder our progress toward the elimination of this devastating disease.
- World TB Day 2023, with the theme 'Yes! We can end TB!', aims to inspire hope and encourage high-level leadership, increased investments, faster uptake of new WHO recommendations, adoption of innovations, accelerated action, and multisectoral collaboration to combat the TB epidemic.

Right to Truth Day

- On 21 December 2010, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 March as the International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims.
- The date was chosen because on 24 March 1980, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of El Salvador was assassinated, after denouncing violations of human rights.
- Each year, on 24 March, the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims is observed.
- This annual observance pays tribute to the memory of Monsignor Óscar Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered on 24 March 1980. Monsignor Romero was actively engaged in denouncing violations of the human rights of the most vulnerable individuals in El Salvador.

Kitty O'Neil's 77th Birth anniversary

- Kitty O'Neil, a famous American stuntwoman and actress who was deaf from a young age, was commemorated by Google on her 77th birthday anniversary with a doodle featuring her in a yellow jumpsuit. She went on to become one of Hollywood's most famous stunt drivers. Google celebrated Kitty O'Neil's 77th birth anniversary with a doodle that depicted her in a yellow jumpsuit. Despite being deaf since childhood, she became a well-known stunt driver in Hollywood and held the women's absolute land speed record until 2019.
- Kitty O'Neil was an American stuntwoman and actor who was born in Texas in 1946. She became deaf at a young age due to contracting multiple diseases. Despite this, she went on to become one of Hollywood's most recognized stunt drivers and performers, appearing as a stunt double in several movies and shows.
- In 1976, O'Neil set the women's absolute land speed record driving a hydrogen peroxide-powered three-wheeled rocket car, reaching an average speed of 825.127 kmph, with a top speed of 999 kmph. This earned her the title of the "fastest woman in the world." She also set a women's high-fall record of 127 feet (39 m) while performing as a stunt double in the 1979 episode of the Wonder Woman TV series, which she would later break.
- O'Neil died in 2018 at the age of 72 due to pneumonia. In 2019, she was honored with the Oscars in Memoriam award. A biopic about her life, called Silent Victory: The Kitty O'Neil Story, was released in 1979 and showcased her land speed record achievement. A biopic named Silent Victory: The Kitty O'Neil Story, was released in 1979, and she received the Oscars in Memoriam award in 2019. She passed away in 2018 due to pneumonia at the age of 72.

Earth Hour Day: March 25, 2023 8:30 PM - 9:30 PM

- Earth Hour is a worldwide movement organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The event is held annually, encouraging individuals, communities, and businesses to turn off non-essential electric lights, for one hour, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the last Saturday of March, as a symbol of commitment to the planet. It was started as a lights-off event in Sydney, Australia, in 2007.
- Occasionally, in years when Holy Saturday falls on the last Saturday of March, Earth Hour is moved a week early rather than its usual date.

Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Urges People To Observe Earth Hour today: 25th March

- Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu appealed to the people of the state to be part of 'Earth Hour', to be observed under the theme 'The Biggest Hour for Earth' today 25th March, 2023. He said that it was an Endeavour of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to raise awareness about the conservation of nature and climate change – the two biggest threats facing the planet today.
- He urged the people of the State to switch off all non-essential lights on 25th March for one hour between 8.30 PM to 9.30 PM to support this mission.. He said this mission would go a long way in creating a better and healthy environment for future generations.

Amit Shah attends the 84th Raising Day CRPF as Chief Guest at Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh: 25 March

- On 25 March CRPF is celebrated 84th Foundation Day. Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah attended the 84th Raising Day celebrations of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) as the Chief Guest at Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh, today. The Union Home Minister also took the salute of the parade on the occasion. Shri Amit Shah also inaugurated Prasar Bharati's news bulletin for the Bastar Division in the local language of Halbi.
- In his address, Shri Amit Shah said that it is a matter of great joy for all of us as this day is being celebrated in Chhattisgarh for the first time after the establishment of CRPF and since the beginning of the problem of left wing extremism. He said that 763 CRPF personnel have made the supreme sacrifice during the drive to end Left Wing Extremism in Chhattisgarh. Today our fight against Left Wing Extremism is at a decisive stage, for which the martyred Jawans have made immense contribution.

World Civil Defense Day.

- On World Civil Defense Day on March 1 every year, the world's attention is on civil protection and preparedness. People need to learn how to prevent, prepare for, and manage emergency situations such as accidents and disasters. The day celebrates the honor and prestige of those in civil protection. It calls on more people to learn about safety measures and protection skills they would need in the case of any form of emergencies, natural or man-made. A

famous Civil Defense Day quote is, “We can only hope for the best as long as we are satisfyingly prepared for the worst.” Civil Defense Day is all about raising awareness of the need to plan ahead.

World Compliment Day.

- World Compliment Day is celebrated every March 1 to spread joy through simple verbal affirmations of appreciation. With less focus on providing material representations of appreciation, this day is meant to cost absolutely nothing at all, so everyone can participate! Giving a compliment is easy, whether it's telling someone you like their shoes, or letting them know they're doing a great job — whatever it is, it can change someone's whole day around.

World Music Therapy Day

- World Music Therapy Day on March 1 every year is a day for people all around the world to celebrate the healing power of music. People have always known and spoken about the power and benefits of music. Music therapy exists as a clinical field. Music therapists use music to help people, especially children, people with disabilities, people with mental issues, and the elderly. Music therapy is an established health profession where music is used therapeutically to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs.

World Theatre Day

- World Theatre Day was initiated in 1962 by the International Theatre Institute (ITI). It is celebrated annually on 27 March by ITI Centres and the international theatre community. Various national and international theatre events are organized to mark this occasion. One of the most important of these is the circulation of the World Theatre Day International Message through which at the invitation of ITI, a figure of world stature shares his or her reflections on the theme of Theatre and a Culture of Peace. The first World Theatre Day International Message was written by Jean Cocteau (France) in 1962. It was first in Helsinki, and then in Vienna at the 9th World Congress of the ITI in June 1961 that President Arvi Kivimaa proposed on behalf of the Finnish Centre of the International Theatre Institute that a World Theatre Day be instituted. The proposal, backed by the Scandinavian centres, was carried with acclamation.

International Day of Zero Waste

- On 14 December 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution at its seventy-seventh session to proclaim 30 March as International Day of Zero Waste, to be observed annually. Türkiye, with 105 other countries, put forward the resolution. It follows other resolutions focused on waste, including “End plastic pollution: towards an internationally legally binding instrument”, adopted at the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022.

The International Day of Zero Waste aims to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns and raise awareness about how zero-waste initiatives contribute to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- Humanity generates an estimated 2.24 billion tons of municipal solid waste annually, of which only 55 per cent is managed in controlled facilities. By 2050, this could rise to 3.88 billion tons per year. The waste sector is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in urban settings and biodiversity loss. Around 931 million tons of food is wasted each year, and up to 37 million tons of plastic waste is expected to enter the ocean annually by 2040.
- In line with the theme for International Day of Zero Waste 2023 - 'Achieving sustainable and environmentally sound practices of minimizing and managing waste',

Rajasthan Day / Rajasthan Diwas

- Rajasthan, the Land of Kings is synonymous with heroism, royalty and honour. Historic tales of battles fought and romance of the riches adorn the walls of the state. Established in the era marked with wartime ballads yet living in the modern period, the region is a travellers' destination.
- 30th March 2023, marks the 74th Foundation Day of the state. The state was formed this day in 1949. The history of the region dates back to around 5,000 years. Before being called Rajputana, the region was called 'Gujratha', the land protected by Gujjars. But it was during this time that Rajputana (the name adopted by the British to manage the dependencies in the region) was merged into India.



- Rajasthan is the largest state in the country by area and covers 10.4% of India's total area. It shares its border with five major Indian states- Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Around 25% of the National Capital Region (NCR) falls in the state. Rajasthan provides access to around 40% of India's market in the neighbouring states and also serves as an indispensable medium of transport between North-Indian states and the ports on the Western coastline of India.

Swachhotsav-2023' was held at India Habitat Centre, New Delh

- Under 'Swachh Bharat Mission' a special workshop under 'Swachhotsav-2023' was held at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on the occasion of 'International Zero Garbage Day' on March 30th in the presence of Union Urban Development and Housing Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.
- Commissioner of the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) Rajesh Narvekar participated in the seminar on innovative initiatives for a waste-free city and presented three unique concepts on behalf of the NMMC. All the three innovative concepts presented by the Commissioner were appreciated at the national level. "Swachhotsav-2023" has been organized at the national level to increase women's participation and leadership in cleanliness, in which Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation has enthusiastically participated. The Municipal Corporation has always used innovative concepts in cleanliness.

OBITUARY

Former diplomat, Padma Bhushan awardee Chandrashekhar Dasgupta is no more

- Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, former Indian diplomat and the recipient of Padma Bhushan, passed away on Thursday at 82. During his almost four-decade-long career, he served as the ambassador to the European Union, Belgium, Luxembourg and China.
- He joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1962. He was the high commissioner to Singapore between 1981 and 1984 and Tanzania between 1984 and 1986. Dasgupta also held the vice-chair of the preparatory committees of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), popularly known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Actor Sameer Khakhar who played role of Khopdi in 'Nukkad', Passed away at 71

- Actor Sameer Khakhar, best known for playing the lovable drunk Khopdi in the classic 1980s TV serial "Nukkad", died at a hospital here in the early hours of Wednesday due to multiple organ failure.
- The actor, who was most recently seen in the Prime Video series "Farzi" and moved to the US in the 1990s for a few years to become a software developer, was 71. Sameer Khakhar was admitted to MM Hospital in Borivali in suburban Mumbai on Tuesday morning following respiratory issues,

Indore's noted journalist and Padma Shri winner Abhay Chhajlani passes away

- Chhajlani was born on 4th August 1934 in Indore. He entered the field of journalism in 1955. In 1963, he took over as the executive editor and later remained the editor-in-chief of NaiDunia for a long time. In the year 1965, he graduated from Thomson Foundation, Cardiff (UK), the world's premier Institute of Journalism. He was the first journalist to be selected for this training from the field of Hindi journalism.
- He had prominently raised many major issues of the city. Along with this, he was also associated with sports. He was the President of Madhya Pradesh Table Tennis Association for a long time and then remained on the post of President for life.
- Lately, apart from serving as the chairman of the editorial board of NaiDunia, he was also carrying out many important social responsibilities. Abhay Chhajlani was a three-time president of ILNA, the apex organization of Indian language newspapers. He was the president of the organization in 1988, 1989 and 1994. He was also the Vice President of the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) in 2000 and President in 2002.

Filmmaker Pradeep Sarkar passes away at 67

- Filmmaker Pradeep Sarkar, who was best-known for directing films like Parineeta, Helicopter Eela and Mardaani, has died at the age of 67. Director Hansal Mehta shared the news on his Twitter profile on Friday morning and he wrote: "Pradeep Sarkar. Dada. RIP." United by grief, Bollywood stars paid tribute to the filmmaker. Ajay Devgn, in his eulogy for Pradeep Sarkar, wrote: "The news of Pradeep Sarkar's demise, 'Dada' to some of us is still hard to



digest. My deepest condolences. My prayers are with the departed and his family. RIP Dada." Actor Manoj Bajpayee retweeted Hansal Mehta's tweet and he wrote: "Ohh! That's so shocking! Rest in peace Dada."

- Several members of the film industry showed up to pay their respects for the filmmaker and greet his grieving family. The veteran filmmaker made his feature directorial debut with Parineeta, that starred Vidya Balan, Saif Ali Khan and Sanjay Dutt. Among those who were in attendance at the crematorium in Mumbai for the funeral were Deepika Padukone, Vidya Balan with husband Sidharth Roy Kapur, Rani Mukerji, Dia Mirza, Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Rhea Chakraborty, Neil Nitin Mukesh, Gajraj Rao, Tahir Raj Bhasin and Sakshi Tanwar.

Intel co-founder Gordon Moore has passed away

- Gordon Moore, co-founder and former CEO of Intel, has passed away at 94. He was the last surviving member of the Intel Trinity, which also included his fellow founder Robert Noyce and their first hire Andy Grove. Moore and Noyce previously worked with the co-inventor of the transistor, William Shockley, before helping found Fairchild Semiconductor. In 1968, the two struck out on their own and founded NM Electronics, which eventually became Intel.

Actor and former MP Innocent passes away at 75

- Veteran Malayalam actor and former member of Parliament Innocent Vareed Thekkethala passes away at 75 in a private hospital in Kochi on Sunday. After learning about the unfortunate event, several celebrities took to their social media handles and mourned the death of the late actor.
- The actor, a cancer survivor was reportedly not keeping well for some time and was admitted to the hospital on March 3 with respiratory problems.
- Saddened by the death, Prithviraj Sukumaran took to Twitter and wrote, "End of an iconic chapter in cinema history! Rest in peace Legend! #Innocent."

SPORTS

Manchester United win Carabao Cup final 2023.

- Manchester United vs Newcastle Final Highlights, Carabao Cup: Manchester United's six-year wait for a trophy is over after beating Newcastle 2-0 to win the League Cup. United manager Erik ten Hag has wasted no time in guiding the club to silverware just 10 months after being hired.

Coming soon at Wankhede, a life-size Sachin Tendulkar statue.

- Ten years after he retired from cricket, a life-size statue of Sachin Tendulkar will be installed inside the iconic Wankhede stadium in Mumbai where he played his final game for India. Cricket officials are hoping the statue will be unveiled during the 50-over World Cup later this year.
- There are not many life-size statues of cricketers inside stadiums in the country. There are three separate such statues of the former big-hitting India great C K Nayudu at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, VDCA Stadium in Andhra and Holkar Stadium in Indore.

WPL 2023: Women To Get Free Entry To Matches In Inaugural Season.

- The inaugural edition of the Women's Premier League is all set to commence in just three days time with the first match set to be played between Gujarat Giants and Mumbai Indians at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai. In a major development, the tournament, comprising of 22 fixtures, has allowed free entry for women and girls. Meanwhile, for men and boys and tickets are being sold at a nominal price of Rs 100 and 400 as per details available on the ticketing website and app.

Indian Men's National Hockey Team Appoints South Africa's Craig Fulton as New Head Coach

- Craig Fulton, former South African Coach announced as the New Chief Coach of the Men's National Hockey Team of India. The Australian Graham Reid who exit after India's dismal show in the World Cup is replaced by him. He holds coaching experience of more than 25 years. Know how he emerged as a leading coach.
- Men's National Hockey Team of India designates Craig Fulton as the new Chief Coach on March 03, 2023 (Friday). The team previously failed to lend the World Cup at home. Craig Fulton has replaced the Australian Hockey Player Graham John Reid who bid farewell after the country's disappointing show in the World Cup.

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Karnataka beats Meghalaya 3-2 to clinch Santosh Trophy football after 54 years

- Karnataka ended their 54-year wait to win the Santosh Trophy National Football Championship, beating Meghalaya 3-2 in a pulsating final at the King Fahd International Stadium in the Saudi Arabia capital, Riyadh. Egged on by vociferous support from the stands, Karnataka, who last played the senior national championships final 47 years back (1975-76), trumped the first-time finalists, breaching their defence at will and pumping in three goals in the first half to set the tone as well as settle the eventual outcome.

Khelo India Dus ka Dum tournament to be organized in 10 cities

- The Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is set to organize the Khelo India Dus Ka Dum event from March 10 to 31, as a celebration for the International Women's Day 2023. This is the first time that such a sports initiative is being taken to celebrate the international event and the Union Ministry has sanctioned a total budget of Rs 50 Lakh for the tournament. Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur shall be in attendance at the opening ceremony of the event on March 10 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in the national capital.

India beat world champions Germany 3-2 in FIH Pro League

- India stunned world champions Germany 3-2 in the FIH Pro League at Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, Odisha, Indian skipper Harmanpreet Singh had given the home side the lead in the 30th minute through a penalty corner conversion. Sukhjeet Singh's second-half brace helped India to take an unassailable lead. He scored in the 31st and 42nd minutes and both goals came from field efforts. India were 3-0 up in the 42nd minute before Paul-Philipp Kaufmann and Michel Struthoff struck for Germany in the 44th and 57th minutes respectively. Sukhjeet Singh was adjudged player of the match.

Bangladesh's historic T20 - series win against England

- Bangladesh might have lost their proud unbeaten record in ODIs but they have exacted emphatic revenge over England in the shorter format, winning the second T20 by four wickets and the series with a game to spare. This is a curiously lopsided England side, light on batters and so overblessed with bowlers – so much so that the 19th over was also Chris Jordan's first. Bangladesh started it needed 13 off 12 deliveries, and had the game wrapped up with seven to spare.

India win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2-1 against Australia and also qualify for 2023 WTC Final

- India vs Australia: Australia played out a draw in the final Test in Ahmedabad but India took the series 2-1 and won the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the fourth successive time. And India have also qualified for the World Test Championship final where they will face Australia at The Oval.

Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur to inaugurate IBA Women's World Boxing Championships

- The IBA Women's World Boxing Championships will begin in New Delhi today, March 15. Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur will attend the opening ceremony at Indira Gandhi Sports Complex this evening.
- International Boxing Association, IBA President Umar Kremlev, and Boxing Federation of India, BFI President Ajay Singh will also be present on the occasion. BFI is hosting the biggest boxing event till the 26th of March. The Championship is taking place in India for the third time after 2006 and 2018, the most for any country. The tournament will witness the participation of more than 350 boxers from around 74 countries. The Indian team of 12 boxers for the event includes 2020 Tokyo Bronze medallist, Lovlina Borgohain and the current world champion in the 50kg category, Nikhat Zareen.

Ashleigh Gardner, and Harry Brook, seal ICC Player of the Month awards for February

- Australia's Ashleigh Gardner won the award in the women's category. She was instrumental in Australia's triumph in the recent Women's T20 World Cup and received the player of the tournament,
- England's Harry Brook was voted the best men's player for the month of February after his amazing run of form. The English batter received his second POTM award after winning it earlier in December 2022.

Gianni Infantino re-elected FIFA president till 2027,

- Gianni Infantino was re-elected as FIFA president until 2027 by acclamation, after highlighting his strong financial performance as a reason for keeping a CEO in their position for life. The decision was made by the congress of 211 member federations, who have seen their annual funding from FIFA increase from \$250,000 to \$2 million since Infantino's first win in 2016. Following the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, FIFA now has \$4 billion in reserves, and it conservatively predicts a record revenue of at least \$11 billion from the 2026 men's World Cup, which will be hosted in North America.

Gianni Infantino re-elected as FIFA president

- Gianni Infantino, a contentious figure in the world of football, on Thursday secured a new term as Fifa president after an election in which he was the only candidate, Infantino, 52, got the post for another four years by acclamation at Fifa's 73rd Congress in the Rwandan capital of Kigali. All but a small number of Fifa's 211 national federations rose to applaud Infantino, making his re-election as head of football's governing body a formality.
- Upon getting the crown, Infantino promised record revenues in the next four-year cycle of \$11 billion as he called for more football to be played around the world. He also appeared to acknowledge that he was not universally popular amid controversies, including the treatment of migrant workers in the run-up to last year's World Cup in Qatar and a failed plan to play the tournament every two years.

ISSF World Cup Shooting Championship to begin today – 20TH March at Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh

- International Shooting Sports Federation- ISSF World Cup Shooting Championship is organised in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh from 20 to 27 March. The official opening ceremony will be held on 21 March while competitions begin on 22 March at Madhya Pradesh State Shooting Academy.
- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will formally inaugurate this event on 21 March. Around 325 shooters from 33 countries and more than 75 technical officials will participate in the World Cup Shooting Championship. The Championship is being organized in collaboration with the Government of Madhya Pradesh and the Rifle Federation of India. It is the 8th World Cup organised in India and the first international shooting tournament to be held outside New Delhi.

Tim Paine Announces Retirement From First-Class Cricket

- The Hobart-born Paine represented Tasmania over 18 years after debuting in 2005, playing 153 first-class matches. Former Australia test cricket captain Tim Paine has announced his retirement following the conclusion of Tasmania's Sheffield Shield first-class match against Queensland on Friday
- Wicketkeeper Paine captained Australia in 23 tests between early 2018 and 2021, playing 35 tests overall. He became Australia's 46th test skipper after Steve Smith had his captaincy stripped in the wake of the ball-tampering scandal on Australia's 2018 tour of South Africa.
- Paine, who debuted against Pakistan at Lord's in 2010, averaged 32.63 in test matches with a top score of 92 and made 157 dismissals behind the stumps. He also played 35 one-day internationals for Australia.

Archery Asia Cup 2023: Indian archers shine as they bagged 10 medals in the tournament

- Indian archers finished with a rich haul of 10 medals - five gold, four silver and one bronze - at the Asia Cup 2023 archery stage-1 world ranking tournament in Taoyuan, Chinese Taipei. In all, 16 Indian archers including eight men and eight women competed at the Asia Cup 2023 in Taoyuan. India topped the medal tally with 10 medals, while Taipei and Kazakhstan finished second and third.

Asian Billiards title 2023

- India's Pankaj Advani retained his Asian Billiards title in the 100-up format, defeating fellow countryman Brijesh Damani 5-1 in the final played at Qatar Billiards and Snooker Federation (QBSF) Academy in Doha on Sunday, March 19. Advani, who is a 25-time International Billiards and Snooker Federation (IBSF) world champion, defeated Damani with a scoreline of 100(51)-18, 100(88)-9, 86(54)-101(75), 100-26, 100(66)-2, 101(64)-59 in the final.
- In the women's section, China's Bai Yulu won the title beating Panchaya Channoi of Thailand 3-0 in the final. This is the eighth Asian Billiards title in all for Advani, the Indian cue sports ace who has been bestowed the Arjuna Award in 2004, Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna in 2006, Padma Shri in 2009 and Padma Bhushan in 2018. Advani had won the same title last year at Doha.

ISSF World Cup Shooting Championship: India win bronze

- Indian pair Narmada Nithin Raju and Rudrankksh Balasaheb Patil won bronze medal as they beat China mix team by 16-8 in the 10m Air Rifle Mixed Team bronze medal match in ISSF World Cup shooting championship in Bhopal today.
- Earlier Nithin and Rudrankksh finished 3rd in qualification with 632 points. This is the third medal for India.

SUMMIT'S & MOU's

ONGC signs MoU with France's TotalEnergies for deep-water exploration

- India's top explorer Oil and Natural Gas Corp has signed a memorandum of understanding with French major TotalEnergies for exploration of deep-water blocks, The MoU seeks to provide technical help for ONGC's push to explore and reduce green house emissions in development of deep-water blocks especially in Mahanadi and Andamans, off India's east coast.

Tamil Nadu signs MoU with UNEP for implementing urban cooling programme in the State

- The Tamil Nadu government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for implementing Urban Cooling Programme in the State to meet the objectives under the Tamil Nadu State Action Plan on Climate Change.
- The collaboration between the State government and UNEP will aim address the rapidly increasing demand for cooling in cities while supporting implementation of initiatives to adapt and counteract rising heat.

1st High-Level Committee Meeting for Paris Olympics 2024 Was Organized in SAI Headquarters

- The Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), Shri Anurag Singh Thakur along with Minister of State (MOS), MYAS Shri Nisith Pramanik chaired the first High- Level Committee Meeting for Paris Olympics 2024,
- The meeting which was attended by representatives from MYAS, the Sports Authority of India (SAI), and the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) discussed in detail the roadmap to the Paris Olympics that is to take place next year and also took an update on the preparations for the upcoming Asian Games in Hangzhou this year.

Second Meeting of Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion concludes in Hyderabad

- The second Meeting of Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion, GPFI under G20 India Presidency concluded on Tuesday in Hyderabad. The two-day meeting was led by GPFI Co-Chair and G20 India Presidency and saw participation from Ministry of Finance and Central Bank representatives from G20 and non-G20 countries and International Organisations. During the Plenary, the GPFI members discussed and agreed on the way forward for important deliverables for the year including those on Digital Financial Inclusion, SME Finance. A Symposium on Digital Innovations in Payments and Remittances was also organised on the sidelines of the GPFI meeting for both G20 and non-G20 countries.

Joint Statement of India-US Commercial Dialogue held on 10.03.2023 in New Delhi

- India and the United States of America held the 5th Ministerial level meeting of the bilateral Commercial Dialogue in New Delhi on 10 March 2023. India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, and U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo, co-chaired and re-launched the Commercial Dialogue in accordance with the U.S.-India Joint Leaders' Statement of September 2021, with a renewed focus on future and emerging areas of bilateral commercial partnership. The Commercial Dialogue is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the U.S.-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, develop inclusive and fair trade and investment policies, and leverage the interests of the private sector in pursuing new market opportunities that advance prosperity in both countries.
- The Minister and the Secretary noted with satisfaction that the bilateral goods and services trade has almost doubled since 2014, exceeding US \$191 billion in 2022, signaling accelerated growth benefitting both countries. With the United States becoming India's largest trading partner in 2022, both sides will take further steps to enhance their commercial collaboration and tap into market potential across multiple sectors. Both sides envision further coordination on how best to foster an enabling environment for increased investment, including by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-up companies.

India, US Sign MoU On Semiconductor Supply Chain And Innovation Partnership

- India and the United States have signed an MoU on semiconductor Supply Chain and Innovation Partnership following the Commercial Dialogue 2023. It was signed between Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo in New Delhi.
- The MoU seeks to establish a collaborative mechanism between the two governments on Semiconductor Supply chain resiliency and diversification in view of the US's CHIPS and Science Act and India's Semiconductor Mission. The India-US Commercial Dialogue was also re-launched today to discuss cooperation for unlocking new trade and investment opportunities between the two countries.

PNB Signs MoU With Central Warehousing Corporation

- Punjab National Bank (PNB) and Central Warehousing Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to facilitate financing under e-NWR (Electronic Negotiable Warehousing Receipt) on Thursday. The partnership is aimed at providing easy access to finance to farmers, food processors, and traders against the pledge of agriculture commodities stored in CWC warehouses
- Punjab National Bank said, "Agriculture is an important sector of the country's economy, and government has been focusing on increasing the income of the farmers who drive this segment. One of the main constraints in increasing farm income has been distress sales by the farmers. With a view to curbing the same, the bank has entered this new MoU."

Third session of National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to begin in New Delhi today : 10 March

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the third session of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi today evening. This year's theme of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is building local resilience in the face of climate change.
- During the event, the Prime Minister will facilitate awardees of the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar. The winners of the 2023 Puraskar are the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority and the Lunglei Fire Station of Mizoram

Piyush Goyal to chair sixth meeting of National Startup Advisory Council

- Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal will chair the sixth meeting of the National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC) in New Delhi today, March 11. According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, NSAC will deliberate upon matters important for the evolution of the Indian startup ecosystem and will cover important topics such as Tech Landscape and the Way Ahead, Innovation in Logistics, Making India the Global Skill Market, Innovation Hub,

Lockheed Martin, & Tata ink MoU for fighter plane wings production in India

- Global defence aerospace player Lockheed Martin and India's Tata Group have inked an agreement for the production of fighter plane wings at their joint venture Tata Lockheed Martin Aerostructures Ltd (TLMAL) in Hyderabad.

- According to Lockheed Martin, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) envisions production of 29 fighter wing shipsets, with an option of additional shipsets, with deliveries commencing in 2025.

First international conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage to begin in New Delhi

- The first international conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage will commence in New Delhi today 14th March. It is being organised with a focus on India's civilisational connect with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) nations 2023. The two-day conference aims at re-establishing trans-cultural links and seeking out commonalities, between Buddhist art of Central Asia, art styles, archaeological sites and antiquity in various museum collections of the SCO countries.
- The event, under India's leadership of SCO, will bring together Central Asian, East Asian, South Asian and Arab countries on a common platform to discuss Shared Buddhist Heritage. The SCO countries comprise of Member States, Observer States and Dialogue Partners, including China, Russia and Mongolia. The two-day programme is being organised by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of External Affairs and the International Buddhist Confederation. A number of Indian scholars of Buddhism will also participate in the event. Participants will also have the opportunity to tour some of the historical sites of Delhi.

RBI and Central Bank of the UAE sign MoU to promote innovation in financial products and services

- The Reserve Bank of India and the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday to promote innovation in financial products and services.
- As per the MoU, both central banks will work together to explore Central Bank Digital Currencies and investigate interoperability between the CBDCs of CBUAE and RBI. They will conduct proof-of-concept and pilot tests of bilateral CBDC bridge to facilitate cross-border transactions of remittances and trade. This collaboration is expected to increase efficiency and reduce costs in cross-border transactions, furthering the economic ties between India and UAE. The MoU also includes technical collaboration and knowledge sharing on matters related to Fintech and financial products and services.
- This collaboration will help both central banks enhance their capabilities and contribute to the development of a robust financial ecosystem. The collaboration between RBI and CBUAE is a significant step towards promoting innovation and collaboration in the field of FinTech.

Ministry of Ayush and Ministry of Rural Development signed MoU for skilling of rural youth & empowering women

- In order to empower women and rural poor youth, the Ministry of Ayush (MoA) and Rural Development signed MoU to collaborate in developing skilled personnel by imparting training for the Ayush healthcare system. The course will also include training of rural youth as panchakarma technicians, which will be started on a pilot basis. The proposed training will be imparted under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya-Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), which is the Ministry of Rural Development's flagship program, charged with the dual goals of diversifying the incomes of rural poor families and catering to the career ambitions of rural youth.
- MoA will aid its institutes to conduct courses, training, and provide certification to the candidates. The Ministry will also depute nodal agencies across the country, who will ensure mobilization, counselling, training, placement, and tracking of candidates as per DDU-GKY norms in their respective designated states.

Two-day SCO Tourism Ministers' meeting to begin at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh : 17 March

- The two-day Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Tourism Ministers' Meeting will start today in Varanasi. Union Minister for Tourism G. Kishan Reddy reached Varanasi yesterday to take part in the meeting. During the meeting, the Tourism Joint Action Plan on the Development of Cooperation in Tourism among SCO member countries would be adopted.
- The Joint Action Plan will include actions relating to the promotion of the SCO tourism brand, the promotion of the cultural heritage of the SCO Member States in tourism, sharing and exchange of information and digital technology in tourism, and promoting mutual cooperation in medical and health tourism.

Government signs MoU with 27 steel companies, kickstarting Rs 6,322-crore PLI scheme

- The government on Friday signed memorandums of understanding (MoU) with 27 companies, kickstarting the Rs 6,322-crore production-linked incentives (PLI) scheme for specialty steel, that is expected to generate investments of up to Rs 30,000 crore over the coming five years.

- The scheme will create 25 million tonnes of additional specialty steel manufacturing in the country and create 55,000 new jobs as per a statement by the Indian Steel Association (ISA).

PM Modi to inaugurate Global Millets Conference in New Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference in New Delhi. The Prime Minister will also address the gathering on the occasion. He will unveil a customised postal stamp and currency coin on the International Year of Millets (IYM) – 2023. A video on Millets will also be released during the event with the announcement of ICAR-IIMR as the Global Centre of Excellence. The Conference will be attended by Agriculture Ministers of six countries, international scientists, nutritionists, health experts, start-up leaders and other stakeholders. It will witness participation from over 100 countries and several stakeholders will attend the event virtually from across the globe.
- The two-day Conference will have sessions on a wide range of issues related to millets including promotion and awareness of millets among producers, consumers and other stakeholders; millets' value chain development; health and nutritional aspects of millets, market linkages research and development etc. An Exhibition-cum- Buyer-Seller Meet with a focus on Millets will also be held with the participation of more than 50 domestic and international buyers, importers, exporters and processors for the promotion of millets. The exhibition of more than 100 stalls will showcase millets and millet-based ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat products, by millet-based Startups, and exporters, and live cooking sessions by various international and national chefs.

Second meeting of Startup-20 engagement group under India's G-20 Presidency begins in Sikkim

- The two-day meeting of the Startup20 engagement group under India's G20 Presidency began today at Chintan Bhawan in Gangtok. The Startup20 engagement group aims to bring together global startup systems while ensuring that every nation has the freedom to grow its unique ecosystem.
- Addressing the inaugural session of Startup20 Sikkim Sabha, Sikkim Chief Minister PS Tamang said, Startup20 is the perfect opportunity for bringing together and synergising key stakeholders in a world that needs innovation, digitisation, dynamic energy, and technology breakthroughs.
- Mr Tamang appreciated the central government's Startup India Initiative to transform India into a country of job creators instead of job seekers. He highlighted various aspects of the scheme including tax exemptions, ease of doing business, and funding assistance. The chief minister also acknowledged the role of the National Credit Guarantee Trust Company, Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, Small Industries Development Bank of India, and Startup India Hub in taking India to the third position in the Global Startup ecosystem and a jump from the 81st to the 40th position in Global Innovation Index in 2022.

International Client's Day

- The global business community celebrates International Client's Day on March 19 every year. As the name entails, it is all about the client on this particular unofficial holiday. Various organizations around the world take the time to thank and congratulate their customers, visitors, partners, and even online shoppers — basically anyone who could be labeled a 'client'.
- As , No matter what goods or services you sell, the truth is that your business would be nothing without its clients. No matter whether we're talking about those who visit the shopping mall every few weeks or those who prefer to make their purchases over the internet, the truth is that no business would make it without them.
- They're the ones who not only pay you for what you offer, but do a great amount of advertising for you as well. Remember: no celebrity paid thousands if not millions of dollars to say he or she loves a certain product could ever convince your stubborn but lovable grandparents to buy an item as well as you can, and your satisfied clients do you favors like this every single day. And that's why showing them your appreciation is so important!

Indian Embassy in Kathmandu celebrates 21st Golden Jubilee Scholarship Day

- The Embassy of India, Kathmandu celebrated the 21st Golden Jubilee Scholarship Day on March 18. On the occasion, Ambassador Naveen Srivastava announced that a special Embassy of India's roll of honour will be awarded to meritorious graduating Golden Jubilee scholars, in different categories from next year.
- The prestigious Golden Jubilee Scholarship was established in the year 2002 to mark the completion of 50 years of India-Nepal economic cooperation. At the inception of this scheme, 50 Nepali students were awarded the scholarship. In the year 2007, the numbers of scholarships were increased to 100. Since the year 2012, the numbers of scholarships have been doubled to 200. Under this scholarship scheme, an MBBS/BDS student receives NRs.

4000/- per month for five years, a BE student receives NRs. 4000/- per month for four years, and a student studying in other undergraduate courses like BA, BEd, B. Pharmacy, BSc Agriculture, BBA, BBM and BBS receives NRs. 3000/- per month for three years.

Google Doodle Today: March 19 Celebrates Nobel Laureate Mario Molina's Birth Anniversary

- The Google Doodle of March 19, 2023 is dedicated to Mexican chemist Mario Molina, who is famous for his work on the ozone layer. March 19, 2023 marks the 80th birth anniversary of Molina. Google pays tribute to him through a doodle which depicts the molecular form of ozone, O₃, as one of the 'Os' of 'GOOGLE', and replaces the other 'O' with the Sun. The ozone layer protects Earth from the Sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation.
- The doodle also shows the hole in the ozone layer, and denotes the fact that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) contributed to the formation of the ozone hole. Chlorofluorocarbons were found in air conditioners and aerosol sprays

Second G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group meeting to begin in Udaipur

- The second Sustainable Finance Working Group (SFWG) meeting under India's G20 Presidency will begin today: 21 March at Udaipur in Rajasthan. The three-day meeting will focus on the identification of relevant policies and best practices for mobilizing sustainable finance to help ensure global growth and stability.
- This is the first time for the SFWG to go beyond climate-related issues and engage in dialogue for enabling enhanced financing for select sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) primarily through nature-related data and reporting and social impact investing.
- On the sidelines of the meeting, two workshops will also be organized today and tomorrow. The first workshop will be on Non-Pricing Policy Levers to support Sustainable Investment. The second Workshop will be on enabling finance for Sustainable Development Goals. More than 90 delegates from the member countries of G20, guest countries, and different international organizations are taking part in this mega-event.

Himachal signs MoU with French Agency to improve drinking water, sanitation

- To improve drinking water and sanitation services in five towns of Himachal Pradesh, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of Rs 817.12 crore project has been signed by the State Government with the French Development Agency Agence Francaise de Developpment (AFD).
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri by the Secretary Jal Shakti Vibhag Amitabh Awasthi on behalf of the State Government and country Director AFD Bruno Bosle on behalf of French Development Agency.
- The objective of the project is to develop better sewerage facilities in five towns of the state viz. Manali, Bilaspur, Palampur, Nahan and Karsog and to improve drinking water supply in Manali and Palampur towns. Under the project, Rs 612 crore would be provided by AFD, whereas the State Government would provide Rs. 204.85 crore, said the Chief Minister.

Paralympic Committee of India signs MOU with Makers Hive and Vilay Sports

- The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Makers Hive and Vilay Sports.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Dr Deepa Malik, a former Paralympic medalist and current president of the PCI, Mr Gursharan Singh, the renowned para-athlete Shri Devendra Jhajharia, Mr Pranav Vempati, CEO of Makers Hive, and Mr Siddharth Ram, CEO of Vilay Sports at the Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Pune, during the 21st National Para-Athletics Championship.
- Vilay Sports is a sports management company that focuses on creating and preserving alliances throughout the spectrum of sports. The company offers clients a 360-degree holistic service and offers cutting-edge solutions to support their success. Vilay Sports' team is eager to work with Makers Hive, an innovative assistive technology firm in India, and PCI, the country's official parasports regulatory organisation, to create a sustainable way of life for people with disabilities.
- On the other hand, the mission of Makers Hive is to establish a revolutionary ecosystem where technology and social problems are met, analytics and human aspirations are encountered, innovation and customer satisfaction are achieved, and creativity empowers the next generation to truly benefit society.

MoU signed for setting up nation's first PM MITRA Park in Tamil Nadu

- The nation's first PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Park is set to be established in Virudhunagar District of Tamil Nadu, and employ an estimated 2 lakh people, the Memorandum of Understanding for which was signed between the Central and State governments here on Wednesday.
- Marking the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on his Twitter handle: "Today is a very special day for my sisters and brothers of Tamil Nadu!"
- "The aspirational district of Virudhunagar will be home to a PM MITRA mega textiles park. This will boost the local economy and will prove to be beneficial for the youngsters of the state #PragatiKaPMMitra," he said. Giving a big boost to the textile sector, the PM MITRA Parks, in all, would create huge employment opportunities and an estimated 20 lakh people would get 'new work' attracting about Rs 70,000 crore investment, Union Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal said here.
- The mega project would ensure south Tamil Nadu's economic growth, Chief Minister M K Stalin said.

G20 Research and Innovation Initiative Gathering

- The two-day G20 Research and Innovation Initiative Gathering (RIIG) Conference will begin in Dibrugarh, Assam today. It will deliberate on ways towards building a sustainable and circular bio-economy.
- About 100 delegates from G20 members, guest countries and International organizations, along with invited participants from the scientific community will be present on the occasion.
- The event will bring together key actors, including national authorities and experts from the G20 members responsible for planning, setting up new, and managing existing programmes on the subject.
- The area of focus will include challenges and opportunities in agriculture, de-carbonization of the industry as well as bio-energy and bioresource management.
- The conference will also deliberate on national and regional programmes and country experiences, regulatory environment and public/private sector collaboration, role of research, development and innovation in creating new, resource-efficient, sustainable and more circular bio-based technologies, products, services and cooperation between G20 members on specific thematic areas.
- This event will further promote active engagement between all key stakeholders, including the 3Ps (people, policies and places), and lead towards an inclusive policy-making approach providing a conceptual framework to mainstream circular bio-economy models across different sectors.

PM Modi to address One World TB Summit at Varanasi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit his parliamentary constituency Varanasi today. PM will address the One World TB Summit at Rudrakash Convention Centre at around 10:30 AM.
- On the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day, Prime Minister will address the One World TB Summit. This summit is being organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Stop TB Partnership. Founded in 2001, the Stop TB Partnership is a United Nations-hosted organisation that amplifies the voices of the people, communities, and countries affected by TB.
- During the event, Prime Minister will launch various initiatives and will also award select States and Districts for their progress toward ending TB.
- In March 2018, during the End TB summit held in New Delhi, Prime Minister called on India to achieve TB-related SDG targets by 2025, five years ahead of stipulated time. One World TB Summit will provide an opportunity to further deliberate upon the targets as the country moves forward to meet its TB elimination objectives. International delegates from over 30 countries are scheduled to be present at the summit.

Second meeting of Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group to begin at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar

- The second meeting of the Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group will begin at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar today. Representatives from more than 30 countries and several international organizations will take part in the event. The meeting will be formally inaugurated tomorrow in the presence of Union Minister Darshana Jardosh. Representatives from more than 30 countries and several international organizations will take part in the event. The three-day meeting will focus on three priority areas such as biodiversity and land degradation, Encouraging resource efficiency in the circular economy, and promoting the sustainable and climate-resilient blue economy.

- AIR correspondent reports that the G 20 representatives were accorded a traditional welcome at the Ahmedabad Airport. The three-day meet will commence today with a side event on Water Resource management during which India's capabilities to make water accessible to all will be showcased. All the G 20 countries will also demonstrate their best practices of Water Resource Management. Later, the delegates will be taken on an excursion to the ancient stepwell Adalaj ni Vav which will demonstrate the long-standing Indian tradition of water conservation. They will also be taken to Engineering Marvels Sabarmati Siphon structure and Sabarmati Escape. During the meeting, various water management interventions of the Indian Government such as Namami Gange, Jal Jeevan Mission, Jal Shakti Abhiyan will be showcased.

Mumbai to host 1st Trade & Investment Working Group meeting Under G20

- Investment and trade are key drivers of growth and employment creation and in order to find common solutions, it is important to create a shared knowledge of the difficulties that come while accelerating global trade and investment. With this aim, the 1st Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) meeting under India's G20 Presidency is scheduled to be held in the financial capital of India, Mumbai, from March 28–30, 2023. Over 100 representatives from G20 member nations, invitee nations, regional groups, and international organisations will participate in this three-day meeting to discuss ways to speed up international trade and investment.
- On the first day, a seminar on 'Trade Finance' will be conducted by the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) and India EXIM Bank. The two-panel talks will take place to discuss the role of banks, financial institutions, development finance institutions, and export credit agencies in closing the trade finance gap. The seminar will also focus on how digitalisation and fintech solutions can improve access to trade finance.
- Key agendas that will be discussed during the first sessions:-
- Current trends in international trade and trade finance amidst the pandemic and growing import bills in developing countries.
- Cause of trade finance gaps, including reduced credit line support in the private sector and inflation cuts into bank lending limits.
- The role of export credit agencies in bolstering trade finance

India-Africa Army Chiefs Conclave On March 28 And 29

- Pune will also host the strategically significant India-Africa Army Chiefs Conclave, on March 28 and 29. The conclave will include talks by renowned speakers on the India-Africa Defense partnership, the Indian defence industry's potential and contribution towards regional security.
- There is a natural feeling of partnership between India and Africa," remarked Defence Minister Rajnath Singh today (March 28) while addressing the first India-Africa Army Chiefs' Conclave. The event is being organised on the sidelines of the second Africa-India Joint Exercise 'AFINDEX'
- India has been one of the biggest contributors of troops to UN Peacekeeping Operations all over the world and the country's Army is considered to be among the expert agencies in the world in mine removal operations.

Gentari signs pact (MoU) with Tata Motors for 5,000 e-commercial vehicles

- Clean energy solutions provider Gentari on Monday said it has signed an agreement with Tata Motors for the delivery of 5,000 units of e-commercial vehicles.
- The memorandum of understanding (MoU) through its affiliate entity is for three years, Gentari said in a statement. "Gentari, through its affiliated entity Amplus Power Supply Private Limited, signed an MoU with Tata Motors, India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, in 2022, whereby the latter will deliver 5,000 units of Tata Ace EV, over three years. The MoU includes delivery of 1,000 units in the first year for deployment in cities, such as Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Kolkata," it said.
- High-quality electric four-wheelers coming into the market opens a whole new segment to electrify in the urban delivery ecosystem, MoEVing CEO Vikash Mishra said.
- "We are excited to work with Gentari to deploy three- and four-wheeler commercial electric vehicles across India to reduce the carbon footprint of deliveries. With our operations, charging and maintenance footprint spanning across India, we hope to bring change on-ground and electrify deliveries for e-commerce, e-grocery, the logistics segment and now also large FMCG and traditional companies,"

Telangana signs three MoUs with Western Australia government

- A total of three MoUs were signed between the governments of Telangana and Western Australia when a delegation led by Western Australia's Minister for Emergency Services, Innovation and Digital Economy, Stephen Dawson visited State-led startup incubators T-Hub and WE-Hub.
- The MoUs signed include one between Hyderabad's Cyber Security Centre of Excellence DSCI and Western Australia's CyberWest, a government-funded innovation hub, which will harness the expertise of both organisations using innovation, design, workshops and industry engagement. The second MoU was between Cyber Security Centre of Excellence DSCI and Edith Cowan University, through this there will be a collaboration for mutual benefit including research, education, innovation, incubation, marketing, hackathons, corporate innovation and training programs.
- The third MoU was a Letter of Intent between WE-Hub and CyberWest which will accelerate growth in the local and international ecosystem and support goals of diversity and inclusion within the cyber security sector. This collaboration will also help in seeding female-led cyber security startups and also integrating cyber safety into all cohorts. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Dawson said: "Western Australia is at the forefront of cyber security research and innovation with leading organisations. The purpose of this visit is to engage with the Telangana ecosystem and understand the priorities as well as convey."

Ministry of External Affairs organises seminar on - Seven Decades of the Constitution of India

- The Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Meenakshi Lekhi, inaugurated the seminar on 'Seven Decades of the Constitution of India' on March 28.
- The Ministry of External Affairs organised the Seminar on the occasion of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in collaboration with the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE) at the Parliament Library Building. The Seminar was also organised in the context of India's Presidency of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organisation (AALCO).

The Seminar covered the following themes :

1. Seven decades of the Indian Constitution
2. Indian Constitution and Human Rights
3. Indian Constitution and Internationalism

Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and former Chief Justice of India; Justice Arun Mishra, Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission and former Supreme Court Judge; and Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, Chairperson of National Green Tribunal and former Supreme Court judge, were the speakers at the Seminar.

India To Host SCO National Security Advisors Meet Today; 29 March

- As the current chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), India will today host the meeting of National Security Advisors (NSA) and top officials in New Delhi. Pakistan and China are likely to attend the SCO-NSA meeting virtually.
- National Security Adviser Ajit Doval will make opening remarks at the meeting. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization established in 2001 and it comprises eight member states, namely, India, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- In 2022, India assumed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Chairship for 2023. Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Nikolai Patrushev, will attend the annual meeting of the secretaries of security councils of SCO member states in New Delhi on Wednesday,
- India became a full member of SCO on June 9 in 2017. There are four Observer States viz Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia and six dialogue partners - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a major regional powerhouse that was established over two decades ago with the aim of promoting economic, political, and military cooperation among its member nations. The eight-member countries of SCO represent around 42 per cent of the world's total population and 25 per cent of the global GDP.

Arunachal Pradesh To Sign MoA With CPSU For Hydropower Development

- The Arunachal Pradesh cabinet, in a meeting, chaired by chief minister Pema Khandu gave "go ahead" for the proposed signing of the memorandum of agreement (MoA) with Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) for development of hydropower in the state.

- The signing of the MoA is expected to unlock the potential 5 hydroelectric projects (HEPs) with an installed capacity of 2820 MW in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The cabinet approved the MoA to be signed with CPSU for development of hydropower in the state. This will pave the way to unlocking potential 5 HEPs with an installed capacity of 2820 MW. This will spur huge investment in the State and generate employment," a statement from the Arunachal Pradesh CMO said. Further, the Arunachal Pradesh cabinet gave its nod to 'recall' the order of new chairman and members of APPSC (Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission) and recommended the same to governor for recalling the appointment orders of February 7, 2023.

1st G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group meeting to begin at Gandhinagar: 30 March

- The First G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group meeting under India's G20 Presidency will begin today at Gandhinagar in Gujarat. Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr P K Mishra and Minister of State for Communication Devusinh Chauhan, will inaugurate the meeting.
- Addressing the media at Gandhinagar, Member Secretary of National Disaster Management Authority Kamal Kishore said that five priority areas have been identified for the meeting which include an early warning for all, resilient infrastructure and improving the National system for financing Disaster Risk Reduction. Around 100 delegates from the G20 member countries, invitee countries and from nine International organisations are participating in the three day event.
- During the meeting, two side events are planned on 'Early Warning system and Disaster Resilient Infrastructure'. On the third day of the meeting, the participating delegates will be taken on a field visit to Smritivan Earthquake Memorial and Museum at Bhuj. The event also provides an opportunity to the delegates to get a glimpse of cultural heritage of Gujarat.

2nd G20 Sherpa meeting under India's G20 Presidency will begin in Kerala: 30 March

- The second G20 Sherpa meeting under India's G20 Presidency will begin today at the picturesque Kumarakom village in Kerala's Kottayam district. Over 120 delegates, drawn from G20 member nations, representatives of nine invitee countries and various international and regional organizations will attend the four-day event, chaired by India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant.
- The multilateral discussions at the meeting will focus on G20's economic and developmental priorities as well as contemporary global challenges. A range of cross-cutting issues of global concern, and the work being done under the 13 working groups under the Sherpa track will form part of the deliberations during the meet. Two high-level side events on Digital Public Infrastructure and Green Development will also be held today. The Kumarakom meet will take forward the outcomes of various Sherpa Track and Finance Track meetings and form the basis of the Leader's Declaration, slated to be adopted at the New Delhi Summit in September later this year.

MoD signs 3 defence contracts worth ₹5,400 cr for Army, Navy

- The Ministry of Defence on Wednesday signed three contracts worth ₹5,400 crore with defence PSUs for procurement of automated air defence control and reporting system, Sarang electronic support measure systems and advanced Communication Satellite GSAT 7B.
- The first contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) pertains to procurement of Automated Air Defence Control and Reporting System 'Project Akashteer' at a cost of ₹1,982 crore for the Indian Army,
- The second contract, also with the BEL, is for acquisition of Sarang Electronic Support Measure (ESM) systems along with associated engineering support package at an overall cost of ₹412 crore for the Indian Navy,
- Other than that, both the projects will encourage participation of Indian electronics and associated industries, including MSMEs, who are sub-vendors of the BEL, believes the MoD.
- The third contract with New Space India Limited (NSIL), a Central Public Sector Enterprise under Department of Space, Bengaluru, is for procurement of an advanced communication satellite, GSAT 7B, which will provide high throughput services to the Indian Army, at an overall cost of ₹2,963 crore.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

HDFC Bank, IRCTC launch India's most rewarding co-branded travel credit card



- Indian Railway-backed catering services provider, IRCTC tied up with the largest private sector lender HDFC Bank on Wednesday to launch one of India's most rewarding co-branded travel credit cards. The co-branded card will be called "IRCTC HDFC Bank Credit Card" and will be in a single variant exclusively available on NPCI's Rupay network.
- IRCTC HDFC Bank credit card will leverage HDFC Bank's expertise as the market leader in card issuance in the country, offering its best-in-class rewards programme, and IRCTC's unmatched services on train travel.

Axis Bank completes acquisition of Citibank's India consumer business

- Axis Bank has completed the acquisition of the India consumer business of the Citigroup-owned foreign bank Citibank for Rs 12,325 crore prior to evaluation of the closing position of Citibank India's assets, assets under management, and liabilities as of January 31, 2023. Post evaluation, the deal is valued at around Rs 11,603 crore. As per this deal, Axis Bank has acquired Citibank's India consumer business from Citibank N.A. or CBNA and the non-banking financial company (NBFC) consumer business from Citicorp Finance (India) Limited or CFIL, according to a recent exchange filing by Axis Bank. The filing - "We now wish to inform you that completion of the acquisition of Citibank's India consumer business from CBNA and the NBFC consumer business from CFIL as going concerns, without values being assigned to individual assets and liabilities for either business shall happen on March 1, 2023."
- Axis Bank further said the amount to acquire Citibank India's consumer business is based on the closing position of the latter's assets, assets under management (AUM), and liabilities as of January 31, 2023. The filing added the acquisition of the consumer business of Citibank India is in accordance with the requirements and terms of the agreed contractual documentation and settlement of consideration.

SBI completes USD 1 billion syndicated social loan

- Country's largest commercial bank, State Bank of India (SBI) on Tuesday announced completion of a \$1 billion Syndicated Social Loan Facility. This syndicated transaction is significant for SBI and the Indian ESG financing market since it is the biggest ESG (environment, social and governance) loan by a commercial bank in the Asia Pacific and the second-largest social loan globally. Additionally, this is the bank's inaugural social loan and the first syndicated loan in the past five years.

MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme launched

- "LEAN has the potential to become a national movement and that it aims to provide a roadmap to global competitiveness for the MSMEs of India," said Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane at the launch of MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme on Friday, March 10.
- During the launch, the Union Minister said that LEAN will not only attempt to improve quality, productivity and performance, but also the capability to change the mind-sets of manufacturers and transform them into a world class manufacturers.
- The Scheme aims at reducing manufacturing waste and is an extensive drive to create awareness amongst MSMEs about LEAN Manufacturing practices. Further, the purpose is to motivate and incentivize them to attain LEAN levels while also encouraging them to become MSME Champions.

Suryoday Small Finance Bank launches Blossom Women's savings account,

- Suryoday Small Finance Bank on Monday launched a new savings account for women. Suryoday's Blossom Women's Savings Account is built on a strong proposition of giving women a complete, simplified, and rewarding banking experience.
- Under this new account, women can earn up to 7% interest rate per annum with monthly interest credit coupled with a specially designed RuPay Platinum Debit Card which offers discounts on shopping and online purchases and many more, The new women's savings account can be operated through the Bank's 571 banking outlets and digital banking platform.

IDFC Mutual Fund set to become Bandhan Mutual Fund

- IDFC Mutual Fund, which was founded in 2000, announced that it is set to renovate itself as Bandhan Mutual Fund. Customers will soon discover all IDFC Mutual Fund schemes have been rebranded as Bandhan Mutual Fund after the effective date. Since the underlying investment strategy, processes, and team continue to remain the same, investors can benefit from the same high-quality investment approach that the fund house is reputed for, - IDFC Mutual Fund said in an official statement

Union Cabinet Approves 4% Increase in Dearness Allowance

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the release of an additional installment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to central government employees and Dearness Relief to pensioners, effective from January 1, 2023. The new installment represents a 4% increase over the existing rate of 38% of the Basic Pay/Pension, which will help compensate against the rising cost of living. This increase in DA will benefit around 47.58 lakh Central Government employees and 69.76 lakh pensioners. The decision to increase the DA is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission, which follows a set formula to calculate the Dearness Allowance for central government employees and pensioners.
- The Central Government usually revises the DA twice a year, in January and July, to combat inflation. The announcement of the hike in DA and the payout is generally done in March.

M T Vasudevan Nair awarded state's highest civilian honour

- The "Kerala Jyothi," the highest civilian honor in Kerala was awarded to the writer M T Vasudevan Nair. The second-highest award, "Kerala Prabha," was shared by actor Mammooty, former civil service officer T Madhava Menon, and writer Omchery NN Pillai. Arif Muhammad Khan, the Governor of Kerala, has presented the inaugural edition of the "Kerala Puraskarngal" awards, which recognize individuals who have made notable contributions to various aspects of social life. The awards were presented in three categories – "Kerala Jyothi," "Kerala Prabha," and "Kerala Shri."

NPCI recommends additional charges for merchant transactions via UPI

- A recent circular issued by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has suggested that Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) charges be applied from April 1 for merchant transactions made using the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- NPCI, UPI's governing body, will review the stated pricing on or before September 30, 2023.
- According to the NPCI circular, using PPIs on UPI will attract interchange at 1.1 percent of the transaction value for transactions worth over Rs 2,000.
- Once the additional charges come into effect, the PPI issuer will be paying around 15 basis points as a wallet-loading service charge to the remitter bank. No interchange in terms of peer-to-peer (P2P) or peer-to-peer-merchant (P2PM) transactions between the bank account and the PPI wallet will apply.

World Bank approves USD 363 million loan to Karnataka for rural water supply programme

- The World Bank has approved a USD 363 million loan to Karnataka, to provide a clean drinking water supply to two million rural households in the state through a piped water connection in their homes.
- According to a World Bank statement, the Karnataka Sustainable Rural Water Supply Program will support the Government of Karnataka's ambition to provide functioning tap water connections to every rural household in the state.

Govt introduces surcharge for Gpay, other payment apps; no charge to customers

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has issued a circular in which it suggested "Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI)" fees on merchant transactions on Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- The governing body of the UPI payment system added that the PPI fees would be levied on transactions above ₹2,000 on UPI. It will result in an interchange at 1.1% of the transaction value.
- However, the NPCI has clarified that there will be zero charges for the bank account to bank account-based UPI payments or normal UPI payments.
- With this addition to UPI, the customers will have the choice of using any bank account, RuPay Credit card and prepaid wallets on UPI-enabled apps.



LEGAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. The Supreme Court refused to hear a bail plea by the Deputy CM of Delhi in the excise policy case, as he had approached the court directly under Article 32 of the Constitution instead of first seeking remedy in the High Court under Section 482 of the CrPC. SC argued that though in previous cases petitions were entertained directly under Article 32, those cases involved free speech issues while this case is about Prevention of Corruption act. Previously, Special CBI Judge had granted Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) custody of Deputy CM on the ground that he 'failed to provide satisfactory answers.' The court had rejected the argument that it was a violation of right against self-incrimination. No self-incrimination, which is provided in the Article 20(3) lays down that no person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/manish-sisodia-delhi-excise-policy-case-how-the-right-against-self-incrimination-works-8472146/>

2. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has decided to start the process of seeking the states' comments on the Punchhi Commission's report on Centre-state relations. The Punchhi Commission was constituted by the Union Government in April 2007 under the chairmanship of former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Madan Mohan Punchhi. The Commission examined and reviewed how the existing arrangements between the Union and States were functioning, as well as various court rulings regarding the powers, duties, and responsibilities in all areas, including legislative relations, administrative relations, the role of governors, emergency provisions and others. The Commission presented its seven-volume report to the government in March 2010. The Inter-State Council's (ISC) Standing Committee considered the suggestions of the Punchhi panel at its meetings in April 2017, November 2017, and May 2018. The key recommendations of the commission included: the creation of a superseding structure for matters relating to internal security (like the Homeland Security Department in the United States). This structure could be known as the 'National Integration Council' and advised that

Article 355 and Article 356 of the Constitution should be amended.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/punchhi-panel-work-centre-state-views-8472376/>

3. In February 2023, the Ministry of Health issued show cause notices to at least 20 companies, including Tata-img, Flipkart, Apollo, PharmEasy, Amazon, and Reliance Netmeds for selling medicines online. This happened after the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD), a powerful lobby of over 12 lakh pharmacists, threatened to launch a country-wide agitation if the government didn't act. Further, The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 regulates the import, manufacturing and distribution of drugs in India. However, there is no statutory definition of "e-pharmacy" either under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 or the Pharmacy Act, 1948. However, the electronic sale of physician-prescribed drugs from online drug store sites is expressed under the IT Act, 2000. Also, the 172nd Parliamentary Standing Committee report released in June 2022, deemed it "appalling" that e-pharmacy rules had not been notified.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/explained-on-regulating-online-sale-of-drugs-in-india/article66565041.ece#:~:text=The%20Ministry%20of%20Health%20has,them%20to%20continue%20to%20operate.>

4. A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court (SC) unanimously ruled that the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners shall be made by the President on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition of the Lok Sabha and Chief Justice of India (CJI). In case no leader of Opposition is available, the leader of the largest opposition Party in the Lok Sabha in terms of numerical strength will be a part of such committee. SC stated that a reading of the debates of the Constituent Assembly (CA) on the appointment of ECI makes clear that all the members were of the clear view that elections must be conducted by an independent Commission. The deliberate addition of the words "subject to the provisions of any law made



in that behalf by Parliament” further indicates that CA envisaged parliament making norms to govern appointment to ECI. While ordinarily, the court cannot encroach on a purely legislative power, but in the context of the Constitution and inertia of the Legislature and the vacuum created by it make it necessary for the court to intervene.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/supreme-court-verdict-on-election-commission-of-india-appointments-8476545/>

5. Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs suspended the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR). CPR (not-for-profit society), along with Oxfam India and the Independent and Public-Spirited Media Foundation (IPSMF), was surveyed by the Income Tax department earlier. FCRA was enacted during the Emergency in 1976 amid apprehensions that foreign powers were interfering in India's affairs by pumping money into the country through independent organisations. The law sought to regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations so that they functioned in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic.

An amended FCRA was enacted in 2010 to “consolidate the law” on utilisation of foreign funds, and “to prohibit” their use for “any activities detrimental to national interest”. The law was amended again in 2020, giving the government tighter control and scrutiny over the receipt and utilisation of foreign funds by NGOs.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/fcr-a-licence-of-think-tank-cpr-suspended-what-is-fcra-8473866/>

6. Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) under Article 142 ruled that the lawyers and professionals with 10 years of experience will be eligible for appointment as President and member of the state consumer commission and district forums. The SC upheld the Bombay High Court judgement quashing the provisions of Consumer Protection Rules, 2020, under section 101 of Consumer Protection Act 2019, which prescribe a minimum professional experience of 20 years and 15 years for adjudicating members to the State consumer commissions and District forums respectively. The Central government

and the state governments concerned have to come up with an amendment in the Consumer Protection (Qualification for appointment, method of recruitment, procedure of appointment, term of office, resignation and removal of President and Members of State Commission and District Commission) Rules, 2020 to provide for 10 years' experience to become eligible for appointment as President and member of the state commission and district forums instead of 20 years and 15 years respectively. Article 142 provides discretionary power to the Supreme Court as it states that the SC in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

Source: https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/sc-lowers-criterion-for-appointment-as-president-member-of-consumer-forums-123030301281_1.html

7. An Army court has recommended life imprisonment for a Captain involved in the staged killings of three men at Amshipora in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district in 2020. The sentence will be final after it is confirmed by the Northern Army Commander. The Captain was court-martialled after a Court of Inquiry (CoI) and subsequent summary of evidence found that troops under his command had exceeded their powers under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. The Process of Court Martial: When the Army wants an allegation against its personnel investigated, it first sets up a CoI for the purpose. This stage is similar to the registering of a First Information Report (FIR) by police. A Court of Inquiry investigates the complaint but cannot award a punishment. The CoI records the statements of witnesses, which is comparable to the examination of witnesses by a police officer under Section 161 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Based on the findings of the CoI, a tentative charge sheet is drawn up by the commanding officer of the accused officer. After this, the hearing of charges takes place (just like the initial summoning of an accused by the magistrate in a case involving civilians). The summary of evidence is then recorded. Once this process has been completed, a General Court Martial (GCM) is ordered; similar to the conduct of a trial by a judicial court for civilian matters.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/jk->



[court-martial-how-armed-forces-punish-their-personnel-for-crime-8482924/](#)

8. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will soon come up with the Digital India Act, 2023 which will replace the Information Technology Act (IT Act) of 2000. The Indian parliament plans to implement the Digital India Act alongside the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022, proposed in November 2022, where the two legislations will work in tandem with each other. Since the IT Act of 2000 was enacted, there have been many revisions and amendments (IT Act Amendment of 2008, IT Rules 2011) in attempts to define the digital space in which it regulates while trying to put more emphasis on the data handling policies. However, because the IT Act was originally designed only to protect e-commerce transactions and define cybercrime offenses, it did not deal with the nuances of the current cybersecurity landscape adequately nor did it address data privacy rights. Without a complete replacement of the governing digital laws, the IT Act would fail to keep up with the growing sophistication and rate of cyber-attacks. The new Digital India Act envisages to act as catalysts for Indian economy by enabling more innovation, more startups, and at the same time protecting the citizens of India in terms of safety, trust, and accountability.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-rethinking-safe-harbour-concept-in-it-act-revamp/article66599676.ece>

9. The Chief Justice of India (CJI) recently addressed the 18th meeting of the Chief Justices/Chairpersons of the Supreme Courts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states. The conference provided an opportunity for member and observer states to reflect upon the challenges that are common to their jurisdictions and emphasised the need for mutual cooperation and sharing of experiences and wisdom gathered. The CJI highlighted the need for judicial cooperation and adoption of new mechanisms to simplify and make the court processes more smart and accessible to the common people. The CJI also stressed the importance of technology in bridging the gap between citizens and the justice system. The CJI shared recent endeavours made by the Supreme Court of India, such as launching an e-version of Supreme Court reports, artificial intelligence-based live transcription of court proceedings,

and translation of judgments in multiple regional languages, among others.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/sco-countries-should-collectively-strive-to-make-judiciary-more-accessible-says-cji-chandrachud-8492842/>

10. The Centre has opposed same-sex marriage in the Supreme Court, stating that marriage between a biological man and woman is a holy union, a sacrament, and a sanskar in India. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India refers petitions to legally recognise same-sex marriages to a Constitution Bench of five judges of the Supreme Court. The government argued that the Court had only decriminalised sexual intercourse between same-sex persons in its 2018 judgement in Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, and not legitimised this "conduct". The court, while decriminalising homosexuality, did not accept same-sex marriage as part of the fundamental right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution. The government argues that marriage depends on customs, rituals, practices, cultural ethos, and societal values. Same-sex marriage cannot be compared to a man and woman living as a family with children born out of the union. The Parliament has designed and framed the marriage laws in the country to recognise only the union of a man and a woman. Registration of marriage of same-sex persons would result in a violation of existing personal as well as codified law provisions. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 provides a civil form of marriage for couples who cannot marry under their personal law. The government argued that any deviation from this norm can only be made through the legislature, and not the Supreme Court.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/same-sex-marriages-can-rock-societal-values-centre/article66610499.ece>

11. Recently, WhatsApp's head said that WhatsApp would not comply with the country's proposed Online Safety Bill (OSB) which will in effect outlaw End-to-End (E2E) encryption. The OSB is a proposed British legislation aimed at improving online safety by placing "Duty of Care" obligations on online platforms. Clause 110 of the OSB empowers the regulator to issue notices to most internet service providers, including private messaging apps, to identify and take down Terrorism and Child Sex

Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) content. The OSB does not mandate removal of E2E encryption, but it would require messaging apps to scan all messages to flag such content, which would de facto mean breaking encryption. Privacy and free speech advocates view the OSB as a disproportionate step that allows for bulk interception and surveillance.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/explained-why-is-whatsapp-threatening-to-leave-uk/article66620220.ece#:~:text=This%20is%20mainly%20because%20India,than%202%25%20of%20global%20users>

12. Extra-judicial confession is weak evidence especially when retracted during trial: Supreme Court

The Court added that an extra-judicial confession requires strong evidence to corroborate it for it to be relied upon in criminal cases.



Justice BR Gavai and Justice Vikram Nath

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that an extra-judicial confession is a *weak piece of evidence* especially when it has been retracted during the trial [*Indrajit Das v. State of Tripura*]

A division bench of Justices **BR Gavai** and **Vikram Nath** stated that an extra-judicial confession requires strong evidence to corroborate it for it to be relied on in criminal cases.

"The extra-judicial confession is a weak piece of evidence and especially when it has been retracted during trial. It requires strong evidence to corroborate it and also it must be established that it was completely voluntary and truthful," the judgment said.

The Court made the observation while setting aside the conviction of a man for the alleged murder of his friend.

The trial court and the Tripura High Court had convicted the accused appellant under Section 302 (murder) read with Section 34 and Section 201 (causing disappearance of evidence, giving false information) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Notably, the prosecution's case was based on circumstantial evidence. The alleged crime had not been directly seen by any of the witnesses, nor had the body of the alleged deceased man been recovered.

The criminal case was registered after the deceased man's uncle informed the police that his nephew, who had gone out on his bike with two friends the previous day, had been missing.

Around the same time, the police had received information that a huge quantity of blood was found on road, along with a blood-stained knife and broken glass which could have been from the rear-view mirror of a motorcycle.

The police later apprehended the appellant and a juvenile boy, who allegedly confessed that they had assaulted the deceased with a knife, thrown his belongings in a nearby jungle, and disposed of his dead body and motorcycle in a river.

While the trial Court and High Court concluded that the prosecution had sufficiently proved the case against the appellant, the Supreme Court expressed serious reservations about the appellant's conviction.

The Supreme Court noted that the instant case was one involving circumstantial evidence, as no one had seen the commission of the crime. While so, the bench pointed out that the prosecution had been unable to explain the motive for the alleged crime.

"In a case of circumstantial evidence, motive has an important role to play. Motive may also have a role to play even in a case of direct evidence but it carries much greater importance in a case of circumstantial evidence than a case of direct evidence. It is an important link in the chain of circumstances," the Court observed.

Additionally, it was also noted that the body of deceased had not been recovered. Only a limb was recovered, but no DNA testing was carried out to establish that the limb was that of the deceased, the bench further observed.

The Court further found that there were inconsistencies arising in the statements regarding whose company the deceased man was last seen before his disappearance and apparent death.

The mother of the deceased had stated that she had seen the deceased last with the appellant and the accused juvenile. On the other hand, as per the sequence of events narrated by the juvenile in his extra-judicial confession, the two accused did not see the deceased man's mother at all.

The Court found that if the extra-judicial confession of appellant and juvenile were to be accepted, it would be difficult to lend any credibility to the *last seen theory* given by the mother.

"Even if we ignore the extra-judicial confession, the statement of mother appears to be an improvement only to develop the *last seen theory*," the Court added.

Since the extra-judicial confession itself had not been corroborated and since the evidence led by the prosecution appeared to be inconsistent with the confession, the Court proceeded to acquit the appellant.

"The appellant would be entitled to benefit of doubt. Accordingly, the appeal is allowed and the appellant is acquitted of all the charges," the Court held.

Advocate Madhumita Bhattacharjee appeared for the appellant. Advocate Shuvodeep Roy appeared for the respondents.

13. When can DNA test be ordered to ascertain paternity of child? Supreme Court lays down guidelines

The Court said that the right of children to not have their legitimacy questioned frivolously is an essential attribute of their right to privacy.



The Supreme Court on Monday held that DNA test in children to ascertain their paternity in matrimonial disputes, should be done only in exceptional cases when it becomes indispensable to resolve the controversy.

A division bench of Justices **BV Nagarathna** and **V Ramasubramanian** observed that the right of children to not have their legitimacy questioned frivolously is an essential attribute of their right to privacy.

"Children have the right not to have their legitimacy questioned frivolously before a Court of Law. This is an essential attribute of the right to privacy. **Courts are therefore required to acknowledge that children are not to be regarded like material objects, and be subjected to forensic/DNA testing, particularly when they are not parties to the divorce proceeding. It is imperative that children do not become the focal point of the battle between spouses,**" the Court said.

Hence, the Court laid down the factors to be considered while deciding the question of whether a DNA Test of a minor child should be ordered at the behest of either parent.

The Court laid down the following principles of law dealing with the presumption of legitimacy of a child born during wedlock under section 112 of Evidence Act and the circumstances under which this presumption can be rebutted through evidence:

(a) The object behind the presumption of legitimacy laid down under Section 112 qua a child born during the wedlock read with Section 4 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, is to prevent an unwarranted enquiry as to the paternity of the child whose parents at the relevant time had "access" to each other.

(b) For rebutting the presumption of legitimacy under Section 112 of Indian Evidence Act, 1872, the party questioning the legitimacy of the minor child is required to prima facie show "non-access" to other party. Further, if no plea has been raised as to "non-access", the DNA Test may not be directed.

(c) That a direction to conduct a DNA Test of a minor child should be viewed from the prism of the child, keeping in mind the best interest of the child.

(d) Such a direction should be ordered by the Court rarely, and only in exceptional and deserving cases, where such a test becomes indispensable to resolve the controversy.

(e) An adverse inference under Section 114(h) of Evidence Act cannot be drawn against the petitioner-wife who in her capacity as mother and natural guardian is refusing the DNA Test of the minor child and is protecting the interest of the child.

The petitioner-wife was represented by Senior Advocate **Huzefa Ahmadi** and advocates **Sanyat Lodha, Aakash Lodha, Sanjana Saddy** and **Hima Bhardwaj**.

The respondent-husband was represented by Senior Advocate **Kapil Sibal**.

The Court was hearing an application filed by the wife in a divorce petition challenging orders of a family court and the Bombay High Court that had allowed DNA test on their minor child at the behest of the husband.

The question was whether the High Court and the family court had made an error in ordering the DNA test of the minor child in response to the application filed by the husband in the divorce proceedings.

He sought DNA test to ascertain paternity of the second child in order to prove his claim of adultery on the part of the wife.

"The short question in the present appeal is as to how a Court can prevent the law's tidy assumptions linking paternity with matrimony, from collapsing, particularly when parties are routinely attempting to dislodge such presumptions by employing modern genetic profiling techniques," the Court noted.

The counsel representing the petitioner-wife pointed out that the courts below routinely directed DNA tests without considering the presumption of legitimacy under Section 112 of the Indian Evidence Act, the legal principles established in the case of Goutam Kundu v. State of West Bengal & Anr., and the fundamental rights of the child, including their best interests, right to privacy, identity and autonomy.

On the other hand, counsel for the respondent-husband contended that the orders under challenge were based on an unimpeachable appreciation of the facts of the case and did not warrant any interference. He further contended that the appeal was filed by the petitioner to mask her adulterous conduct.

Furthermore, he contended that in the present case, the most material piece of evidence to establish the allegations of adultery was the DNA test, and that the same cannot be shut out on the ground of sensitivity or privacy.

The Court began its judgment by saying,

"Under the Indian legal spectrum, a husband is strongly presumed to be the father of a child born to his wife. Thus, there is a strong presumption regarding the paternity of a child. This presumption can be overcome only by evidence precluding any procreative role of the husband, such as by showing that the husband and wife had no access to each other at the relevant time of possible conception. In the absence of proof of non-access, the law considers the husband's paternity to be conclusively established if they cohabited when the child was likely to have been conceived."

It ruled that the dispute was between the parties to the marriage and that the rights and best interests of the child could not be sacrificed to enable one of the parties to have the benefit of a fair trial.

"The lis in these cases is between the parties to a marriage. The lis is not between one of the parties to the marriage and the child whose paternity is questioned. To enable one of the parties to the marriage to have the benefit of fair trial, the Court cannot sacrifice the rights and best interests of a third party to the lis, namely, the child," the Court said.

Specifically with regard to the case, the Court noted that the husband himself had categorically claimed that he was in possession of call recordings/transcripts and the daily diary of the appellant-wife, which may be summoned in accordance with law to prove the infidelity of the appellant.

"Therefore, it seems to us that the respondent is in a position to attempt to make out a case based on such evidence, as to adultery/infidelity on the part of the appellant," the Court said.

Hence, it ruled that a DNA test would not be the only way in which the truth of the matter can be established.

The Court, therefore, allowed the appeal by the wife and set aside the order of the family court and Bombay High Court which had allowed DNA test.

"However, this shall not preclude the respondent-husband from leading any other evidence to establish the allegations made by him against the appellant in the petition for divorce," the Court said.

The Court also clarified that Section 112 does not provide protection for the alleged adulterous behavior of the wife.

"We are not suggesting for a moment that Section 112 acts as a shield even for the alleged adulterous conduct on the part of the wife. All that we say is that anything that would destroy the legal effect of Section 112 cannot be used by the respondent, on the ground that the same is being done to achieve another result," it said.

14. Mere breach of contract cannot give rise to criminal case for cheating: Supreme Court

The Court also cautioned against using criminal cases to pressurise parties to settle civil disputes.



The Supreme Court recently held that mere breach of contract does not give rise to criminal prosecution for cheating unless a fraudulent or dishonest intention was present right from the beginning of the transaction [**Sarabjit Kaur v. State of Punjab and Another**].

A division bench of Justices **Abhay S Oka** and **Rajesh Bindal** was of the view that merely on the allegation of failure to keep up promise, criminal proceedings cannot be initiated.

"A breach of contract does not give rise to criminal prosecution for cheating unless fraudulent or dishonest intention is shown right at the beginning of the transaction. Merely on the allegation of failure to keep up promise will not be enough to initiate criminal proceedings," the Court said.

The Court also cautioned against using criminal cases to pressurise parties to settle civil disputes.

"Criminal courts are not meant to be used for settling scores or pressurise parties to settle civil disputes," the bench said.

By way of background, a first information report (FIR) was registered against the accused-appellant under Sections 420 (cheating), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The basis of this FIR was a third complaint made by the complainant-respondent against the appellant with regard to allegations of cheating in an agreement to sell of a property.

In the previous two complaints which were based on the same set of facts as the third complaint, the complainant-respondent had only made the prayer for return of the amount paid by him in the agreement to sell with no allegation of cheating.

Moreover, the said complaints were only directed at the property dealers and not against the appellant.

After investigation, it was found that no criminal offence was made out with respect to the first complaint and the complainant was, therefore, granted the liberty to invoke the jurisdiction of the civil court.

Similar finding was arrived at in the second complaint as well.

However, in the third complaint, the complainant had accused the appellant of cheating and other offences. On the basis of the same, the FIR Came to be registered against the appellant.

The appellant then moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court seeking quashing of the FIR, but the plea was dismissed. This was challenged before the Supreme Court.

The apex court after considering the sequence of complaints by the complainant, observed that the effort of the complainant was merely to put pressure on the appellant in order to get his money back.

Moreover, it was also noted that no efforts were made by the complainant to initiate any civil proceedings against the appellant to get the sale deed executed on the basis of the agreement to sell.

Rather, the complainant proceeded only by filing three identical criminal complaints with the police.

Taking note that the allegations made in the complaint are civil in nature, the Court observed:

"The entire idea seems to be to convert a civil dispute into criminal and put pressure on the appellant for return of the amount allegedly paid. The criminal Courts are not meant to be used for settling scores or pressurise parties to settle civil disputes. Wherever ingredients of criminal offences are made out, criminal courts have to take cognizance. The complaint in question on the basis of which F.I.R. was registered was filed nearly three years after the last date fixed for registration of the sale deed. Allowing the proceedings to continue would be an abuse of process of the Court."

Therefore, the Court allowed the appeal and quashed the case.

15. Plea before Supreme Court for recognition of same-sex marriages to be heard by Constitution Bench

A bench of Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala posted the matter for hearing on April 18 and said that the matter will be heard as a Constitutional case.



The Supreme Court on Monday said that the plea before it for recognition of same-sex marriages will be heard by a Constitution bench of the top court [*Supriyo and anr vs Union of India*].

A bench of Chief Justice of India **DY Chandrachud** and Justices **PS Narasimha** and **JB Pardiwala** said that plea raises issues concerning rights which are Constitutional in nature and hence, would have to be heard by a Constitution bench of five judges.

"One of the issues raised before the Court relates to the rights of transgender couples to marry, as a natural incident of their constitutional entitlements. Having due regard to the broader context of the petitions before this Court and the inter relationship between the statutory regime and constitutional rights, we are of the considered view that it would be appropriate if the issues raised are resolved by a Bench of five Judges of this Court in view of the provisions of Article 145(3) of the Constitution. We accordingly direct that the hearing of these petitions be posted before a Constitution Bench," the Court said in its order.

Article 145(3) provides that the minimum number of judges who are to sit for the purpose of deciding any case involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of this Constitution, shall be five.

The Court posted the matter for hearing on April 18 when it will come up before a bench of five judges.

The top court was hearing a batch of petitions seeking recognition of same-sex marriages under law. The pleas have sought that the right to marry a person of one's choice should extend to LGBTQIA+ citizens as well.

The Central government has opposed the petitions filed before the Supreme Court by gay couples.

In an affidavit filed before the top court on Sunday, the Central government said that living together as partners and having sexual relationship by same sex individuals is not comparable to the Indian family unit concept which involves biological man and biological woman with children born out of such wedlock.

The latter requires a biological man as a 'husband', a biological woman as a 'wife' and the children born out of the union between the two, the government said.

The government has argued that there can be no fundamental right for recognition of a particular form of social relationship.

The Centre has contended that the registration of marriage of same-sex persons will result in violation of existing personal as well as codified law provisions such as 'degrees of prohibited relationship', 'conditions of marriage' and 'ceremonial and ritual requirements' under personal laws governing the individuals.

The government clarified that though same sex relations are not unlawful but State only recognises heterosexual relationship for the mode of marriage.

The bench had in January this year transferred all petitions seeking recognition of same-sex marriages, pending before several High Courts, to itself.

Arguments today

Solicitor General (SG) **Tushar Mehta**, appearing for the Central government, said that recognition of same-sex marriages will lead to various legal issues.

"Marriage is not just a contract for Hindu and it may be so in Mohammedan law. In Islam too, it is between biological man and biological woman. The moment marriage as a recognized institution comes between same sex, question will come on adoption. Parliament will have to examine and see will of the people, psychology of child has to be examined... whether it can be raised in such a way, parliament will factor into societal ethos," the SG said.

"Adopted child of a gay or lesbian couple does not have to be gay or a lesbian Solicitor," the CJI responded.

Special marriage act also refers to the biological man and biological woman, the SG pointed out.

"The court is shouldering grave responsibility on how the society will develop henceforth and will have grave ramifications on the society as a whole," the SG said.

He, however, maintained that the government's stance was specifically on same-sex marriages and not on such relationships which have already been recognised by the Supreme Court in its judgment in Navtej Singh Johar's judgment.

However, even in that judgment, the apex court said that the right to have such relationships should not be construed as right to marry.

"Right to love, right to express is already upheld and no one is interfering with that right But court said that it should not be meant to mean that it includes right to marry and the court was careful in doing so," the SG said.

Senior Advocate **Neeraj Kishan Kaul**, appearing for the petitioner, said that after the Navtej Singh Johar judgment, it would not be correct to rely on arguments like cultural ethos etc.

"Section 4 of Special Marriage Act uses the word 'marriage between two persons' and not man or woman. It says marriage between any two persons... where neither party has a spouse living and is capable of giving a valid consent for marriage. Male of 21 and female of 18. In Navtej Johar, right to life includes right to marriage, procreation and even sexual orientation, this is the first proposition we rely on," Kaul said.

Kaul also submitted that the proceedings in the case should be streamed live.

"These proceedings need to be live streamed since there are people all across India interested in this. Swapnil Tripathi case held that live streaming has to be in cases of public or constitutional importance. After Navtej judgment it was held that such cases must be given all publicity as required," Kaul said.

Senior Advocate **KV Viswanathan**, appearing for one of the petitioners, said that the government is refusing to recognise same-sex marriages despite the Transgender Protection Act which seeks to confer equal rights on LGBTQ persons.

"What is engaged here is Article 21 and 19 where denial of right to marry is a denial to right to expression, dignity... These are natural rights. These have other implications such as inheritance etc," he contended.

Dr. **Abhishek Manu Singhvi**, also representing the petitioners, said that right to marry cannot be withheld from a class of person solely on the basis of their sexual orientation.

"In case right to marry is extend to this class it must be extended in equal terms. Special Marriage act has to be read in a way to extend to such classes also. Terms such as 'man', 'woman' have to be done away with," he said.

The Court noted that the petitioners have asserted broader constitutional entitlements around right to life, right to dignity embodied in the constitution, its preamble and natural incidents of Articles 14, 19 and 21.

"The submissions involve the inter play between constitutional rights on the one hand and specific legislative enactments including the Special Marriage Act 1954, the Foreign Marriage Act 1969, the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, the Citizenship Act and the Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act 2019 on the other," the bench noted.

In view of this, it referred the matter to Constitution Bench.

The bench also directed that petitioners to rely on the common compilation and asked parties to inform the nodal counsel about all cases which they would be relying upon.

"The petitions shall be listed for final disposal and hearing on 18 April 2023 at 10.30 am ... In the event that any supplement is required to be made to deal with the issues which may have been raised in any individual petition or a subsequent petition which has been filed after the date of the counter affidavit, that shall be done within a period of three weeks. Rejoinder affidavit, if any, may be filed before the next date of listing," the bench added.

16. GOVERNOR VERSUS STATE: WHY TENSIONS ARE RISING AGAIN

The role of governors is in the news again. Their actions across several states — Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal — have been questioned. Recently, the Supreme Court had to hear a case where the governor of Punjab did not summon the assembly after the cabinet's recommendation. Tamil Nadu governor R N Ravi is also in the news after he returned a Bill that bans online gambling for reconsideration (the Constitution provides him with this power). He had earlier skipped reading parts of the Governor's Address (which is passed by the state cabinet as the government's policy plan). These incidents raise the question on the governor's role as per the Indian Constitution.

The Constituent Assembly had discussed the position of the governor in great detail. The Provincial Constitution Committee (chaired by Patel) agreed with the Union Constitution Committee (chaired by Nehru) that a parliamentary form of government was suitable for the country, and that the governor be directly elected by adult franchise. The draft Constitution incorporated this provision. However, while debating this provision, the Constituent Assembly changed this process to a direct appointment by the President. Many members felt that an elected governor would undermine the authority of the chief minister. They also reasoned that an impartial individual needed to be nominated to the post, instead of a person elected on a party ticket.

The other question was the role of the governor in relation to the chief minister. The final formulation (Article 163) reads: "There shall be a Council of Ministers with the chief minister at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except in so far as he is by or under this Constitution required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion". The Governor has discretion only in cases where it was provided in other Articles of the Constitution (such as the Sixth Schedule related to tribal areas of Assam). Indeed, Ambedkar clarified, "The Governor under the Constitution has no functions which he can discharge by himself; no functions at all".

Over the last 70 years, two questions have kept cropping up. Are individuals appointed by the central government able to maintain their independence from the political preference of the central government? What is the level of discretion that governors have in their decision-making powers?

The Constitution provides the governor full discretion for certain actions such as special powers in some states in the North-East. There are some other areas where the governor needs to exercise judgement. For example, after an election, the governor will have to decide whom to invite to form government whenever a single party or coalition does not have a clear majority. The decision to dissolve the assembly also has to be made if no one is able to demonstrate majority support in the legislative assembly.

The governor also has to act in certain circumstances when the unity of the nation is at stake. The governor has full discretion to recommend the dismissal of the chief minister and imposition of President's rule. Clearly, no chief minister is likely to recommend such an action, and this decision has to be made by the governor.

Indeed, the frequency of imposition of President's rule indicates the type of relationship between the centre and states across the last 70 years. Until 1966, when the centre and most states were mostly governed by the same party, the number of states that had President's rule was 1.1 per year on average. This number rose to 6 between 1967 (when the Congress party lost several state elections) and 1993. In 1994, the Bommai judgment curtailed the use of this power, and the number has fallen to 1.5 since then. However, the last few years has seen the tension rising again with governors delaying Bills and taking other steps contrary to the decisions of the state cabinet.

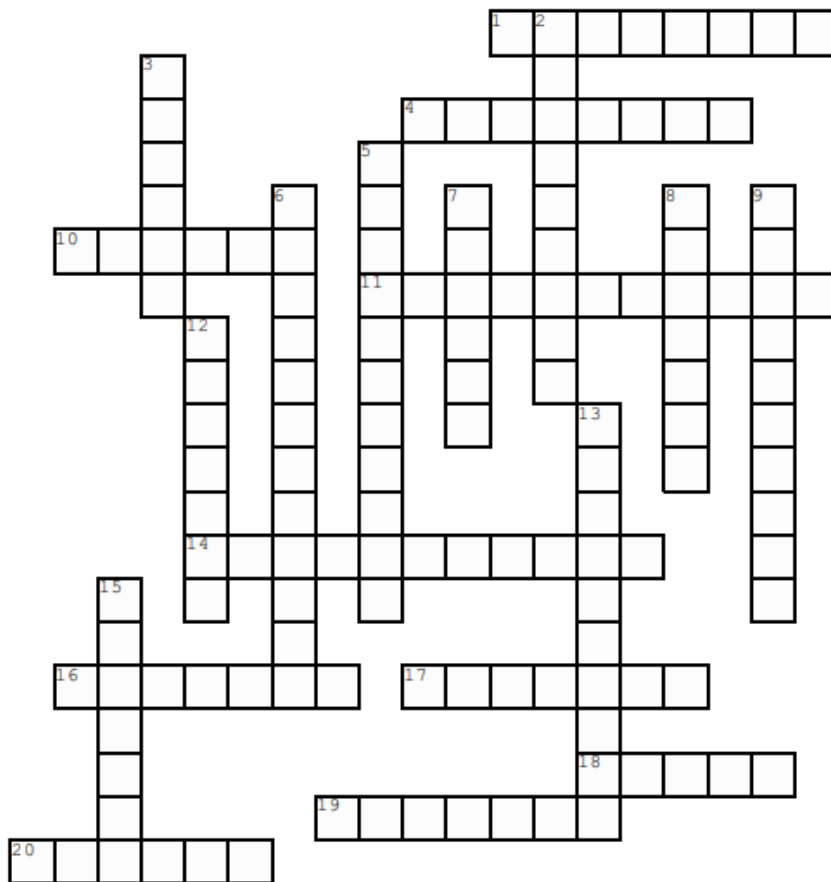
Six high-level committees and commissions have looked into the issue. These include three in the 1969-71 period, the Sarkaria Commission in the 1980s, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution and the Punchhi Commission in the 2000s. These commissions suggested that the governor should be an individual from a different state who was not recently involved in politics, and that the chief minister should be consulted before appointment. They recommended security of tenure and term limits to ensure independence. They also said that President's Rule should be a last resort, and that the confidence in a government should be tested only on the floor of the House.

Most of these recommendations — except the confidence-test rule which has been mandated by the Supreme Court — have been ignored. And we continue to see tensions in the relationship between the governor and the state government.



LEGAL CROSSWORD

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ACROSS	DOWN
1. lawsuit brought to remove a party who is occupying real property	2. theft or misappropriation of funds placed in one's trust or belonging to one's employer.
4. a person who takes responsibility for another's performance of an undertaking, for example their appearing in court or paying	3. scope of the lawful power vested in an authority
6. abrogation or cancellation of a contract	5. unconditional offer to the party to the contract to perform his side of the bargain
7. conditional	8. act necessary for (someone) as a duty or responsibility.
11. transfer of property or money for the purpose of charity	9. person who swears an affidavit or deposition
12. To make known (a decree, for example) by public declaration; announce officially. See Synonyms at announce.	10. to send back
15. Beyond prudence or reason; excessive: unconscionable spending.	13. a temporary prohibition of an activity.
17. substituting an old contract with a new one	14. responsibility or duty to do an act
19. illegal	16. illegal copy of a document
20. right to hold property which has been sold but not finally paid for	18. One who furnishes evidence.

CROSSWORD ANSWER KEY

1. LARCENY
2. ACCESSOR
3. REMAND
4. SANCTION
5. FORECLOSURE
6. RENUNCIATION

7. DEPORT
8. ALIMONY
9. INTANGIBLE
10. BAILEE
11. EXPROPRIATE
12. CODICIL

13. GRATUITOUS
14. INTERROGATE
15. CHATTEL
16. WARRANT
17. QUANTUMS
18. USURY

19. ARREARS
20. BYLAWS



