



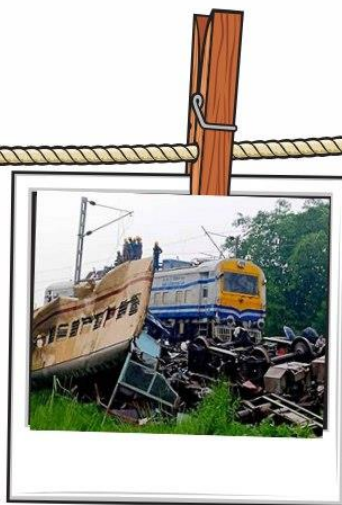
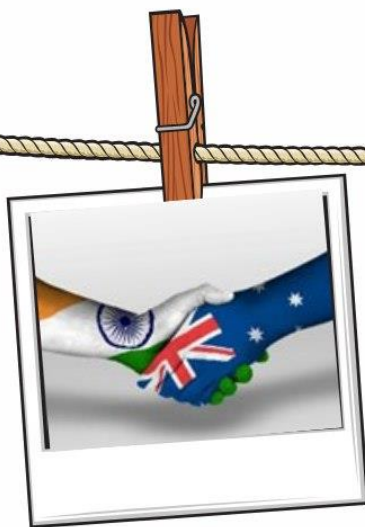
Weekly Current Affairs



To The Point

by Dhananjay Gautam

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Arrow-3 Missile Defense System: The Cutting-Edge Shield Against Ballistic Threats

Context: In a significant move, Israel's Defence Ministry is coordinating with the German Federal Ministry of Defence for the initial deployment of the Arrow-3 missile defense system on German soil, set for 2025. This collaboration is part of a broader strategy to enhance missile defense capabilities across Europe, ensuring the protection of allied nations against potential threats.

About the Arrow-3 Missile Defense System:

What is Arrow-3?

The Arrow-3 Missile Defense System is an **exo-atmospheric anti-ballistic missile defense solution** designed to intercept long-range ballistic threats outside of the earth's atmosphere. It is part of Israel's advanced **Arrow Weapon System (AWS)**, recognized as the world's first **national, operational, and stand-alone Anti Tactical Ballistic Missiles (ATBM)** defense system.

Key Features and Capabilities:

- **Exo-atmospheric Interception:** Arrow-3 is specifically engineered to engage **ballistic missiles** while they are still outside of the **atmosphere**, offering an extra layer of defense to protect against long-range threats.
- **Advanced Hypersonic Speed:** The system uses **hypersonic technology**, allowing the interceptor to travel at **five times the speed of sound**, ensuring rapid response times to intercept incoming missiles.
- **Long-Range Capability:** With a range of up to **2,400 km**, Arrow-3 can target threats from great distances, providing Israel and its allies with broad defense coverage.
- **Altitude and Tracking:** The interceptor is capable of targeting threats at an altitude of **100 km**, and is equipped with **early-warning radar** and **multi-target tracking capabilities**, ensuring high accuracy and effectiveness in complex combat environments.

How Does the Arrow-3 Work?

- **Hit-to-Kill Technology:** Arrow-3 employs **hit-to-kill technology**, which ensures the destruction of incoming missiles by physically colliding with them, rather than relying on explosives.
- **Vertical Launch and Interception:** The missile is launched **vertically** before its direction is adjusted towards the predicted interception point, guided by **high-resolution electro-optical sensors** that provide precise targeting.
- **Integrated Defense System:** Arrow-3 is part of Israel's broader **multi-layered defense network**, complementing other systems like **Arrow 2**, **David's Sling**, and the **Iron Dome**, to provide a comprehensive defense against all types of aerial threats.

A Global Strategic Asset:

The deployment of the **Arrow-3** missile defense system in **Germany** signals a deepening of defense collaboration between Israel and Europe. As part of Israel's robust defense strategy, the Arrow-3 stands as a testament to its leadership in missile defense technology, offering an advanced shield against emerging threats. With its capability to intercept missiles at extreme altitudes and speeds, Arrow-3 represents a pivotal advancement in global defense systems, safeguarding nations from a new generation of missile warfare.



Kayakalp Scheme: Revitalizing Healthcare through Cleanliness and Hygiene

Context: In a move to promote cleanliness and aesthetic improvements, the **Rajasthan College Education Commissionerate** has instructed 20 government colleges to paint the **front facades** of their buildings and entry halls **orange** under the **Kayakalp Scheme**. This initiative, which began in the healthcare sector, is now extending to educational institutions, reinforcing the importance of cleanliness and visual appeal.

**What is the Kayakalp Scheme?****An Initiative for Cleaner Healthcare Facilities:**

The **Kayakalp Scheme** was launched by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** on **May 15, 2015**, as part of the larger **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** (Clean India Mission). It aims to enhance the cleanliness, hygiene, and overall quality of **Public Health Facilities (PHFs)** across India.

Objectives of the Kayakalp Scheme:

- **Promoting Cleanliness and Hygiene:** The scheme seeks to improve sanitation standards, infection control, and the use of **environment-friendly practices** in healthcare settings, ensuring safer spaces for patients and staff.
- **Incentivizing Excellence:** PHFs that demonstrate outstanding efforts in maintaining cleanliness and infection control are recognized and rewarded, fostering a competitive spirit among healthcare facilities.
- **Building a Culture of Ongoing Improvement:** The scheme encourages **continuous assessment**, peer reviews, and ongoing enhancements to hygiene, cleanliness, and sanitation practices within healthcare centers.
- **Sustainable Practices:** It focuses on sharing **sustainable, health-enhancing practices** related to cleanliness that can lead to improved public health outcomes.

Assessment and Recognition Process:

The **Kayakalp Scheme** follows a **three-tier assessment process**:

1. **Internal Assessment:** Healthcare facilities are evaluated based on their self-reported cleanliness practices.
2. **Peer Review:** Other healthcare centers review the facility's performance.
3. **External Evaluation:** An external body assesses the facility's adherence to cleanliness and hygiene protocols.

At the start of each financial year, facilities are scored and documented using a pre-defined assessment tool.

Performance Parameters for Evaluation:

- Hospital/Facility Upkeep
- Sanitation and Hygiene
- Waste Management
- Infection Control
- Support Services
- Hygiene Promotion

Awards and Recognition under the Kayakalp Scheme:

To acknowledge the exceptional efforts of healthcare facilities, **five awards** are given each year under the **Kayakalp Scheme**:

- Two Best District Hospitals
- Two Best Community Health Centres/Sub-District Hospitals
- One Primary Health Centre in each district



Awards Include:

- Cash prizes
- Citations

These awards are granted based on the performance of the healthcare centers, as assessed by the established criteria.

Significance of the Kayakalp Scheme:

The **Kayakalp Scheme** has played a pivotal role in transforming the cleanliness standards of India's public health facilities, resulting in healthier and more welcoming environments for patients and healthcare workers alike. By incentivizing **sustained cleanliness practices**, it supports the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan's** broader goals of hygiene, health, and environmental sustainability across the nation.



Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary: A Rich Habitat in Assam

Context: Recently, a **highly decomposed elephant carcass** was discovered in the **Khanapara range** of the **Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary**, raising concerns about the sanctuary's wildlife conservation efforts.

About Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary:

Location and Geography:

Situated in the **state of Assam**, the **Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary** is a vital ecological reserve. It is made up of three major **reserve forests: Khanapara, Amchang, and South Amchang**. This sanctuary spans from the **Brahmaputra River** in the north to the **hilly forests of Meghalaya** in the south, forming a continuous forest belt that extends through **Meghalaya's Maradakdola Reserve Forests**.

Flora: A Rich Biodiversity

The sanctuary hosts a variety of plant life, contributing to its lush ecosystem:

- **Khasi Hill Sal Forests**
- **East Himalayan Mixed Deciduous Forest**
- **Eastern Alluvial Secondary Semi-evergreen Forests**
- **East Himalayan Sal Forests**

These forest types support a rich diversity of wildlife, making the sanctuary a key area for conservation in Assam.

Fauna: Home to Unique Species:

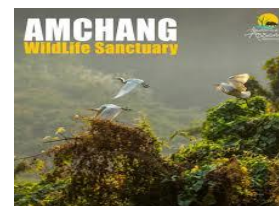
The **Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary** is a habitat for several unique and endangered species. Among the notable animals are:

- **Flying fox**
- **Slow loris**
- **Assamese macaque**
- **Rhesus macaque**
- **Hoolock gibbon**
- **Porcupine**
- **White-backed vulture**
- **Slender-billed vulture**

Additionally, **Tree yellow butterflies (Gancana harina)** are found in this sanctuary, which are indigenous to **Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and northeast India**.

Significance of Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary

The **Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary** is an important conservation area, providing a refuge for both flora and fauna unique to the region. It plays a crucial role in maintaining biodiversity, particularly in the face of growing threats to wildlife populations. The sanctuary's location, stretching from the **Brahmaputra River** to the forests of **Meghalaya**, underscores its significance in maintaining ecological continuity between the two regions.



India's Missed Trade Opportunities: Rethinking RCEP, CPTPP, and the China-Plus-One Strategy

Context: India's trade strategy is at a crossroads. With global investments and export opportunities shifting away from China, many Asian nations have seized the "**China-plus-one**" strategy, but India has yet to capitalize on this opportunity. Meanwhile, the resurgence of **Donald Trump** in US politics adds further uncertainty, particularly regarding American trade policies. The growing debate on whether India should join **multilateral trade agreements** like **RCEP** and **CPTPP** underscores the urgency for a strategic shift.

**India's Trade Dilemma: Balancing Protectionism and Global Integration:**

India's trade policies are grappling with a delicate balance. On one hand, **protectionism** has driven India to avoid free trade agreements like **RCEP**, fearing the opening of markets to **China** and the risk of cheap imports flooding the country. On the other hand, countries like **Vietnam** and **Indonesia** have significantly benefited from integration into global trade agreements.

Risks and Rewards of RCEP:

In **September 2024**, **Piyush Goyal**, India's Commerce Minister, warned that joining **RCEP**—the **China-led** trade pact—could exacerbate India's **trade deficit** with China, which had been growing at an alarming rate from 2004 to 2014. He expressed concerns over **manufacturing** being weakened further by increased imports from China, potentially undermining the **Make in India** initiative.

India Missing the China-Plus-One Opportunity:**The China-Plus-One Strategy:**

The **China-plus-one strategy** aims to diversify manufacturing and sourcing away from **China** to reduce dependency on the nation. This strategy gained momentum due to several factors:

- **COVID-19 pandemic**
- **US-China trade war**
- **Rising labor costs in China**
- **Geopolitical tensions**

Countries like **Vietnam** and **Thailand** have been quick to capitalize on this shift, but **India** has lagged behind.

Missed Growth in US-China Trade Shift:

Despite **India's** manufacturing potential, it has not gained much from the **US-China trade shift**. An **Oxford Economics** report highlighted that while **India's exports** surged, the country failed to increase **domestic value addition** in high-growth sectors. For instance, in the **electronics sector**, India's share of **US imports** increased from **0.2%** in 2017 to **2.1%** in 2023. However, rivals like **Vietnam** and **Taiwan** still dominate the market, limiting India's growth potential.

Attracting Chinese FDI: Pros and Cons**Chinese Investment Surge Amid Protectionism:**

With rising protectionism, **Chinese companies** have increased their overseas investments. However, India's share of Chinese **outward direct investment** has significantly dropped, from **2.6%** in 2019 to **1%** in 2021. This is primarily due to ongoing **border tensions**.

Strategic Concerns:

While Chinese investments could boost trade in the short term, they also pose risks to India's **long-term economic security**. Experts warn that excessive reliance on Chinese firms could weaken **India's strategic independence** and expose the country to **supply chain vulnerabilities**. Chinese firms may prioritize their interests, reducing benefits for **Indian workers** and stalling growth in **domestic industries**.

Uncertainty with Trump's Trade Policies:

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Potential Impact of Trump's Return:

With **Donald Trump** possibly returning to the presidency, there are growing concerns over **future tariffs** and stricter trade conditions for India. During his first term, Trump's **trade tariffs** harmed India's **exports** by removing India's **duty-free benefits** under the **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)** program, impacting **\$5.7 billion** worth of Indian goods.

Concerns Over Tariff Hikes:

Trade analysts predict that a second Trump term could extend tariffs to sectors critical to **India's exports**, including **automobiles**, **textiles**, and **pharmaceuticals**. This could significantly impact **India's market access** in the **US**, reducing competitiveness in key sectors.

New Opportunities for Indian Exporters:

As the **US** intensifies its actions against **China**, **India** could seize the opportunity to fill the gaps left by restricted Chinese imports. This shift may allow **Indian exporters** to benefit from increased demand for goods once supplied by China.

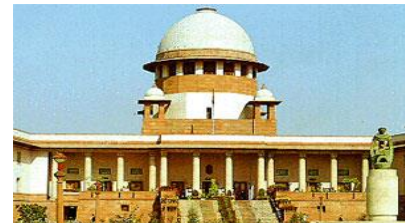
Conclusion: Rethinking India's Trade Strategies

India must rethink its trade strategy to better navigate the shifting global landscape. While protectionism may have served India in the short term, joining **multilateral trade agreements** like **RCEP** and **CPTPP**, combined with leveraging the **China-plus-one strategy**, may offer more long-term benefits. Furthermore, attracting **foreign direct investment** and fostering domestic industries will be crucial in ensuring India remains a competitive player in the global economy.

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Supreme Court Ruling on Property Rights and State Acquisition of Private Property

Context: The **Supreme Court of India (SC)** recently delivered a landmark judgment in the **Property Owners Association & Ors v State of Maharashtra** case, marking a significant shift in how the state can acquire **private property** for public purposes. The judgment has sparked debates on the balance between **property rights** and the **state's welfare objectives**.

**Background of the Property Owners Association & Ors v State of Maharashtra Case:**

The case revolved around a **Maharashtra law** that allowed the **state** to acquire certain privately owned **dilapidated buildings** in Mumbai. The law claimed to be in line with **Article 39(b)** of the **Indian Constitution**, which aims to redistribute the **material resources** of the community for the common good. In 1991, the **Bombay High Court** upheld the law, asserting that it was protected under **Article 31C**, which was originally introduced to promote **socialist objectives** under the **Indira Gandhi government**.

Understanding Articles 39(b) & 31C

Article 39(b):

This article mandates that the **state** ensure the **ownership** and **control** of the material resources of the community are distributed in a way that benefits the common good.

Article 31C:

Article 31C has two parts:

1. **Exemption:** Laws aimed at promoting **Article 39(b)** or (c) cannot be challenged for inconsistency with **Articles 14, 19, or 31**.
2. **Protection:** It shields these laws from **judicial scrutiny**, provided they claim to support **Article 39(b)** or (c). However, this second part was **struck down** in the **Kesavananda Bharti case (1973)**. Later, the **42nd Amendment (1976)** expanded its scope, though it was partially invalidated in the **Minerva Mills case (1980)**.

The Property Owners Association & Ors v State of Maharashtra Case:**The Judgment:**

The **9-judge bench** of the **Supreme Court**, chaired by the **Chief Justice of India**, addressed two key issues:

1. The **status** of **Article 31C** and whether it still stands despite previous amendments being struck down.
2. The scope of **Article 39(b)** and whether it permits the state to acquire **private property** as part of the community's **material resources**.

Status of Article 31C:

The case challenged the **Bombay High Court's** interpretation, which argued that the **Minerva Mills** ruling invalidated **Article 31C**. The Supreme Court clarified that only the expanded scope was removed, but the original version of **Article 31C** remains valid, ensuring that laws promoting **socialist principles** still have **constitutional protection**.

Interpretation of Article 39(b):

The court then examined whether **Article 39(b)** justifies the acquisition of all **private property** as community resources. Referring to **Justice Krishna Iyer's** views, the court clarified that not all private property is considered part of the **community's material resources**. The court outlined four criteria to determine whether **private property** could be designated as a community resource:



1. **Nature** of the resource: What inherent characteristics make it vital for the community?
2. **Impact on the community**: How does the resource benefit society at large?
3. **Scarcity** of the resource: Is it in short supply, making it critical for communal welfare?
4. **Concentration of ownership**: What are the consequences of wealth or resource concentration in a few hands?

Diverging Opinions in the Property Owners Association & Ors v State of Maharashtra Case:

- **Majority Opinion**: The majority of the bench emphasized the **shift** from a **public-investment economy** to one with a mix of **public** and **private investments**. They argued that not all **private property** qualifies as a **community resource**, and acquisition must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- **Justice Nagarathna's Concurrence**: Justice Nagarathna concurred with the majority but advocated for a **broader interpretation** of **Article 39(b)**, stressing that **changing socio-economic policies** shouldn't alter its original intent to promote public welfare.
- **Justice Dhulia's Dissent**: In contrast, **Justice Dhulia** dissented, arguing for the inclusion of **all private resources** as community resources to address the growing wealth inequality in India. He believed the state should have broader authority to acquire private property for the **common good**.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's ruling in the **Property Owners Association & Ors v State of Maharashtra** case has redefined the interpretation of **Article 39(b)** while preserving the **original scope of Article 31C**. This decision represents a balancing act between the **state's welfare objectives** and the **protection of private property rights**. It reflects India's evolving socio-economic needs and provides a framework for **future property acquisitions**, ensuring that private property is only acquired for the **greater good** and when the conditions warrant such an intervention.

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National Education Day 2024: Theme, Date, Significance, and History

Context: National Education Day is celebrated every year on **November 11** in India to honor the birth anniversary of **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**, a revered freedom fighter, scholar, and India's first Minister of Education. This day was officially recognized in **2008** by the **Ministry of Human Resource Development** (now the Ministry of Education) to commemorate Azad's monumental contributions to the Indian education system. National Education Day serves as a reminder of the vital role that **education** plays in empowering individuals and fostering a **progressive society**. The year **2024** offers a fresh opportunity to reflect on the nation's educational progress and future goals.

**When is National Education Day?**

National Education Day is observed annually on **November 11**, marking the birthday of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. This day serves as a symbol of India's dedication to improving its education system and addressing the challenges faced in the sector. Across the country, **schools, colleges, universities**, and government institutions organize events to raise awareness about the importance of education and its role in shaping a **forward-thinking society**.

National Education Day History:

The **origins** of National Education Day are deeply rooted in the **educational reforms** led by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first **Minister of Education**. Azad was instrumental in the establishment of key educational institutions like the **Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** and the **University Grants Commission (UGC)**. He focused on making education accessible to all, aiming to bridge gaps in quality and availability.

In recognition of his efforts, the Government of India declared **November 11** as National Education Day in **2008**. Azad's advocacy for **universal primary education**, along with his emphasis on **scientific education**, continues to influence India's educational framework today.

Contribution of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's contributions were transformative in shaping India's modern education system. As the country's first Education Minister, Azad pushed for **universal primary education** and worked towards ensuring that quality education was accessible to all, regardless of social or economic background. His leadership led to the foundation of iconic institutions such as the **IITs** and the **UGC**, which remain cornerstones of India's educational and technological progress.

Azad also advocated for the integration of **science, technology**, and **cultural heritage** within the education system, founding institutions like the **Sahitya Akademi** and the **Lalit Kala Akademi** to preserve and promote Indian culture. His balanced approach to education — integrating modernity with tradition — remains a guiding principle in India's educational policies today.

Theme of National Education Day 2024:

The theme for **National Education Day 2024** is "**Learning for Lasting Peace**." This theme highlights the role of education in fostering a **peaceful, inclusive society**. It emphasizes that education not only empowers individuals but also contributes to building social cohesion and harmony in the nation.

Importance of National Education Day:

National Education Day serves as a reminder of the **transformative power of education** and its key role in the **personal and national development** of a country. Here's why this day holds significance:



- **Honoring Azad's Legacy:** Azad's leadership in shaping India's education system laid the foundation for many of the institutions and policies we benefit from today, such as the IITs and the UGC.
- **Promoting Literacy and Awareness:** National Education Day spreads awareness about the importance of **literacy**, especially in **rural** and **underserved areas**, reinforcing that **education is a fundamental right**.
- **Emphasizing Equal Access:** The day underscores the need for **equitable education** for all, ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has access to quality education. The **Right to Education (RTE) Act** further enforces this principle by guaranteeing free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14.
- **Encouraging Educational Reforms:** The day offers an opportunity to review and discuss **educational reforms**, such as the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, and assess their progress in reshaping the education system.
- **Celebrating Progress:** National Education Day acknowledges the strides India has made toward **universal education**, including the expansion of schools, colleges, and **digital learning platforms**.

National Education Day 2024 Celebrations:

National Education Day 2024 will be celebrated with a range of activities designed to engage both students and educators:

- **Essay Writing and Debates:** Schools and colleges often hold competitions on themes related to **education**, encouraging students to reflect on its importance.
- **Workshops:** Educational workshops focusing on innovative teaching methods, **digital literacy**, and **student mental health** will be organized to improve the learning experience.
- **Honoring Teachers and Scholars:** The day also provides an opportunity to recognize the **contributions** of educators and scholars who have made a lasting impact on their students and the education system.
- **Community Outreach:** Universities and **NGOs** will participate in activities such as promoting **literacy** in rural areas, distributing books, and conducting study sessions to reach underserved communities.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** Various **social media platforms** will run campaigns to spread awareness about the importance of education, showcasing inspiring stories and motivating individuals to embrace **lifelong learning**.

Government Initiatives on National Education Day:

On **National Education Day**, the **Government of India** often launches new policies and initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges within the education sector:

- **NEP 2020:** The **National Education Policy** of 2020 aims to bring about a comprehensive transformation in the education system, promoting **multidisciplinary learning**, **critical thinking**, and **technological integration**.
- **Digital Education Platforms:** Initiatives like **DIKSHA**, **SWAYAM**, and **PM eVidya** have been rolled out to provide **online learning resources** to students, especially in remote areas, thereby bridging the digital divide.
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan:** This initiative aims to provide **inclusive and equitable** education across all levels, targeting disadvantaged and marginalized groups.
- **Skill Development:** Programs like **Skill India** offer **vocational training**, equipping students with practical skills that align with **industry demands**, thus ensuring better employment prospects.

Conclusion:

National Education Day 2024 serves not only as a tribute to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's vision for education but also as a reminder of the ongoing need for **reforms**, **inclusive practices**, and **innovations** in the Indian education system. This day highlights the importance of **quality education** in building a strong, inclusive, and prosperous nation. As India moves forward, it is crucial to continue addressing the evolving educational challenges and ensure that every individual, regardless of background, has access to the tools they need to succeed.



What is Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT)?

Context: The Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) is an **intergovernmental organization** established in **February 1979** to promote the development of **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** in the **Asia-Pacific region**. It was founded as a result of joint initiatives by the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)** and the **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**.



Key Details:

- **Established:** February 1979
- **Headquarters:** Bangkok, Thailand
- **Membership:**
 - **38 Members** (Governments)
 - **4 Associate Members**
 - **140+ Affiliate Members** (Private sector companies and academic institutions in the ICT field)

Fuctions of APT:

1. **Promotion of Telecommunication Development:**
APT facilitates the growth of **telecommunication services** and **information infrastructure** across the Asia-Pacific region.
2. **Policy Coordination:**
It harmonizes **policies, regulations, and technical standards** for ICT to ensure seamless development and integration across member nations.
3. **Preparatory Activities for Global Conferences:**
APT plays a significant role in regional preparations for key international events such as:
 - **ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP)**
 - **World Radiocommunication Conferences (WRCs)**
 - **World Telecommunication Standardization Assemblies (WTSAs)**
 - **World Telecommunication Development Conferences (WTDCs)**
 - **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)**
4. **Capacity Building and Pilot Projects:** The organization organizes capacity-building programs on ICT and implements pilot projects to encourage regional ICT growth.
5. **Specialized Working Groups and Forums:**
APT hosts forums and working groups to address specific ICT issues, such as:
 - **Spectrum Management**
 - **Policy and Regulation Harmonization**
 - **Standardization**
6. **Sub-Regional Platforms:**
APT establishes sub-regional platforms to promote collaboration on specific regional priorities. For example:
 - **South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC):**
 - Composed of regulatory bodies from nine countries: **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.**
 - Discusses regulatory and technical challenges related to telecommunication and ICT.

Significance of APT

1. **Regional ICT Growth:**
APT facilitates the expansion of ICT infrastructure and services in the Asia-Pacific, benefiting **governments, businesses, and communities.**



2. **Global Integration:** By aligning regional policies with international standards, APT ensures member countries remain competitive in the global ICT space.
3. **Knowledge Sharing:** Through capacity-building programs and forums, APT fosters **collaboration and knowledge exchange** among members, addressing key ICT challenges.
4. **Spectrum and Policy Harmonization:** APT's efforts in spectrum management and regulatory standardization enhance regional cooperation and reduce conflicts over ICT development.

In summary, APT plays a pivotal role in shaping the ICT landscape of the Asia-Pacific region, fostering innovation, collaboration, and regulatory harmony.





Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)

Context: The **Supreme Court** recently revisited and overruled its **1967 judgment in the Azeez Basha case**, which had denied minority status to the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). This decision is seen as a significant step toward re-evaluating the university's minority status and its historical origins.

About Aligarh Muslim University:

Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) is a **government-run educational institution** located in **Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh**. It is one of India's oldest and most prestigious universities, offering a diverse range of traditional and modern courses.



Historical Background:

1. Founding:

- Established in **1875** as the **Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College** by **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**, a visionary social reformer.
- Built with the aim of empowering **Muslims** through education after the **1857 War of Independence**.

2. Support:

- Raja Jai Kishan** assisted Sir Syed in setting up the institution.

3. Transition to AMU:

- The institution was transformed into **Aligarh Muslim University** in **1920**, under the **Aligarh Muslim University Act**.

4. Inclusivity:

- Since its inception, AMU has welcomed students from **all communities, castes, creeds, and religions**.
- It is recognized by the **University Grants Commission (UGC)** and the **Association of Indian Universities (AIU)**.

5. Academic Offerings and Reach:

- Offers **300+ courses** across diverse fields.
- Attracts students from across India and internationally, especially from **Africa, West Asia, and Southeast Asia**.
- Some seats are reserved for students from **SAARC and Commonwealth nations**.

6. Off-Campus Centres:

- AMU operates three centres:
 - Malappuram Campus, Kerala**
 - Murshidabad Centre, West Bengal**
 - Kishanganj Centre, Bihar**

Minority Status of AMU:

1. 1967 Azeez Basha Case:

- The Supreme Court ruled that AMU was a **central university** and thus **not a minority institution**.

2. AMU (Amendment) Act, 1981:

- Parliament restored AMU's minority status through this amendment.

3. 2006 Allahabad High Court Verdict:

- Struck down the 1981 amendment, challenging AMU's minority status.

4. Appeal in the Supreme Court:

- The Supreme Court is currently re-examining the **minority status** issue.



- On **January 9, 2024**, a **seven-judge bench** commenced hearings, overruling the **1967 Azeez Basha judgment**.
- The court emphasized the importance of identifying AMU's "**genesis**" to determine its **minority status**.

Significance of Recent Developments:

- **Revisiting AMU's Legacy:** The court's decision to re-evaluate AMU's origins underscores its commitment to preserving the historical and cultural identity of institutions.
- **Impact on Minority Rights:** A favorable decision on AMU's minority status could set a precedent for other institutions seeking similar recognition.
- **Inclusivity in Education:** The debate highlights the importance of maintaining inclusivity while respecting the historical ethos of educational institutions.

This evolving legal discourse on AMU's status demonstrates the intricate balance between constitutional provisions, historical legacies, and modern interpretations of minority rights.



Reclassifying FPIs as FDI

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued new guidelines for **Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)** who wish to reclassify their investments in Indian companies as **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**. This reclassification is necessary when FPI holdings exceed the threshold of **10% of the total paid-up equity capital**.

- **Requirements for Reclassification:**
 - Government approvals.
 - Consent from the investee companies.
 - Alignment with FDI norms and sectoral restrictions.

**What is Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)?**

FPI refers to short-term investments made by foreign investors in a country's **financial markets or assets**.

Key features include:

- **Nature of Investment:**
 - Includes securities (e.g., stocks, bonds) and financial assets (e.g., mutual funds, ETFs).
 - Does not grant direct ownership or control over a company.
- **Liquidity and Volatility:**
 - FPI is relatively liquid and subject to market fluctuations.
- **Impact on Economy:**
 - Forms part of a country's **capital account** and appears on its **Balance of Payments (BOP)**.
 - In India, FPIs contribute significantly to financial market growth.

What is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)?:

FDI refers to investments where foreign entities acquire **controlling ownership** in a business. Key aspects include:

- **Nature of Investment:**
 - Includes mergers, acquisitions, building facilities, reinvesting profits, and intra-company loans.
 - Typically involves management control, technology transfer, and long-term participation.
- **Economic Contributions:**
 - Brings capital, skills, and technology to the host country.
 - Contributes to the development of sectors with growth potential.
- **Stock of FDI:**
 - Represents the cumulative net FDI (outward minus inward) for a given period.

Guidelines on Investment Limits for FPIs:

1. **Regulatory Framework:**
 - Under the **Foreign Exchange Management (Non-Debt Instruments) Rules, 2019**, FPI investments must not exceed **10% of paid-up equity capital** on a fully diluted basis.
2. **Breach of Threshold:**
 - If the limit is exceeded, FPIs must:
 - Divest the excess holdings, or
 - Reclassify the excess as **FDI** within **five trading days**.
3. **Reclassification Approval:**
 - Obtain approvals from the government and adhere to FDI norms, particularly for countries sharing land borders with India.
4. **Role of Investee Companies:**
 - Ensure sectoral caps and FDI prohibitions are followed.
 - Consent from the company is mandatory to verify compliance.



5. Sectoral Restrictions:

- Reclassification is prohibited in specific restricted sectors.

Significance of the Guidelines

- **Regulatory Consistency:** Ensures uniformity in applying FDI and FPI rules across sectors.
- **Market Integrity:** Strengthens compliance with FDI norms, sectoral caps, and entry routes.
- **Investment Confidence:** Enhances transparency and clarity for foreign investors.
- **Support for Economic Growth:** Aligns foreign investments with India's policy objectives and sectoral priorities.

By providing a clear framework, the RBI aims to streamline foreign investments while safeguarding India's economic and regulatory interests.





NGOs to Lose FCRA License Over Conversions, Anti-Development Acts: MHA

Context: The Central Government has announced that NGOs found engaging in **anti-development activities, forced religious conversions**, or actions disrupting **social or religious harmony** may face cancellation of their registration under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010**.



Key Reasons for Cancellation:

- Misuse of foreign funds for **personal gain** or **undesirable activities**.
- Links to **terrorist** or **radical groups**.
- Divergence from the NGO's stated objectives while utilizing foreign contributions.

About Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)

- **Enactment:**
 - First introduced in **1976** to regulate foreign funding of voluntary organizations and political groups.
 - Repealed and replaced by a stricter version in **2010**.
- **Objective:** To ensure that foreign contributions do not harm India's **sovereignty, security, or social harmony**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **Applicability:**
Applies to **associations, groups, and NGOs** intending to receive foreign donations.

Major Provisions Under FCRA, 2010:

1. **Mandatory Registration:** NGOs must register under FCRA, and registration is valid for **five years**, subject to renewal if they comply with norms.
2. **Annual Returns:** NGOs must file annual returns, similar to **income tax filings**.
3. **Utilization Restrictions:** Foreign funds must not be used in ways that:
 - Affect **sovereignty** and **integrity** of India.
 - Impact **friendly relations** with other countries.
 - Disrupt **communal harmony**.
4. **Core Banking Requirements:**
 - NGOs must operate accounts in banks with **real-time monitoring** capability for security agencies.

Permitted Purposes for Foreign Contributions:

Registered NGOs can utilize foreign contributions for the following purposes:

1. **Social**
2. **Educational**
3. **Religious**
4. **Economic**
5. **Cultural**

Who Cannot Receive Foreign Funding?

The following entities and individuals are **prohibited** from accepting foreign contributions:

- **Candidates** contesting elections.
- **Judges** and **government employees**.
- **Media persons**.
- **Political parties**.
- **Public servants** (as per the 2020 Amendment).



Foreign Contribution Regulation Amendment Act, 2020:

Key updates introduced under the amendment include:

1. **Addition of Public Servants:** Public servants are now prohibited from accepting foreign contributions.
2. **Prohibition on Fund Transfers:** Foreign contributions cannot be transferred to other entities or individuals.
3. **Mandatory Aadhaar:** Applicants for registration, renewal, or prior permission must provide their Aadhaar number.
4. **Account in SBI Delhi Branch:** NGOs receiving foreign funds must operate an account in the **State Bank of India's New Delhi branch**.
5. **Inquiry for Renewal:** The government may conduct an **inquiry** before renewing an NGO's registration certificate.
6. **Voluntary Surrender of Registration:** NGOs can surrender their FCRA registration if desired.

News Summary:

- NGOs involved in **activities against national development** or **forced conversions** will face stricter scrutiny under FCRA regulations.
- **Other Violations Leading to Cancellation:**
 - Misuse of funds for **personal benefits**.
 - Involvement in **terror-linked or radicalized activities**.
 - Failure to use funds as per their registered objectives.
- **Government Stance:** This measure is aimed at ensuring foreign contributions are used **transparently** and in line with national interests, preventing misuse and safeguarding **internal security**.

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Germany's Economic Struggles

Context: Why in News?

- **Chancellor Olaf Scholz** has indicated openness to face a confidence vote before Christmas due to economic management issues and a **collapsed coalition**, originally planned for January 15.
- Germany's economic growth in Q3 2023 was a modest **0.2%**, following a contraction.
- **Volkswagen**, Europe's largest employer, is considering shutting down three factories in Germany—unprecedented in its **87-year history**—highlighting the broader industrial and economic crisis.



Volkswagen's Crisis Highlights Germany's Industrial Decline:

- **Key Challenges for Volkswagen:**
 - Declining sales and **intensifying competition from China**, particularly in the electric vehicle (EV) market.
 - Lag in the **transition to EVs** due to dependence on internal combustion engines.
 - Rising **energy costs** and shrinking global markets.
- **Wider Implications:**
 - Volkswagen employs **800,000 people**, accounting for **5% of Germany's GDP**. Layoffs and factory closures could ripple across the German **automotive sector**.
 - The industry is Germany's largest, and its decline jeopardizes **20% of national industrial output by 2030**.

Economic Crisis in Germany:

Current State of the Economy:

- Germany was the **only G7 economy to shrink** in 2023 and is projected to remain the group's **slowest-growing economy** in 2024.
- Its **GDP per capita** declined by **1%** between 2019 and 2023, per the IMF.
- Post-pandemic global demand has shifted from **manufactured goods to services**, leaving Germany, reliant on manufacturing, vulnerable.

Key Indicators:

- **Shrinking output** in high-tech manufacturing, a sector once synonymous with German global leadership.
- Rising concerns about high **debt and deficits**, worsened by coalition-driven economic policies.

Reasons Behind the Crisis:

1. **Volkswagen's Struggles:**
 - Slow adaptation to EVs and competition from more agile markets, especially **China**.
 - High operating costs and **falling global demand** for traditional vehicles.
2. **Energy Dependence:**
 - Heavy reliance on **Russian gas** left Germany exposed after the **Ukraine war** caused energy prices to surge.
 - Terms of trade deteriorated as energy costs skyrocketed, reducing industrial competitiveness.
3. **Structural Issues:**
 - Over-dependence on manufacturing without sufficient integration of the **digital economy**.
 - Bureaucratic **over-regulation** and hurdles for **mid-sized enterprises** (Mittelstand), historically the backbone of Germany's economy.
4. **Global Shifts:**

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- The pivot towards **services over manufacturing** post-pandemic has placed additional strain on Germany's manufacturing-heavy economy.

Germany's Fragile Coalition Amid Economic and Global Tensions:

- The coalition government struggles to navigate economic turmoil while addressing global tensions, including geopolitical dependencies on **Russia** and **China**.
- Internal disagreements within the coalition hinder the ability to implement effective reforms.
- High debt levels and the growing deficit have raised concerns within the **European Union**, given Germany's historical role as an economic stabilizer.

Implications:

Economic:

- Germany risks **losing its position** as Europe's industrial leader, with significant ramifications for the EU economy.
- Decline in the **automotive sector** could lead to widespread unemployment and further contraction in industrial output.

Political:

- Chancellor Scholz faces a credibility crisis amid political instability, risking **weakened governance** in tackling economic challenges.

Global:

- Germany's struggles may **undermine EU stability**, given its central role in **economic integration** and **policy coordination**.
- Competition from **China** and shifting global trade dynamics underscore the urgency for Germany to adapt its economic strategies.

Germany's recovery depends on addressing its **structural challenges**, diversifying its economy, and embracing innovation in **energy** and **digital technologies**.

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Manipur Violence: 10 Militants Killed in Attack on CRPF Camp Amid Rising Tensions

Why in News?

- **Recent Incident:** In **Jiribam district** of Manipur, **10 suspected militants** from the **Hmar tribe**, affiliated with the **Kuki-Zo** community, were killed in a **shootout with security forces** after armed attacks targeting **Meitei settlements**, a **CRPF post**, and a local police station. A **CRPF constable** was injured in the incident and hospitalized.
- The violence comes in the wake of **ongoing tensions** in Manipur between the **Kuki tribe** and the majority **Meitei community**.
- **Prohibitory orders** were imposed in Jiribam to curb further violence, and shutdowns were observed in **Kuki-Zo-majority districts** of Churachandpur and Kangpokpi.



Manipur Violence Background:

- **Ethnic Tensions:** Manipur has witnessed prolonged violence between **Meitei** (non-tribal) and **Kuki** (tribal) communities. The **Imphal Valley**, home to 64% of Manipur's population (Meitei), and the **hills** (inhabited by over 35% of recognized tribes) are at the heart of the ethnic divide.
- **Historical Tensions:** The violence escalated after the **Manipur High Court's directive** in February 2023, asking the state government to pursue granting **Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Meitei community**, which triggered protests from tribal groups.

Key Factors Behind the Violence:

- **ST Status for Meiteis:** The Meitei community has been pushing for ST status since 2012, claiming it was recognized as a tribe before Manipur's merger with India in 1949 but lost that status thereafter.
 - **Meitei Argument:** The demand stems from a desire to **protect culture, language, and ancestral land**, arguing that the community has been marginalized over time.
 - **Tribal Opposition:** Tribal groups fear that granting **ST status** to Meiteis would undermine their political and economic standing, resulting in **job losses** and **land encroachments** by the Meitei community in hill areas.
- **Tribal Solidarity March:** In opposition to the Meitei ST demand, the **All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM)** organized a **tribal solidarity march**, which led to **violent clashes** in various parts of the state.

The Hmar Tribe:

- **Ethnicity & Language:** The **Hmar tribe**, part of the **Kuki-Zo umbrella**, is primarily found in northeastern states, including **Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, and Tripura**. They belong to the **Sino-Tibeto-Burman** language family, with linguistic ties to **Mizo** and other related dialects.
- **Social Structure:** The Hmar society is traditionally **patriarchal** and follows the **ultimogeniture system** of inheritance, where the youngest child inherits the estate.
- **Economic Activities:** Primarily **agricultural**, the Hmar practice both **shifting cultivation (jhum)** and **settled farming**, growing crops like **rice, maize, vegetables, and cotton**.

Implications of the Violence:

- The violence in Manipur continues to escalate, impacting **ethnic relations, economic activities, and security** in the region.
- The **Hmar tribe's involvement** in the recent clashes underscores the **complexity** of the conflict, involving **cultural, political, and economic** grievances.
- The **Meitei demand for ST status** remains a flashpoint for further **ethnic polarization**, with broader **social and economic consequences** for the state.

New Rules Under Water Act 2024: Penalties and Inquiry Process Simplified

Context: The Central Government has notified new rules under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**, focusing on streamlining the **inquiry process** and **penalty framework** for water pollution offenses. These rules, titled the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) (Manner of Holding Inquiry and Imposition of Penalty) Rules, 2024**, aim to enhance **regulatory oversight** and ensure a smoother adjudication process for violations.

The Need for Amendments to the Water Act:

Background: The Water Act, 1974

The original Act was introduced to **prevent and control water pollution**. It included provisions for **imprisonment** for violations and established penalties for failing to comply with its directives.

Why Amend the Water Act?



- **Simplifying Compliance:** Minor offenses, such as not informing the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) about water abstraction, carried harsh penalties, including imprisonment. These provisions often led to **harassment** of businesses and individuals.
- **Promoting Ease of Living and Doing Business:** The earlier provisions were **not aligned** with India's **Ease of Living** and **Ease of Doing Business** initiatives.
- **Focus on Reform:** The **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024**, was introduced to rationalize penalties and **decriminalize minor violations**.

Key Highlights of the Water Act, 2024:

1. Introduction and Applicability

- Initially applicable in **Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Union Territories**, with other states adopting the Act through resolutions.

2. Decriminalization and Revised Penalties

- **Imprisonment provisions removed** for minor offenses.
- **Failure to pay penalties** can lead to imprisonment of up to **three years** or fines up to **twice the penalty amount**.

3. Exemptions for Certain Industries

- Specific categories of industries may be **exempted** from requiring SPCB consent if deemed non-polluting by the Central Government.
- Penalties for **tampering with monitoring devices** are set between ₹10,000 and ₹15 lakh.

4. Streamlined SPCB Chairman Appointments: The **nomination process** for SPCB chairpersons will now involve **central oversight**, adding transparency and accountability.

5. Enhanced Penalties for Pollutant Discharge

- Monetary fines replace imprisonment for violations of pollutant discharge norms.
- **SPCBs empowered** to order the immediate cessation of activities causing pollution.

6. Appointment of Adjudicating Officers

- **Adjudicating officers** (minimum rank: Joint Secretary) are authorized to assess penalties for violations.
- Appeals can be made to the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, with a deposit of **10% of the penalty amount**.

7. Accountability for Government Departments

- Heads of government departments are liable to pay penalties equal to **one month's salary** for violations unless they prove **due diligence**.

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Key Features of the New Rules Under the Water Act 2024

1. Introduction of Penalty Rules

- The **Union Environment Ministry** has notified procedures for **inquiries** and **penalty imposition**, which are now in effect.

2. Shift to Civil Penalties

- Criminal charges for violations have been replaced by **civil penalties**.
- Non-polluting industries (e.g., **white category industries**) are exempt from prior permissions under the Act.

3. Empowerment of Pollution Control Authorities: **CPCB, SPCB**, Pollution Control Committees, and Integrated Regional Offices can now directly file complaints for violations.

4. Role of Adjudication Officers

- Officers (minimum rank: Joint Secretary) oversee complaints, issue notices, and complete inquiries within **six months**.
- Alleged violators may respond through **legal representatives**.

Conclusion:

The **Water Act 2024** and its new rules mark a **significant shift** in India's approach to addressing water pollution. By **decriminalizing minor offenses** and introducing **monetary penalties**, the government aims to reduce harassment and encourage compliance. These reforms not only support the **Ease of Doing Business** but also strengthen regulatory mechanisms for safeguarding India's water resources.

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Kanchanjunga Express Collision: CRS Report Reveals Safety Gaps

Context: The **Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS)** has released a detailed report on the **June 2024 Kanchanjunga Express-Goods Train collision** in West Bengal. The report cites "**multiple lapses**" at various operational levels, from station staff to divisional officials, as the primary reasons for the tragic incident.

Labeling the collision as an "**accident-in-waiting**," the CRS highlighted failures in managing train operations during automatic signal breakdowns. The report recommends the **urgent implementation of the KAVACH system** to prevent similar incidents.

**What is the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS)?**

The **CRS** is a statutory body responsible for ensuring the **safety of railway operations and travel** under the **Railways Act, 1989**.

Key Functions:

- **Investigates Serious Accidents:** Probes train collisions and derailments.
- **Makes Safety Recommendations:** Suggests preventive measures to the government.

Administrative Structure:

- **Headquarters:** Located in **Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**.
- **Reporting:** The CRS operates under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)**, not the Ministry of Railways, to maintain independence and prevent conflicts of interest.

What is KAVACH?**About the System:**

- **KAVACH**, meaning "armour," is India's indigenous **Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS)** developed since 2012.
- It is designed to ensure **zero accidents** by automatically managing train movements during emergencies.

How It Works:

- **Electronic Devices:** Uses **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)** devices on trains, signals, and tracks.
- **Communication:** Tracks, locomotives, and signals "communicate" using ultra-high radio frequencies to control brakes and alert drivers of dangers.

Development;

- **Indigenously Designed:** Created by the **Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO)** in collaboration with Indian industries.
- **Testing:** Trials conducted by the **South Central Railway**.

The Kanchanjunga Express Collision:**What Happened?**

On **June 17, 2024**, the **Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express** collided with a goods train near **New Jalpaiguri station** in West Bengal. The accident occurred within the **Katihar Division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR)**.

Casualties and Injuries

- **Deaths:** 10, including the goods train's loco pilot and the Kanchanjunga Express's train manager.
- **Injuries:** 43 passengers suffered various injuries.

CRS Report: Key Findings**Causes of the Accident:**

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**The CRS identified the following lapses as major causes:**

- **Flawed Authority Letter:** Issued to pass defective automatic signals, but it lacked proper speed guidance.
- **Communication Failures:** Absence of **walkie-talkies** limited coordination between the train crew and station staff.
- **Operational Negligence:** Station staff and officials failed to follow standard protocols, leading to errors in train working.

Communication and Safety Violations

- The flawed authority letter misled the **loco pilot** into maintaining full speed despite defective signals.
- Key staff, including the **train manager**, were unaware of the signal issue due to improper documentation.

Systemic Issues in Signal Management

- **Repeated Failures:** Katihar Division recorded **275 automatic signal failures** since January 2023.
- **Accident History:** Over five years, **208 dangerous signal-passing incidents** were reported, with 12 leading to collisions.

CRS Recommendations:

1. Implement KAVACH System

The report strongly advocates for the **nationwide implementation** of the KAVACH system to prevent future accidents.

2. Crashworthiness in Coaches

- Prioritize crash-resistant features in the **last two coaches** of passenger trains.
- Retrofit older coaches with enhanced safety measures during major servicing.

3. Install Crew Monitoring Systems

Accelerate the installation of **Crew Voice and Video Recording Systems (CVVRS)** in locomotives to improve communication and safety compliance.

Ministry of Railways' Response:**Disciplinary Actions:**

The Ministry has initiated **disciplinary proceedings** against staff found responsible for the collision, including station masters and inspectors.

Revised Safety Rules

- **Amendments to Procedures:** General and Subsidiary Rules (G&SR) have been updated to prevent ambiguities in handling signal failures.
- **Updated Formats:** New formats for books and forms related to automatic block sections ensure clear instructions.

Equipment and Communication Upgrades:

- **Walkie-Talkies Procured:** All defective communication devices in Northeast Frontier Railway have been replaced.
- **Enhanced Staff Training:** Comprehensive training for loco pilots, train managers, and station masters has been conducted to improve adherence to protocols.

Conclusion:

The **Kanchanjunga Express collision** underscores the critical need for robust safety mechanisms and better operational practices. The CRS report highlights systemic lapses while offering a roadmap for improvement. By implementing **KAVACH** and reinforcing communication protocols, the Ministry of Railways can move closer to achieving **zero-accident rail operations** in India.

Expanding Himalayan Glacial Lakes: A Looming Threat

Context: A recent report by the **Central Water Commission (CWC)** reveals that **Himalayan glacial lakes** are expanding at an alarming rate, posing significant risks to communities, ecosystems, and infrastructure.

**Key Findings of the Report:**

- The total **glacial lake inventory area in India** grew from **1,962 hectares in 2011 to 2,623 hectares in 2024**, marking a **33.7% increase**.
- **67 lakes in India** showed a surface area increase of over **40%**, placing them in the **high-risk category for Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)**.
- Regions like **Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh** experienced the most pronounced expansions, indicating **heightened risks of GLOFs**.
- Across the Himalayan region, glacial lakes and other water bodies have seen an **overall area increase of 10.81%** in 2024.
- Expanding glacial lakes in **Bhutan, Nepal, and China** pose significant **transboundary risks** to India.

What Are Glacial Lakes?

Glacial lakes are **water bodies formed by melting glaciers**. These lakes usually develop at the **foot of glaciers** but may also form on, in, or under them.

Types of Glacial Lakes

1. **Ice-Contact Lakes:** Directly connected to glacier ice, terminating in lake water.
2. **Distal Lakes:** Located away from glaciers but influenced by their presence.

Understanding Glacial Lake Outbursts:

As glacial lakes expand, they become increasingly hazardous due to their **unstable boundaries**, often composed of loose ice or sediment.

When these natural dams break, they unleash **massive floods**, known as **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)**, causing severe destruction downstream.

Historical Incident

In **2013**, Uttarakhand's **Kedarnath flash floods** combined with a GLOF from **Chorabari Tal** killed thousands and caused widespread devastation.

Causes of Glacial Lake Outbursts:

1. **Rising Temperatures:** Accelerated glacier melting in the Himalayas leads to the formation and expansion of glacial lakes.
2. **Increased Glacier Instability:** Melting glaciers destabilize **moraines** (rock ridges) that act as natural dams.
3. **Heavy Monsoon Rains:** Intense rainfall during the **Indian monsoon** increases lake volumes, raising the risk of overflow.
4. **Earthquakes and Landslides:** The **seismically active Himalayan region** often experiences landslides or rockfalls that destabilize glacial lakes.
5. **Development Projects:** Infrastructure projects, such as roads and dams, increase environmental stress and the likelihood of landslides.
6. **Lack of Monitoring:** Many remote glacial lakes are not regularly monitored, leaving communities unprepared for potential disasters.

Consequences of GLOFs in India:

1. **Severe Flooding:** Floodwaters can **destroy villages, farmlands, and infrastructure** downstream.
2. **Erosion and Riverbank Damage:** Sudden surges of water erode riverbanks, destabilizing surrounding land and structures.
3. **Loss of Lives and Livelihoods:** Communities in flood-prone regions face dire risks, with limited resources to recover from disasters.

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4. **Infrastructure Damage:** Key assets like roads, bridges, and hydropower plants are often washed away during GLOFs.

Preventive Measures Taken:

High-Risk Lakes Identified:

The **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** has listed **189 high-risk glacial lakes** for mitigation measures.

Lake-Lowering Measures

Specialized teams conduct investigations and implement **lake-lowering techniques** to reduce overflow risks.

National GLOF Risk Mitigation Programme (NGRMP)

This program focuses on:

- **Hazard Assessments:** Conducting detailed technical evaluations of glacial lakes.
- **Monitoring Systems:** Installing **automated weather and water level stations (AWWS)** and **early warning systems (EWS)** to detect potential outbursts.
- **Expeditions:** So far, **15 expeditions** have been conducted, covering regions like **Ladakh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, and Kashmir.**

Conclusion:

The rapid expansion of **Himalayan glacial lakes** demands immediate attention. **Proactive monitoring, enhanced infrastructure resilience, and community preparedness** are critical to mitigating the risks posed by **GLOFs**. With climate change accelerating glacier melt, long-term solutions like the **National GLOF Risk Mitigation Programme** hold the key to safeguarding lives, ecosystems, and economies in vulnerable regions.

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World Intellectual Property Report 2024: India Shines in Global IP Rankings

Context: According to the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) 2024 Report**, India has secured a spot among the **top 10 countries** for patents, trademarks, and industrial designs, showcasing its growing focus on innovation and intellectual property.

Key Highlights of the Report**1. Patents**

- India saw a remarkable **15.7% growth in patent applications in 2023**, the fastest among the top 20 global IP economies.

2. Industrial Designs

- Applications for **industrial designs rose by 36.4%**, highlighting India's emphasis on creativity and advancements in the **manufacturing sector**.

3. Trademarks

- India ranked **4th globally in trademark filings**, recording a **6.1% increase** in applications in 2023.

4. Global IP Trends

- A total of **3.55 million patent applications** were filed worldwide in 2023, marking a **2.7% increase** compared to 2022.
- Asia emerged as a key driver** of this growth, with India, China, the United States, Japan, and South Korea leading the way.

Understanding Intellectual Property (IP):

Intellectual Property (IP) refers to the **creations of the human mind**—inventions, literary and artistic works, designs, symbols, names, and images used in commerce. IP is protected by laws that grant inventors and creators **exclusive rights** over their work, enabling them to gain recognition or financial benefit.

Types of Intellectual Property

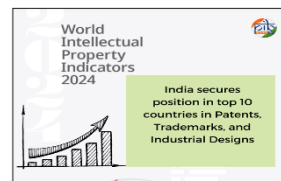
- Patents:** Exclusive rights granted for inventions, covering new methods or technical solutions.
- Copyrights:** Legal protection for creators of literary, artistic, and musical works.
- Trademarks:** Unique signs or symbols that distinguish the goods or services of a company.
- Industrial Designs:** Protection for the aesthetic or ornamental features of an article.
- Geographical Indications (GIs):** Signs used for products originating from a specific region, attributed to unique qualities of that location.
- Trade Secrets:** Protection for confidential information that has commercial value.

India's Key IP Initiatives:

- National IPR Policy (2016):** A comprehensive vision document to integrate all forms of IP, ensuring a framework for **implementation, monitoring, and review** of IP laws.
- Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM):** Established to coordinate the implementation of the **National IPR Policy**, promoting awareness and enforcement of IP laws.
- National Intellectual Property Awareness Mission (NIPAM):** A flagship initiative to impart **IP education and training** in schools, colleges, and research institutions.
- Scheme for Facilitating Startups Intellectual Property Protection (SIPP):** A program to **encourage innovation** and support startups in protecting and managing their **IP assets**.
- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** Launched by **NITI Aayog in 2016**, AIM promotes a culture of **innovation and entrepreneurship** through programs such as:
 - Atal Tinkering Labs** for nurturing creativity in schools.
 - Atal Incubation Centers** for startup support.
 - Atal New India Challenges** to address social issues through innovation.
 - Mentor India** for guidance to budding innovators.

Concluding Remarks:

India's **stellar growth in intellectual property filings**, especially in **patents, industrial designs, and trademarks**, reflects its commitment to innovation and global competitiveness. These advancements bolster India's aspirations for **economic growth** and an **innovation-driven future**, positioning the nation as a significant player in the global IP landscape.



HAWK Air Defense Equipment

Context: Taiwan's **Defense Minister** recently stated that the decision regarding Taiwan's decommissioned **HAWK anti-aircraft missiles** lies with the **United States**, reflecting the ongoing strategic importance of this iconic defense system.

What is the HAWK Missile System?

The **HAWK (Homing All the Way Killer)** is a **ground-to-air missile system** designed to provide effective air defense under a variety of conditions. Initially developed by the **American defense company Raytheon**, it has served as a reliable tool for countering aerial threats.

**Key Features:**

- **All-Weather Capability:** Designed to operate in diverse weather conditions.
- **Altitude Range:** Effective for **low-to-medium-altitude targets**.
- **Versatility:** Initially created to destroy aircraft, it was later upgraded to intercept other missiles mid-flight.

Development and Operational History:

- **Origin:** The missile entered service in **1960** and underwent continuous upgrades to stay relevant.
- **Modernization:** Extensive updates prevented it from becoming obsolete, but by **1994**, it was replaced by the **MIM-104 Patriot** in the **U.S. Army**.
- **Decommissioning in the U.S.:**
 - Phased out of U.S. service by **2002**.
 - Replaced by the **man-portable FIM-92 Stinger** for the U.S. Marine Corps.
- **Global Use:** The HAWK missile has been **exported widely** and remains in use by **NATO allies** and countries across **Asia** and the **Middle East**.

Technical Specifications:**Guidance System:**

The HAWK uses a **Semi-Active Radar Homing (SARH)** system, relying on external radar to guide it toward its target.

Launch and Propulsion:

- **Launcher:** The missile is transported and launched using the **M192 towed triple-missile launcher**.
- **Propulsion:** Powered by a **dual-thrust motor**, it features both a boost and sustain phase for optimized performance.

Key Capabilities:

- **Engages Multiple Targets:** Can simultaneously intercept several threats.
- **Weather Flexibility:** Performs efficiently in a variety of weather conditions.

Legacy and Limitations:

The **HAWK missile system**, while once cutting-edge, is now considered **outdated** compared to modern systems like the **Patriot missile defense system**. However, its **legacy of reliability** and **global adoption** underline its historical significance in air defense technology.

The Gutti Koya Tribals: A Glimpse into their Society and Culture

Context: The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has recently directed the Union Home Ministry and the states of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha to submit a comprehensive report on the Gutti Koya tribals and their current status, reflecting growing interest in their community.

**Who Are the Gutti Koya Tribes?**

The Gutti Koya are a unique and diverse tribal community that stands out as one of the few multi-racial and multi-lingual groups in India. Their population is primarily concentrated in the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha.

Language

The Koya speak the Koya language, which belongs to the Dravidian language family. It has close ties to the Gondi language and has been significantly influenced by Telugu over time.

Occupation and Livelihood:

- The Koya are primarily engaged in the Podu system of shifting cultivation, a practice historically relied upon for economic survival in forested regions.
- Additionally, they earn their livelihood through animal husbandry and collecting minor forest produce, which forms an essential part of their daily sustenance.

Cultural Heritage and Festivals:**Sammakka Saralamma Jatra**

One of the most significant cultural events for the Koya people is the Sammakka Saralamma Jatra. This biennial festival, held on the full moon day of Magha Masam (January or February), takes place at Medaram village, located in the Mulug taluk of Warangal district, where thousands gather to celebrate their traditions and honor their deities.

Social Structure and Family Life:

The Koya society is organized into five main sub-divisions known as gotrams, and every Koya is born into one of these clans. Clan affiliation is crucial, and individuals remain within their gotram throughout their lives.

Family Structure:

- The Koya people follow a patrilineal and patrilocal family structure, where lineage is traced through the father, and the family unit is typically centered around the nuclear family or Kutum.
- Monogamy is the norm within Koya society, where individuals are expected to maintain single-marriage relationships.

Political and Social Recognition:

While the Koya tribe holds Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in Chhattisgarh, they are yet to be granted the same recognition in some other regions, like Telangana, where they have migrated. This disparity in ST status has been a longstanding issue for the community.

Conclusion:

The Gutti Koya tribals embody a rich tapestry of cultural traditions and linguistic diversity, with their practices, festivals, and social structure deeply rooted in history. As they continue to navigate the challenges of modernity and government recognition, their unique heritage remains a testament to the resilience and richness of India's tribal communities.

RBI Retains SBI, HDFC, ICICI as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) in 2024

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has once again classified State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) for 2024. This means these banks are considered "Too Big To Fail", with their stability being critical to the financial system. If any of these institutions were to fail, the consequences would be severe, potentially leading to widespread economic disruption.

**What Are Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)?**

D-SIBs are banks that are deemed so significant to the economy that their failure could create widespread financial instability. These banks are highly integrated into global and local financial systems and hold complex financial structures. Therefore, their operational continuity is vital for ensuring **economic stability** and **public confidence** in the financial system.

Key Characteristics of D-SIBs:

- **High Integration:** These banks are involved in a range of **cross-jurisdictional activities** and have a broad impact on both local and global financial markets.
- **Government Support:** D-SIBs are expected to receive **government bailouts** during financial crises to prevent catastrophic disruptions in the financial system. This "Too Big to Fail" status can result in these banks facing fewer risks in the funding markets but also creates moral hazard, encouraging excessive risk-taking.

The RBI Framework for D-SIBs:

To manage the risks associated with D-SIBs, the RBI issued a **framework** in **July 2014**, with the following goals:

- **Annual Disclosure:** The list of **D-SIBs** is disclosed annually, with specific **capital requirements** and **risk regulations** to mitigate systemic risks.
- **Systemic Importance Score (SIS):** The banks are categorized into **buckets** based on their SIS, which determines the **additional capital** they must maintain. The higher the SIS, the higher the capital surcharge.

Capital Requirements for D-SIBs:

To safeguard against potential financial distress, D-SIBs must hold additional **Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1)** capital. This requirement ranges from **0.20% to 0.80%** of their **Risk-Weighted Assets (RWAs)**, depending on their assigned bucket.

- **SBI (Bucket 4): 0.80%** additional CET1 capital
- **HDFC Bank (Bucket 3): 0.40%** additional CET1 capital
- **ICICI Bank (Bucket 1): 0.20%** additional CET1 capital

These capital buffers help ensure that these banks have the financial resilience to absorb shocks and continue operations during financial stress.

Two-Step Process for Assessing D-SIBs:

The RBI uses a two-step process to evaluate the systemic importance of banks:

1. **Bank Selection:** Only large banks (those whose size exceeds 2% of the country's GDP) are considered for evaluation. Smaller banks are excluded from this assessment.
2. **Score Calculation:** Various financial and operational indicators are used to calculate a **composite score** for each bank. If a bank surpasses a predefined threshold, it is classified as a D-SIB and placed in one of the buckets.

Which Banks are Classified as D-SIBs in 2024?

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The **RBI** has reaffirmed **SBI**, **HDFC Bank**, and **ICICI Bank** as D-SIBs for 2024, continuing their inclusion from the previous year. Here's a breakdown of their positions:

- **SBI**: Placed in **Bucket 4** (highest risk category)
- **HDFC Bank**: Placed in **Bucket 3**
- **ICICI Bank**: Placed in **Bucket 1**

These banks have been classified as D-SIBs for several years, with:

- **SBI** being first designated in **2015**
- **ICICI Bank** in **2016**
- **HDFC Bank** in **2017**

International Considerations: G-SIBs and India:

Foreign banks operating in India that are classified as **Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs)** are also subject to additional CET1 capital requirements, proportional to their **Risk-Weighted Assets (RWAs)** in India. Notable **G-SIBs** for 2023 include **JP Morgan Chase**, **Bank of America**, **HSBC**, and **Citigroup**, among others.

Conclusion:

The **RBI's designation** of SBI, HDFC, and ICICI as **D-SIBs** underscores their pivotal role in India's financial ecosystem. By maintaining higher capital reserves and adhering to strict regulatory guidelines, these banks are better positioned to withstand financial stress, ensuring the stability of the broader economy. Their continued classification as **Too Big to Fail** highlights their importance and the ongoing need for vigilant oversight in a rapidly evolving financial landscape.

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Novo Nordisk Calls for FDA Action to Halt Compounded Versions of Semaglutide Drugs

Context: Novo Nordisk, the Danish pharmaceutical leader behind the widely used drugs **Wegovy** (for weight loss) and **Ozempic** (for type 2 diabetes treatment), has formally requested that the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** take action to prevent the compounding of **semaglutide-based** medications. The company warns that the **compounded versions** of these drugs, made to meet high demand, could pose **serious health risks** to patients, prompting concerns over **safety and efficacy**.



Comparing Generic and Compounded Drugs:

Generic drugs are officially approved medications that are chemically identical to the brand-name versions, undergoing rigorous regulatory oversight. They must meet strict standards for **purity**, **bioavailability** (how effectively the drug is absorbed into the bloodstream), and **dosage accuracy**.

In contrast, **compounded drugs** are personalized medications created by pharmacists to meet a specific patient's needs, often when the commercial version is unavailable. However, these compounded versions are subject to less stringent regulation, leading to potential **quality control issues**.

Key Issues in Drug Compounding:

- Limited Regulations:** Under FDA guidelines, licensed pharmacists are permitted to compound drugs, particularly when commercial options are out of stock. With the increasing demand for **Wegovy** and **Ozempic**, compounding pharmacies have begun producing their own versions of **semaglutide**, sparking concerns from **Novo Nordisk** and other pharmaceutical companies.
- Purity and Stability Risks:** Semaglutide has a **complex chemical structure**, making it difficult to replicate accurately. **Compounded versions** may fail to match the purity or stability of the FDA-approved products, which could undermine their effectiveness and safety.
- Dosing Inaccuracies:** The FDA-approved semaglutide is delivered through **single-use pens**, ensuring **precise dosing**. However, compounded versions are often dispensed in **multi-dose vials or syringes**, leading to the risk of **incorrect dosing**. Reports have surfaced of patients **overdosing**, resulting in serious side effects such as **nausea** and **vomiting**.
- Health Risks:** Semaglutide's **bioavailability** (how well the drug is absorbed into the bloodstream) is critical for its effectiveness. **Compounded versions** may not be absorbed properly, diminishing the drug's effects and increasing the risk of severe complications such as **heart disease**, **nerve damage**, and **kidney issues**.
- Contamination Concerns:** Compounded drugs require **sterile environments** and careful handling to prevent contamination. Recent years have seen the **FDA** flag **sterility issues** at compounding pharmacies, resulting in significant recalls of affected products.

Proposed Solution to Address Issues with Drug Compounding:

Adding Semaglutide to the DDC List: To mitigate these risks, **Novo Nordisk** has petitioned the **FDA** to add **semaglutide** to the **Demonstrable Difficulties for Compounding (DDC)** list. This would restrict the compounding of semaglutide when **commercial options** are available, ensuring that patients only use the **FDA-approved** version.

The **FDA** assesses drugs for the **DDC** list based on factors such as:

- **Stability**
- **Bioavailability**
- **Dosage accuracy**
- **Sterility requirements**

Novo Nordisk argues that **semaglutide** meets all of these criteria, making it a poor candidate for compounding due to the **complexity and risks involved**.

Conclusion:

Novo Nordisk's call for FDA action highlights the growing concerns around **compounded versions** of **semaglutide**, which may compromise **patient safety**. By placing semaglutide on the **DDC list**, the **FDA** would help ensure that patients receive a consistent, **safe**, and **effective** medication.

**Booker Prize: Celebrating Literary Excellence**

Context: In a remarkable achievement, **Samantha Harvey**, a British author, has won the **Booker Prize 2024** for her extraordinary novel "**Orbital**". This captivating, **short**, and **wonder-filled** narrative takes place aboard the **International Space Station (ISS)**, offering readers a unique perspective and an unforgettable literary experience.



What is the Booker Prize?

The **Booker Prize** stands as the **world's foremost literary award** for a single work of **fiction**. Since its inception in **1969** in the **UK**, it has grown to be a prestigious global award, initially focused on **Commonwealth writers** but now open to authors from anywhere in the world, as long as their work is written in **English**.

- **Purpose:** The prize seeks to **celebrate exceptional fiction** by rewarding the **best novel of the year**.

Eligibility Criteria:

To be eligible for the Booker Prize, a novel must meet the following conditions:

- **Language:** The novel must be an **original work** written in **English**, not a translation.
- **Publication:** It must be **published in the UK or Ireland** during the year of the prize.

Imprint: The novel must be published by a **registered UK or Irish imprint** (self-published works are excluded).

Prize Award and Recognition:

- **Winner's Prize:** The **Booker Prize** winner receives **£50,000** in recognition of their literary achievement.
- **Shortlisted Authors:** Authors who make the shortlist each receive **£2,500**, recognizing their contribution to the literary world.

The Booker Prize Foundation:

The **Booker Prize Foundation**, a **registered charity** established in **2002**, is responsible for managing the **Booker Prize for Fiction** and the **Man Booker International Prize** (since 2005). The foundation ensures the continued celebration of literary excellence and provides a platform for global recognition of authors.

The **Booker Prize** continues to honor **outstanding talent** in fiction and plays a pivotal role in promoting **the finest writers** from across the globe.

**Wildlife Institute of India (WII): Championing Wildlife Conservation**

Context: The **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** is at the forefront of wildlife science and conservation in India. Recently, WII experts have highlighted the success of the ambitious '**Project Cheetah**' in **Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh**, showcasing the institute's pivotal role in biodiversity management.

About the Wildlife Institute of India (WII):**Foundation and Status:**

Established in **1982**, the WII is an **autonomous institution** under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change**. It was created to advance **wildlife science** and provide solutions for **biodiversity conservation** in India.

Location:

- Situated in **Dehradun, Uttarakhand**, WII is uniquely positioned alongside the **Rajaji National Park**.
- Recognized **internationally**, it provides **training programs, academic courses**, and expert advisory services on **wildlife research and management**.

Objectives of WII:

1. **Enhancing Scientific Knowledge:** Developing and disseminating scientific insights about **India's wildlife resources**.
2. **Training for Conservation:** Offering specialized training programs for **personnel at various levels** in wildlife conservation and management.
3. **Innovative Research:** Conducting **research projects** to develop techniques suited to **Indian ecosystems**.
4. **Expert Advisory Services** Providing critical advice on **wildlife management challenges**.
5. **International Collaboration:** Working closely with **global organizations** to enhance research, training, and management practices.
6. **Regional Excellence:** Establishing itself as a **regional hub** of international importance for **wildlife and natural resource conservation**.

Key Areas of Research and Activities:

The WII's research focuses on diverse areas, including:

- **Biodiversity Studies**
- **Wildlife Policy**
- **Endangered Species Conservation**
- **Forensic Wildlife Research**
- **Wildlife Management**
- **Eco-Development**
- **Spatial Modelling**
- **Climate Change Studies**

Governance and Oversight:

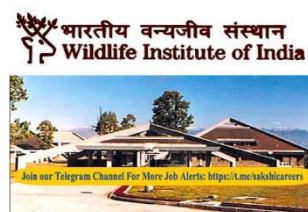
The WII's governing board is chaired by the **Union Minister for Environment, Forests, and Climate Change**. It includes representatives from:

- **Central and State Governments**
- **Research Institutions**
- **Academic Bodies**

Conclusion:

The **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** continues to play a vital role in protecting and preserving India's rich biodiversity. Through its **cutting-edge research, innovative training programs, and global partnerships**, WII is driving the nation's efforts to achieve sustainable **wildlife conservation** and inspire a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

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Bitcoin Surges to Record High Following Trump's Presidential Win

Context: Bitcoin, the largest cryptocurrency globally, has skyrocketed to an **all-time high** after Donald Trump's groundbreaking victory in the US presidential elections. This milestone reflects the growing significance of cryptocurrencies in the financial world.



Understanding Cryptocurrency:

What is Cryptocurrency?

Cryptocurrency refers to a form of **digital or virtual currency** that employs **cryptography** to ensure security, making it resistant to counterfeiting and double-spending.

- Operates on **decentralized blockchain networks**, a secure and transparent digital ledger.
- Functions without centralized control, offering immunity to **government interference or manipulation**.

Key Features of Cryptocurrency:

1. **Decentralization:** Most cryptocurrencies run on **blockchain networks**, ensuring no single entity governs the system.
2. **Enhanced Security:** **Blockchain technology** uses consensus mechanisms like **Proof of Work (PoW)** and **Proof of Stake (PoS)** to safeguard transactions.
3. **Transparency and Anonymity:** Offers visible transaction records while maintaining **user anonymity**.
4. **Global Accessibility:** Enables seamless cross-border transfers without the need for **currency exchange or excessive fees**.
5. **Ownership:** Cryptocurrency owners retain **full control** over their digital assets via **secure wallets** protected by private keys.

The Power of Blockchain Technology:

- **Blockchain** is a **distributed ledger system** that maintains transaction security and transparency.
- Uses **consensus algorithms** to validate transactions, ensuring only authentic ones are added to the ledger.

Challenges Facing Cryptocurrencies:

1. **Regulatory Uncertainty:** The lack of clear regulations creates fragmented markets, stifles innovation, and exposes investors to risks.
2. **Market Volatility:** Cryptocurrencies are notorious for **wild price fluctuations**, posing financial risks for investors.
3. **Limited Consumer Protections:** Fraud and scams remain rampant, with few avenues for recovering lost funds.
4. **Environmental Concerns:** Energy-intensive mining processes, particularly for **Bitcoin**, raise sustainability issues.

India's Approach to Cryptocurrencies:

Taxation Policies:

- The Indian government introduced a **30% tax** on cryptocurrency income in 2022, along with a **1% TDS** on transactions.



- These measures have **reduced domestic enthusiasm** for crypto trading.

Regulatory Landscape:

- In 2018, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** restricted banks from facilitating crypto transactions, citing **macro-economic risks**.
- The **Supreme Court overturned** this decision in 2020, providing a much-needed boost to the sector.

Way Forward for Cryptocurrency in India:

1. **Comprehensive Regulation:** Develop clear and balanced policies addressing security and consumer protection while defining cryptocurrencies' legal status.
2. **Investor Awareness:** Promote education on the **risks and opportunities** associated with digital assets.
3. **Global Collaboration:** Foster international partnerships to align **regulations and technical expertise** for the crypto ecosystem.

Cryptocurrencies, led by **Bitcoin**, continue to revolutionize the financial landscape. While challenges remain, strategic policies and investor awareness can pave the way for a **secure, inclusive, and innovative financial future**.





Exercise Sea Vigil-24: A Pan-India Coastal Defence Initiative

Context: The Indian Navy is gearing up for the **fourth edition** of the national-level coastal defence exercise, '**Sea Vigil-24**', scheduled to take place on **20th and 21st November 2024**. This comprehensive drill underscores India's commitment to strengthening its maritime security postures.

What is Exercise Sea Vigil?

Introduction:

Exercise Sea Vigil, first conceptualized in **2018**, is a **national-level coastal defence exercise** designed to evaluate and enhance **India's maritime security mechanisms** post the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

Objective:

The exercise activates the **Coastal Security apparatus** across India, thoroughly assessing the nation's **Coastal Defence framework**.

Key Features of Sea Vigil-24:

1. Multi-Agency Collaboration:

- This year's exercise involves **six Ministries** and **21 organizations/agencies**, emphasizing a **collaborative approach** to coastal defence.

2. Focus Areas:

- Protection of **critical coastal assets** such as **ports, oil rigs, Single Point Moorings, Cable Landing Points**, and vital **coastal infrastructure**.

3. Involvement of Other Services:

- Integration of the **Indian Army** and **Indian Air Force** along with extensive deployment of ships and aircraft enhances the **tempo and scope** of the exercise.

4. Engagement of Coastal Communities:

- Actively involves **fishing communities**, the **coastal population**, and students from **NCC** and **Bharat Scouts and Guides** to raise **maritime security awareness**.

Significance of Exercise Sea Vigil:

- **Holistic Security Assessment:** The drill serves as a platform for a **comprehensive review** of India's **coastal security infrastructure** and maritime preparedness.
- **Community Involvement:** Encouraging active participation from **local communities** helps in fostering a **shared sense of responsibility** toward maritime security.
- **National-Level Initiative:** **Sea Vigil**, coordinated by the **Indian Navy**, is a **unique initiative** that brings together all maritime stakeholders for a synchronized security effort.
- **Precursor to TROPEX:** This exercise acts as a **precursor** to the **Theatre Level Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX)**, conducted biennially by the Indian Navy to ensure comprehensive operational readiness.

Conclusion:

Exercise Sea Vigil-24 is a critical step in reinforcing **India's maritime defence capabilities**. By integrating various agencies, leveraging technology, and engaging coastal communities, it stands as a testament to India's unwavering commitment to safeguarding its **maritime frontiers**.



Will the End of the SDS Visa Impact Indian Students' Canadian Dreams?

Context: The Canadian government's decision to **discontinue the Study Direct Stream (SDS) visa program** has sent shockwaves through the Indian student community, one of the largest contingents of international students in Canada. Introduced in **2018**, the SDS visa aimed to simplify and expedite visa applications for students from specific countries, including India. However, its **abolishment in November 2024** has made the path to Canadian education more challenging, with longer wait times, **higher fees**, and **complex application requirements**.

**What Was the SDS Visa?**

The SDS visa program offered numerous advantages to eligible students, including:

1. **Faster Application Processing:** A streamlined process ensured quicker study permit approvals.
2. **Lower Application Fees:** Students enjoyed reduced costs compared to the standard visa process.
3. **Simplified Documentation:** Minimal paperwork made the process more accessible.

In **2022**, more than **189,000 Indian students** applied through the SDS program, with an **approval rate of 63%**, far surpassing the **19% approval rate** for non-SDS applicants.

Why Was the SDS Visa Discontinued?

The Canadian government outlined several reasons for ending the program:

1. **System Abuse:** Concerns grew over students using the SDS route to enroll in **low-value diploma courses** primarily as a gateway to **permanent residency**.
2. **Housing Challenges:** A sharp increase in international students exacerbated **Canada's housing crisis**, especially in urban hubs.
3. **Strained Resources:** Public services, such as healthcare and transportation, faced mounting pressure.
4. **Policy Shifts:** Canada is **reassessing its immigration policies** to ensure fair and sustainable practices.

Canadian Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** remarked, "We're issuing **35% fewer international student permits** this year, and next year, that number will decline by **another 10%**."

Impact on Indian Students:

The removal of the SDS visa introduces several hurdles:

- **Longer Processing Times:** Delays in approvals may disrupt students' academic plans.
- **Increased Costs:** Standard visa applications are more expensive, adding financial stress.
- **Complex Documentation Requirements:** Applicants now need comprehensive proof of funds, language proficiency scores, and detailed study plans.

These changes may result in **admission delays**, **higher financial burdens**, and uncertainty about **future immigration pathways**, particularly for students aiming for **permanent residency**.

What Are the Options for Indian Students?

Despite the SDS visa discontinuation, students can still apply for a **regular Student Visa**. Here's how aspirants can enhance their chances of success:

1. **Early Planning:** Start the application process well in advance to account for longer processing times.
2. **Accurate Documentation:** Ensure thorough preparation of required documents, including **proof of funds** and **admission letters**.
3. **Seek Expert Guidance:** Consult with experienced **immigration consultants** to navigate the complex application process.

Conclusion:

While the end of the **SDS visa program** poses challenges, it doesn't close the door on Indian students' Canadian education dreams. By planning ahead, staying informed, and seeking professional advice, aspirants can still make their way to Canada and achieve their academic and career goals. **Resilience and preparation** are key to overcoming these new obstacles.

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Centre Reimposes AFSPA in Six Volatile Areas of Manipur Amid Rising Insurgent Violence

Context: The Indian government has reimposed the "Disturbed Areas" status under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in six police jurisdictions of Manipur. This decision comes amid escalating violence and insurgent activities in the state.

Key Areas Under AFSPA:

The regions where AFSPA has been reinstated include **Sekmai, Lamsang, Lamlai, Moirang, Leimakhong, and Jiribam**. Notably:

- **Jiribam**, a critical region bordering Assam, is now back under AFSPA.
- These areas were previously exempted from AFSPA between **April 2022 and April 2023**, prior to the onset of the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur.

The **reimplementation** is aimed at curbing insurgent violence and enhancing security in these volatile areas. What is the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)?

Background:

- The origins of AFSPA trace back to **British-era laws** designed to suppress the **Quit India Movement**.
- It was first introduced as four ordinances in **1947**, later replaced by an act in **1948**.
- The current version, enacted in **1958** under **Home Minister G.B. Pant**, was initially called the **Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act**.
- Over time, it extended to cover states like **Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya**.

Key Provisions of AFSPA:

- **Control Over Disturbed Areas:** Enacted to regulate regions declared as **disturbed** due to internal conflicts or insurgency.
- **Special Powers to Armed Forces:**
 - **Open Fire:** Security forces can fire upon individuals if deemed necessary.
 - **Arrest Without Warrant:** Officers are empowered to arrest without judicial permission.
 - **Search Without Warrant:** Premises and individuals can be searched without prior authorization.
- **Protection for Security Forces:** Legal prosecution of officers requires prior approval from the **Central Government**.

States Affected by AFSPA:

AFSPA is currently enforced in parts of:

- **Nagaland**
- **Assam**
- **Manipur**
- **Arunachal Pradesh**

However, it has been **lifted from Meghalaya (2018)** and repealed in **Tripura (2015)**.

Disturbed Area Status:

- A **disturbed area** is declared under **Section 3 of AFSPA** based on threats from internal conflicts.
- The **Governor** or the **Central Government** can issue the notification, allowing the deployment of armed forces.
- Once declared, the area retains its status for at least **three months** under **The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976**.

Controversial Provisions of AFSPA:

Section 3: Empowers the **Centre** to declare any region as a **Disturbed Area**, even without the **state's consent**.

Section 4: Grants extensive authority to armed forces, including:

- **Use of Lethal Force:** Officers can fire upon individuals, even if it results in death.
- **Arrests Without Warrants:** Enables detention without judicial oversight.
- **Unrestricted Searches:** Permits property searches without prior authorization.

Section 7: Mandates prior approval from the **state or central authorities** for prosecuting security personnel, often leading to **allegations of misuse and lack of accountability**.

Conclusion:

The **reimposition of AFSPA in Manipur** highlights the government's ongoing struggle to address rising violence in the region. While the act strengthens the security apparatus, it also invites concerns over **civil liberties** and **human rights violations**. Balancing **security needs** with **community rights** remains a pressing challenge for policymakers.



3 MATES Migration Scheme: A New Pathway for Indian Professionals

Context: Australia has introduced an innovative initiative called the **Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES)**, designed to attract **young Indian talent** and provide them with opportunities to **work in Australia** for a limited period.

What is the MATES Scheme?

The **MATES Scheme** is a part of the **Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA)** between India and Australia. It allows **Indian university graduates** and **early-career professionals** to gain valuable international work experience in Australia for up to **two years**.

Key Highlights of the MATES Scheme

Background:

- The scheme is part of the **Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA)**, aimed at promoting **two-way migration** and addressing issues related to **illegal and irregular migration**.
- MATES will officially commence in **December 2024**.

Eligibility Criteria:

To qualify for the MATES Scheme, applicants must:

1. Be **30 years old or younger** at the time of application.
2. Have **proficient English skills**, demonstrated by an **IELTS score of 6 or equivalent** (minimum 5 in each module).
3. Hold a **Bachelor's degree or higher** in one of the following fields:
 - **Renewable Energy**
 - **Mining**
 - **Engineering**
 - **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**
 - **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
 - **Financial Technology (FinTech)**
 - **Agricultural Technology (AgriTech)**
4. Be a recent graduate (within two years) from an **eligible educational institution**.
5. Be an alumnus of one of India's **top 100 universities** as per the **NIRF 2024 rankings**.
6. Not have participated in the **MATES Scheme** previously.

Features of the MATES Scheme:

- **Duration:** Participants can **live and work in Australia for up to 2 years**.
- **Dependents:** Visa holders can bring their **spouses and dependent children**, who will have full **work rights**. Dependents do not count towards the **3,000 annual participant cap**.
- **Pilot Programme:** The scheme begins as a **pilot**, with **3,000 slots annually** for primary applicants.
- **Flexible Entry:** Visa holders have **12 months** to make their first entry into Australia and can stay for **24 months** from the first entry date.

Significance of the MATES Scheme:

- **Boosts Talent Mobility:** Offers a platform for **Indian graduates** to explore global opportunities and enhance their professional expertise.
- **Strengthens Bilateral Ties:** Deepens the **India-Australia relationship** through strategic cooperation in education, technology, and workforce development.
- **Encourages High-Demand Skills:** Focuses on industries critical to future growth, such as **AI, FinTech, and Renewable Energy**.
- **Empowers Dependents:** Allows families to relocate and enjoy employment opportunities in Australia, making it a more attractive option for young professionals.

The **MATES Scheme** is a game-changer for talented **Indian professionals**, offering them a gateway to explore international work environments, contribute to key industries, and foster stronger ties between India and Australia.



Operation Dronagiri: Transforming Lives with Geospatial Technology

Context: The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has recently launched **Operation Dronagiri**, a pioneering initiative aimed at showcasing the transformative potential of **geospatial technologies**. The launch took place at the **Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT)**, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

What is Operation Dronagiri?

Operation Dronagiri is a **pilot project** under the **National Geospatial Policy 2022**, designed to demonstrate how geospatial technologies can **enhance citizens' quality of life** and **streamline business processes**.

Key Objectives and Features**1. Core Goals**

- **Integration of Geospatial Technologies:** Showcase innovative applications in fields like **agriculture, livelihoods, logistics, and transport**.
- **Ease of Access to Spatial Data:** Utilize the **Integrated Geospatial Data Sharing Interface (GDI)** to make spatial data easily accessible.
- **Nationwide Impact:** Build a foundation for **nationwide implementation** by proving its value in a **pilot phase**.

2. Pilot Phase Implementation

The project will first be rolled out in **five states**:

- **Uttar Pradesh**
- **Haryana**
- **Assam**
- **Andhra Pradesh**
- **Maharashtra**

Here, **use cases** will be developed to demonstrate the real-world applications of geospatial technology across key sectors.

3. Collaborative Framework

- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with **government departments, industries, corporates, and startups** to leverage resources and expertise.
- **Implementing Agency:** The project is spearheaded by the **Geospatial Innovation Cell, Department of Science and Technology**.
- **Operational Support:** Activities are supervised by the **IIT Tirupati Navavishkar I-Hub Foundation (IITTNiF)**.
- **Geospatial Innovation Accelerators (GIAs):** Institutes such as **IIT Kanpur, IIT Bombay, IIM Calcutta, and IIT Ropar** will serve as operational arms to drive the initiative forward.

The Backbone: Geospatial Data Infrastructure

The project is powered by an **Integrated Geospatial Data Sharing Interface (GDI)**, a robust platform that ensures easy access to spatial data and promotes innovation in geospatial technologies.

Significance of Operation Dronagiri:

- **Empowering Sectors:** It focuses on solving challenges in **agriculture**, improving **livelihoods**, and optimizing **logistics and transport** systems.
- **Skill Development:** Enhances **geospatial skills and knowledge**, aligning with the **National Geospatial Policy**.
- **Fostering Innovation:** Encourages collaboration between startups, corporates, and academia to drive technological advancements.
- **Nationwide Transformation:** Creates a blueprint for the **nationwide rollout** of geospatial applications, improving governance and economic growth.

Way Forward:

Operation Dronagiri represents a **milestone in geospatial innovation** in India. By aligning with the **National Geospatial Policy 2022**, it is set to create a **modernized, data-driven ecosystem** that will benefit citizens, industries, and governments alike.

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SVASTIK Initiative: Bridging Tradition and Science

Context: At the **International Conference on Communication and Dissemination of Traditional Knowledge (CDTK-2024)**, the Director of CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (NIScPR) presented an overview of the innovative **SVASTIK Initiative**. This national effort combines traditional wisdom with scientific validation to ensure its preservation and relevance in modern society.

**What is the SVASTIK Initiative?**

The **Scientifically Validated Traditional Knowledge (SVASTIK)** initiative, coordinated by **CSIR-NIScPR**, is a national program aimed at:

- **Preserving Traditional Practices:** Ensuring the longevity of culturally significant traditions.
- **Encouraging Scientific Validation:** Fostering a **scientific approach** to verify the authenticity and benefits of traditional knowledge.
- **Building Public Trust:** Boosting public confidence in the **scientific validity** of traditional practices.

Collaborative Efforts:

The initiative involves **research organizations, higher education institutions, experts, and NGOs** working together to:

- Document Indian traditional knowledge.
- Share scientifically validated information with society.

Achievements of the SVASTIK Initiative:

- **Dissemination of Knowledge:** SVASTIK has successfully shared engaging stories of scientifically validated traditions in **17 Indian languages** through **social media platforms**.
- **Inspirational Publications:** Two dedicated **SVASTIK publications** provide authenticated narratives on traditional knowledge, inspiring young minds to explore science through a cultural lens.
- **Community Engagement:** By linking traditional knowledge with scientific temper, the initiative fosters a deeper connection between India's heritage and its scientific future.

About CSIR:**India's Premier R&D Organization:**

The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** is India's foremost publicly funded research organization. It promotes cutting-edge advancements in **natural sciences** and **engineering**, translating them for the benefit of the nation.

Key Facts about CSIR:

- **Legal Status:** Registered under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- **Network:** Operates **37 national laboratories, 39 outreach centers, one innovation complex, and three specialized units** across India.
- **Headquarters:** Based in **New Delhi**.

Organizational Structure:

- **President:** The **Prime Minister of India** (Ex-officio).
- **Vice President:** The **Union Minister of Science and Technology** (Ex-officio).

Governing Body: Headed by the **Director-General**, with the **Finance Secretary (Expenditure)** as an ex-officio member. Other members serve **three-year terms**.

25th Session of the IRIGC-TEC

Context: The 25th session of the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological, and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) was recently co-chaired by India's External Affairs Minister and Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister in New Delhi. The session highlighted significant strides in the trade relations and strategic cooperation between the two nations across various sectors.



Key Highlights from the 25th Session of IRIGC-TEC

- 1. Ambitious Trade Targets: USD 100 Billion by 2030:** India and Russia set a target to achieve a **USD 100 billion** trade goal by 2030. Both nations are optimistic about reaching this target, with notable progress already made in several sectors.
- 2. Advancing Trade and Overcoming Challenges:** Both countries have made substantial progress in overcoming **payment and logistics barriers**. Nearly **90% of bilateral trade** is now being conducted using **local or alternative currencies**, with only a small portion remaining in freely convertible currencies. This shift is helping both nations mitigate the impact of international financial fluctuations.
- 3. Focus on Diversification:** Efforts are underway to move beyond traditional trade areas like **crude oil** and explore opportunities in **agriculture, pharmaceuticals, industrial equipment, and technology**. This will help both countries reduce the existing trade imbalance, which is heavily skewed by oil imports from Russia.
- 4. Strengthening Connectivity and Talent Mobility:** Both countries emphasized the importance of enhancing connectivity, notably through initiatives such as the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** and the **Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor**. These projects are designed to improve **trade logistics**. Additionally, there is a strong focus on promoting **talent mobility and skills development**, particularly in sectors aligned with Russia's needs.
- 5. Economic Cooperation Beyond 2030:** The session also set the stage for long-term economic cooperation. Working groups were tasked with advancing discussions on **market access, services, investments, and technology exchange**, aiming for a comprehensive economic cooperation program through 2030.

Trade and Economic Landscape Between India and Russia

Bilateral Trade Milestones:

- India and Russia originally aimed to increase bilateral trade to **USD 30 billion by 2025**.
- In **FY 2023-24**, bilateral trade reached a record **USD 65.7 billion**, with India's exports valued at **USD 4.26 billion** and imports from Russia at **USD 61.44 billion**.

Key Imports and Exports:

- **Imports from Russia** include **oil, petroleum products, fertilizers, minerals, precious stones, and vegetable oils**.
- **Exports to Russia** include **pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, electrical machinery, mechanical appliances, and iron & steel**.

Challenges in India-Russia Trade:

- 1. Trade Imbalance:** India faces a **trade deficit** of nearly **USD 57 billion** with Russia, primarily due to the **crude oil imports**. India's exports to Russia are relatively low in comparison, contributing to the imbalance.
- 2. Geopolitical Challenges:** India's growing ties with the **US** and the **Quad** are complicated by the ongoing **Ukraine war**, which may limit the depth of strategic cooperation with Russia. Furthermore, Russia's alignment with **China** impacts its ability to balance relations with both nations, reducing India's leverage in **multilateral forums**.

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3. **Sanctions and Compliance Issues:** Western sanctions on Russia present a significant hurdle in trade relations, as some Indian companies now face targeted sanctions. India must balance its **defence** and **energy ties** with Russia while adhering to international norms.
4. **Slow Trade Diversification:** While the energy sector has boomed, efforts to diversify into areas like **automotive parts**, **electronics**, and **renewables** have been slow. Additionally, **Russia's declining international influence** makes it challenging to engage India in new economic areas like **technology** and **manufacturing**.
5. **Connectivity Projects Hindered:** Projects like the **INSTC** and the **Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor** are central to the India-Russia trade strategy, but India's interest in other routes like the **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor** may reduce the INSTC's significance, affecting its performance.

Addressing Trade Challenges: India-Russia Initiatives

1. **Special Rupee-Vostro Account:** To bypass international sanctions and facilitate **local currency payments**, India introduced the **Special Rupee-Vostro Account**, allowing Indian and Russian businesses to transact without relying on global financial systems.
2. **Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** India and Russia are working toward an **FTA** with the **Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)** to reduce trade barriers and streamline cooperation. A **Bilateral Investment Treaty** is also under negotiation, aimed at boosting economic engagement between the two countries.
3. **Facilitating Business Ventures:** Russia has expressed interest in India's **Make in India** program, which could lead to new **joint ventures** and enhance **economic collaboration** in manufacturing and other sectors.
4. **Bilateral Agreements:** The **Authorised Economic Operators (AEO)** agreement was signed between India and Russia, simplifying trade processes and providing mutual benefits for trusted exporters in both nations.
5. **Energy Sector Cooperation:** Energy remains a focal point, with efforts to expand cooperation in the **nuclear, solar, and wind energy sectors**.
6. **Russian Business Centre in New Delhi:** The establishment of the **Russian Business Centre** in New Delhi aims to strengthen ties through **business forums, regional missions**, and analytical support to enhance economic cooperation.

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):

The **INSTC** is a **7,200 km multimodal transit** route connecting the **Indian Ocean** and **Persian Gulf** to the **Caspian Sea** and **northern Europe** via **St. Petersburg**, Russia. Launched in **2000** through a trilateral agreement by **India, Iran, and Russia**, it aims to strengthen **trade and logistics** between the countries involved.

Significance of INSTC:

- **Boosts connectivity** between India, Central Asia, and **Eurasian regions**.
- **Membership:** India, Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman, Syria, and **Bulgaria** (Observer State).

By enhancing connectivity and leveraging strategic partnerships, India and Russia are poised to strengthen their bilateral ties, ensuring greater **trade cooperation** and **economic growth** in the years to come.

Supreme Court Guidelines to Curb Illegal Demolitions

Context: The Supreme Court of India recently issued comprehensive guidelines to curb the illegal demolition of homes and private properties, emphasizing due process and fundamental rights. This action comes in response to instances where demolitions have been used as punitive measures, particularly against individuals accused of crimes, raising significant concerns about human rights and legality.

**Background:**

- **Prevalence of Demolitions:** Several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, have resorted to demolishing properties of individuals accused of crimes, often citing encroachment or unauthorized construction.
- **Concerns:** These actions frequently bypass legal protocols, violating rights and principles of natural justice.

Concerns Regarding Illegal Demolitions:

1. **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the **right to life and personal liberty**, which includes the **right to shelter**. Illegal demolitions infringe upon these rights.
2. **Breach of Natural Justice:** Affected individuals are often denied a fair hearing or adequate notice.
3. **Erosion of Rule of Law:** Arbitrary demolitions undermine legal systems and foster impunity.
4. **Governance and Credibility:** Such actions erode public trust in the government and damage its credibility.
5. **Displacement and Hardship:** Families face loss of shelter, livelihoods, and significant financial distress.
6. **Social Unrest:** These demolitions can lead to protests and unrest, destabilizing communities.

Key Guidelines Issued by the Supreme Court:

To ensure fairness and legality, the Supreme Court has outlined the following measures:

1. **Mandatory 15-Day Notice:** Authorities must provide a 15-day notice before proceeding with demolitions, allowing affected individuals to challenge the decision.
2. **Adherence to Due Process:** Clear reasons for demolition must be provided, and all actions must follow established legal protocols.
3. **Legal Authorization:** Demolitions require proper authorization, including court orders when applicable.
4. **Protection of the Right to Shelter:** No demolition should proceed solely based on accusations, upholding the **right to shelter** under Article 21.
5. **Right to Challenge:** Property owners and tenants may legally contest demolition orders during the notice period.
6. **Accountability for Officials:** Officials who carry out illegal demolitions may face:
 - **Disciplinary actions.**
 - **Contempt of court charges.**
 - **Liability for compensation** to the affected parties.
7. **Personal Hearing:** Authorities must provide affected parties a chance for a personal hearing before finalizing demolition orders.
8. **Videography for Transparency:** The entire demolition process must be recorded to ensure transparency and accountability.



9. **Contempt and Restitution:** Violations of these guidelines can result in contempt proceedings and restitution costs for the responsible officials.
10. **Exemptions:** The guidelines do not apply to:
 - Unauthorized structures in public spaces.
 - Demolitions mandated by court orders.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's guidelines represent a significant step toward safeguarding individual rights and ensuring accountability in government actions.

By emphasizing procedural fairness, personal hearings, and videography, the court aims to prevent arbitrary demolitions and uphold the **rule of law**. This decision also sets a precedent for state legislatures to align their laws and practices with these principles, reinforcing trust in governance and justice.



Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements in the Coaching Sector, 2024

Context: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has issued detailed guidelines to curb misleading advertisements in the coaching sector, addressing concerns about false claims, exaggerated success rates, and unfair practices that mislead students and parents.

**Key Definitions:**

1. **Coaching:** Academic support or activities providing education, guidance, or instruction, excluding counseling and creative pursuits like sports, dance, or theater.
2. **Coaching Center:** Any establishment offering coaching to more than 50 students.
3. **Endorser:** As defined in the **Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements, 2022**, an individual who promotes a product or service.

Key Highlights of the Guidelines:

1. **Regulation of Advertisements:** Coaching institutes are prohibited from making the following false claims:
 - Exaggerated course success rates or faculty qualifications.
 - Assured admission, guaranteed high scores, or selection guarantees.
 - Misleading information about fees, refund policies, and infrastructure.
2. **Truthful Representation:** Institutes must honestly depict the quality of their services, including infrastructure, resources, and facilities.
3. **Integration with National Consumer Helpline (NCH):** All coaching centers must register with the NCH to facilitate students' complaints against misleading practices or advertisements.
4. **Fair Use of Testimonials:** Institutes cannot use candidates' photos, names, or testimonials without their explicit consent post-selection.
5. **Addressing False Urgency:** Practices like overstating demand or claiming limited availability of seats are prohibited to prevent undue pressure on students.
6. **Enforcement Mechanism:** Violations of these guidelines are treated as breaches under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, subject to penalties and stringent actions by the CCPA.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019:

- Replaced the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986** and widened its scope to protect consumers against false claims and unfair practices.
- Key Provisions:
 - Addresses misleading advertisements and false claims regarding goods or services.
 - Empowers consumers to seek redressal through new rules and stricter enforcement mechanisms.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):

- Established under **Section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, to protect consumers' rights as a class.
- **Functions and Powers:**
 1. Investigate consumer rights violations.
 2. Recall unsafe goods/services.
 3. Discontinue unfair trade practices and misleading ads.
 4. Penalize offenders, including endorsers and publishers of deceptive advertisements.

Conclusion: The new guidelines are a significant step toward safeguarding students from deceptive practices in the coaching sector. By ensuring truthful representation, addressing unfair trade practices, and penalizing violations, the guidelines aim to foster trust and transparency in the sector while upholding students' rights as consumers.

RBI Releases List of Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) for 2024

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has retained **State Bank of India (SBI)**, **HDFC Bank**, and **ICICI Bank** as **Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)** for 2024. The classification and bucket structures remain unchanged from 2023.



- SBI and ICICI were first designated D-SIBs in **2015** and **2016**, respectively, while **HDFC Bank** joined the list in **2017**.

About Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs):

- **Definition:** D-SIBs are banks deemed “**Too Big to Fail**” due to their size, interconnectedness, and complexity, meaning their failure could pose significant risks to the financial system.
- **Annual Assessment:** RBI updates the D-SIB classification annually under its 2014 framework.
- **CET1 Requirements:** Banks are categorized into **five buckets** based on their risk profiles, requiring progressively higher **Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1)** capital surcharges.

Key Components of D-SIB Classification:

1. **Evaluation Criteria:**
 - Banks above **2% of GDP** in size are assessed for systemic importance.
 - Banks crossing the threshold are designated as D-SIBs and assigned to buckets with corresponding CET1 requirements.
2. **Bucket Structure:**
 - Bucket 1: Lowest CET1 surcharge.
 - Bucket 5: Highest CET1 surcharge.
3. **Foreign Banks in India:**
 - **Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs)** identified by the Financial Stability Board are required to maintain CET1 in India proportional to their **Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs)** in the country.
4. **Key Metrics:**
 - **Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1):** Represents the bank's core capital, such as common shares and retained earnings, excluding intangible assets.
 - **Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs):** Measures the capital required to cover potential losses from assets, assigning higher weights to riskier assets like loans and derivatives.

Benefits of D-SIB Classification:

1. **Enhanced Stability:** Ensures large banks maintain higher capital reserves to withstand financial downturns, safeguarding depositors and public confidence.
2. **Systemic Safeguards:** Promotes strong risk management practices, reducing the risk of systemic disruptions caused by the failure of major banks.
3. **Proactive Preparedness:** RBI's framework enables preemptive adjustments to capital requirements, improving resilience against future economic shocks.

Challenges:

1. **Moral Hazard:** The “Too Big to Fail” label may lead to riskier behavior, as D-SIBs expect government support during crises, reducing market discipline.
2. **Competitive Distortions:** Smaller banks may struggle to compete with D-SIBs that benefit from enhanced investor confidence and market advantages.
3. **Increased Costs:** Higher capital requirements can raise operational costs, potentially impacting profitability and competitiveness.



Conclusion and Way Forward:

The D-SIB classification is crucial for ensuring financial stability, protecting the economy, and maintaining public confidence in India's banking system.

- **Future Expansion:** As the economy grows, the framework may include more banks, enhancing systemic resilience.
- **Balanced Regulation:** It is essential to mitigate challenges such as moral hazards and ensure equitable competition while promoting robust risk management among D-SIBs.

By fostering proactive regulation, India's D-SIBs will continue to support the country's economic growth and financial stability.



Corals in Crisis: IUCN Finds Nearly Half of Coral Species at Risk of Extinction

Context: The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), during the ongoing COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, released an alarming report revealing that **44% of reef-building coral species** are now at risk of extinction. This marks a significant increase from **33% in 2008**, underscoring the escalating threats to coral ecosystems.

**Key Findings:**1. **Increased Risk of Extinction:**

- Nearly half of coral species are at risk, reflecting the deteriorating health of coral ecosystems globally.
- The findings are based on data from the **Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network** and the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**.

2. **Threatened Coral Species:**

- **Of 892 assessed coral species:**
 - **15% (56 species)** are vulnerable.
 - **67% (251 species)** are endangered.
 - **9% (33 species)** are critically endangered, including species like:
 - **Staghorn coral** (*Acropora cervicornis*).
 - **Elkhorn coral** (*Acropora palmata*).

Major Threats to Corals:1. **Primary Threat: Climate Change**

- **Rising sea temperatures** lead to frequent and severe coral bleaching events.
- Ocean acidification compromises coral growth and resilience.

2. **Other Human-Induced Threats**

- **Pollution:** Agricultural runoff, industrial waste, and marine debris.
- **Diseases** exacerbated by environmental changes.
- **Unsustainable fishing practices**, including destructive methods like blast fishing.

Impacts of Coral Decline:1. **Biodiversity Loss**

- Coral reefs support **25% of marine species**, including fish, crustaceans, and mollusks.
- Their degradation disrupts the balance of marine ecosystems.

2. **Economic and Social Impact**

- **500 million people** globally depend on coral reefs for food, income, and coastal protection.
- Coral reefs contribute approximately **\$375 billion annually** through:
 - **Tourism:** A vital source of revenue for tropical regions.
 - **Fisheries:** Supporting livelihoods and food security.
 - **Coastal Protection:** Shielding communities from storms and floods.

3. **Increased Vulnerability:** Coastal areas face heightened risks from **rising sea levels, storms, and erosion** due to reef degradation.**Broader Biodiversity Crisis:**

- Coral decline reflects a **global biodiversity emergency**, with **46,300 species worldwide** classified as threatened, including:
 - **41% of amphibians.**
 - **37% of sharks and rays.**
 - **34% of conifers.**
 - **26% of mammals.**

**Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR):**

Overview: The GFCR, launched in 2020, is a **public-private partnership** to support coral reef conservation and sustainable management globally.

Objectives:

1. **Coral Reef Protection:** Strengthen resilience against climate change and human-induced threats.
2. **Sustainable Development:** Support eco-friendly activities like **eco-tourism** and **sustainable fisheries**.
3. **Innovative Financing:** Mobilize investments to close the **\$12 billion funding gap** (only **\$30 million** secured so far).
4. **Climate Resilience:** Enhance reef and community adaptation to **sea-level rise** and extreme weather events.

Key Features:

- **Blended Finance:** Combines grants, loans, and private investments to maximize funding impact.
- **High-Priority Regions:** Focuses on threatened areas like the **Caribbean, Southeast Asia,** and the **Pacific Islands**.
- **“Reef-Positive” Projects:** Incentivizes sustainable practices and restoration initiatives.

Future Steps and Opportunities:

1. **Research and Adaptation:** Urgent studies are needed to explore corals' potential to adapt to warming oceans, though evidence suggests limited capacity.
2. **2025 UN Ocean Conference**
 - Scheduled from **June 9-13, 2025**, in **Nice, France**, co-hosted by **France** and **Costa Rica**.
 - Key themes include marine biodiversity, sustainable fisheries, and climate impacts on oceans.
 - Objectives:
 - Strengthen global cooperation to address ocean degradation.
 - Promote sustainable management and conservation of marine ecosystems.
 - Mobilize partnerships among governments, private sectors, and civil society.
3. **Increased Funding and Policy Support**
 - Governments and private sectors must boost contributions to initiatives like the GFCR.
 - Policy frameworks should prioritize coral conservation and integrate it into broader climate and biodiversity goals.

Conclusion: Corals are a cornerstone of marine ecosystems and human livelihoods. The escalating threats to reef-building species demand urgent, coordinated action globally. Efforts such as the **GFCR** and the upcoming **2025 UN Ocean Conference** present critical opportunities to reverse coral decline, safeguard biodiversity, and protect vulnerable coastal communities. Proactive measures, innovative financing, and global collaboration are essential to ensure a sustainable future for coral reefs.

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)

Context: The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) has launched the 'Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research' (PAIR) program, aligned with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This initiative aims to enhance the research ecosystem in Indian universities by fostering collaboration between established and emerging institutions using a **hub-and-spoke model**.

About PAIR:1. **Hub-and-Spoke Model:**○ **Hubs:**

- Institutions with high **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)** scores.
- Serve as mentors, guiding emerging institutions in research and innovation.
- Provide access to their resources, expertise, and infrastructure.

○ **Spokes:**

- Include **Central and State Public Universities** and select NITs and IITs.
- Will expand over time to include more institutions.

2. **Purpose:**

- Transform research and innovation in Indian universities.
- Foster collaboration, capacity-building, and resource-sharing.

Research Ecosystem in Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):**Current Status (Based on 2024 EY Report):**1. **Strengths:**

- **World's Third-Largest Higher Education System:** After the U.S. and China.
- **Global Research Output:**
 - India ranks 4th in research papers published between 2017 and 2022.
 - Significant contributions to global research quantity.

2. **Challenges:**

- **Quality of Research:** Lower rankings in **citations per document** and **Hirsch Index (H-index)** compared to global peers.
- **Research Translation:** Limited conversion of academic research into real-world applications and solutions.
- **Funding:** Indian universities rely heavily on **government funding**, unlike global counterparts that receive substantial private sector investment.
- **Budgetary Constraints:** India spends just **0.65% of GDP on R&D**, compared to:
 - **4.8%** in South Korea.
 - **3.4%** in the U.S.
- **Lack of Incentives:**
 - Limited motivation for publishing high-quality research.
 - Administrative burdens on faculty reduce focus on research.

About ANRF:

1. **Established:** Under the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation Act, 2023**.

2. **Role:**

- Strengthens India's research ecosystem.
- Bridges the gap between academic research and industry requirements.
- Supports interdisciplinary and translational research.

Complementary Initiatives:

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1. **SERB-SURE (State University Research Excellence):** Enhances research capabilities in state universities.
2. **IMPRINT (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology):** Focuses on technology-driven research to address national challenges.
3. **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** Encourages innovation and entrepreneurship through incubation centers and tinkering labs.

Significance of PAIR and ANRF

1. **Building Research Capacity:**
 - Strengthening emerging institutions through mentorship.
 - Improving access to cutting-edge resources and expertise.
2. **Promoting Collaborative Research:** Encouraging partnerships among institutions for shared innovation.
3. **Improving Research Quality:**
 - Addressing challenges like low citation impact and research relevance.
 - Creating incentives for impactful and high-quality research.
4. **Boosting India's Global Competitiveness:** Supporting NEP 2020's goal of making India a global leader in education and innovation.
5. **Encouraging Industry Collaboration:** Attracting private sector investments for sustainable research funding.

Conclusion: The **PAIR initiative**, alongside ANRF and complementary programs, has the potential to revolutionize India's research ecosystem. By addressing key challenges in funding, quality, and collaboration, these initiatives aim to elevate India's status as a hub for **cutting-edge innovation** and **world-class research**, fostering sustainable development and global leadership.

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Ganga River Biodiversity Projects Approved

Context: The Executive Committee of the National Mission on Clean Ganga (NMCG) has approved crucial biodiversity conservation projects aimed at preserving the Ganga River Basin ecosystem and its unique aquatic life, particularly focusing on endangered species.

Key Projects Approved:

- 1. Environmental Flow Assessment:**
 - **Rivers Covered:** Chambal, Son, Damodar, and Tons.
 - **Aim:** Assessing environmental flows to maintain ecological balance and river health.
- 2. Conservation of Endangered Turtles:**
 - **Region:** Ganga Basin, Uttar Pradesh.
 - **Focus:** Rehabilitation of endangered turtle species and reintroduction of three critically threatened species.
- 3. Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART):**
 - **Location:** National Chambal Sanctuary.
 - **Purpose:** Improving monitoring and management of aquatic biodiversity, especially for species like gharials and dolphins.
- 4. Advanced Rescue System for Ganges River Dolphins:**
 - **Objective:** Development of a **specialized rescue vehicle (Dolphin Ambulance)** to protect and assist stranded dolphins.
 - **Focus:** Community awareness, capacity building, and training for dolphin conservation.

**About Gangetic Dolphin (Platanista gangetica)**

- 1. Habitat:** Found in **India's Ganga-Brahmaputra-Barak river system**, as well as rivers in Nepal and Bangladesh.
- 2. Characteristics:**
 - A **freshwater dolphin species**, adapted to murky river waters.
 - Almost blind, relying on **echolocation** (ultrasonic sounds) to navigate and hunt.
- 3. Threats:**
 - **Entanglement in fishing gear** and poaching (e.g., for oil).
 - Habitat destruction due to dams, irrigation projects, and pollution.
 - Contamination from industrial waste and pesticides.
- 4. Conservation Status:**
 - **Endangered** (IUCN Red List).
 - Listed in **Appendix I** of CITES.
 - Included in **Schedule I** of the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.

Conservation Initiatives for the Gangetic Dolphin:

- 1. National Aquatic Animal:** Declared India's **National Aquatic Animal** to raise awareness about its ecological importance.
- 2. Wildlife Habitat Scheme:** Financial assistance provided under the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Development of Wildlife Habitats** for critically endangered species.
- 3. Project Dolphin:** Aimed at conserving the Ganges river dolphins and restoring their riverine ecosystem.
- 4. Protected Areas:** Important habitats, like the **Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary** in Bihar (India's only dolphin sanctuary), have been designated as protected areas to safeguard the species.

Significance of These Initiatives:

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1. **Enhanced River Health:** Environmental flow assessments and conservation projects help maintain the ecological integrity of the river system.
2. **Community Involvement:** Training and awareness initiatives will empower local communities to contribute to biodiversity preservation.
3. **Preservation of Endangered Species:** Dedicated efforts for turtles, dolphins, and other species will help reduce extinction risks and improve biodiversity.
4. **Strengthening Ganga Basin Conservation:** These projects align with the **Namami Gange Mission**, promoting a sustainable approach to managing riverine ecosystems.

The initiatives demonstrate India's commitment to sustainable river management and biodiversity conservation, aligning with global efforts to protect aquatic ecosystems and combat the threats of habitat destruction and species endangerment.



Know Your Medicine' App

Context: The Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports has launched the 'Know Your Medicine' (KYM) app as part of a broader initiative by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) India to combat doping in sports and promote fair play.

About the KYM App:

- **Purpose:**
 - Designed to raise awareness and educate athletes about doping and prohibited substances.
 - Ensures athletes can make informed decisions regarding the medications they use.
- **Key Features:**
 1. **Medicine Verification:** Users can verify if a specific medicine or its ingredients contain substances prohibited by the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**.
 2. **Convenient Access:**
 - Offers **image** and **audio search** functionalities.
 - Allows users to filter results by **sport category** for tailored information.
 3. **User-Friendly Interface:** Designed to make the process of accessing anti-doping information seamless and quick.
- **Impact:**
 - Encourages **clean and ethical sportsmanship**.
 - Reduces the risk of inadvertent doping due to lack of awareness.

**About the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA):**

- **Establishment:**
 - Formed in **November 2005** under the **Societies Registration Act of 1860**.
 - Functions as the independent **Anti-Doping Organization for India**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.
- **Primary Functions:**
 1. **Anti-Doping Code Implementation:** Ensures compliance with global anti-doping standards across all Indian sports organizations.
 2. **Dope Testing:** Coordinates comprehensive dope-testing programs with all stakeholders.
 3. **Research & Education:** Promotes anti-doping research and awareness to foster a culture of **dope-free sports**.
 4. **Adoption of Best Practices:** Implements global best practices and quality systems for effective program execution.

Significance of KYM App:

1. **Athlete Empowerment:** Provides athletes with critical tools to stay informed and avoid accidental doping violations.
2. **Promotes Integrity in Sports:** Upholds fairness and ethical values in Indian sports by reducing doping risks.
3. **Supports India's Global Sporting Goals:** Strengthens India's commitment to clean sports, enhancing its reputation on the global stage.
4. **Enhanced Accessibility:** The innovative search features ensure information is accessible to athletes at all levels, including grassroots.

The KYM app is a step forward in NADA's mission to create a **dope-free sporting culture**, ensuring that athletes, coaches, and support staff work together to uphold the spirit of fair competition.