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# INDEX

<b>INDEX.....</b>	<b>1</b>	2024.....	17
<b>Economics.....</b>	<b>3</b>	'Sanyukt Vimochan 2024'.....	18
RBI's Repatriation of Gold and Foreign Exchange Reserves Management in India...3		Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024 – A Joint Military Exercise between India and the US... 19	
Reevaluating Development Economics - Insights from the IMF WEO Report and India's Economic Landscape..... 4		Exercise GARUDA SHAKTI 2024.....	19
RBI's Framework for Reclassification of FPI to FDI..... 4		Exercise Sea Vigil – Pan-India Coastal Defence Exercise.....	20
Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) and Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs)..... 5		Exercise VINBAX 2024: A Bilateral Army Exercise between India and Vietnam.....	21
Rising Inflation in India..... 6		Exercise Poorvi Prahar of the Indian Military..	21
Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2024 and 21st Livestock Census..... 7		The 3rd Edition of Exercise AUSTRALIND 22	
<b>Geography And Environment.....</b>	<b>8</b>	Exercise Sanyukt Vimochan 2024.....	22
Tiger Translocation for Genetic Diversity: A Look at Similipal and Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserves..... 8		SAREX-24 - Indian Coast Guard's National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise & Workshop.....	23
The 16th Edition of the Conference of Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity - Key Highlights and Updates..... 9		<b>Polity.....</b>	<b>24</b>
IUCN's Initial Global Tree Assessment and COP16..... 10		Constitution Day 2024 - India.....	24
Meetings And Submits..... 11		Strengthening Understanding on UP Madarsa Education Board Act, 2004.....	24
The 2nd India-Australia Annual Summit..... 11		Supreme Court Ruling on Limits for Private Property Acquisition.....	26
Prime Minister's Diplomatic Visit to Nigeria, Brazil, and Guyana..... 12		Appointment of the Chief Justice of India... 27	
Visit to Nigeria..... 12		Supreme Court Guidelines on "Bulldozer Justice".....	27
Details of the Visit to Brazil..... 13		<b>Rank Reports and Awards.....</b>	<b>29</b>
PM's Visit to Guyana..... 13		The National Gopal Ratna Awards 2024....	29
UNFCCC COP29 Baku: Key Highlights and India's Stance..... 13		Importance of the National Gopal Ratna Awards.....	29
The 11th ADMM Meeting-Plus and the Role of Buddhism..... 14		Global Nature Conservation Index 2024....	29
6th ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Joint Committee Meeting..... 15		WMO's Greenhouse Gas Bulletin 2023: Key Findings and Impacts.....	30
<b>Military Defence and Exercises.....</b>	<b>16</b>	Ballon d'Or Awards 2024: Shining Moment for Spanish Football.....	31
3rd Edition of MAHASAGAR: An Initiative by Indian Navy for Virtual Interaction within IOR Littorals..... 16		Asia-Pacific Climate Report 2024 by ADB..	32
Antariksha Abhyas 2024: India's First-ever Space Exercise..... 17		The World Cities Report 2024 - Cities and Climate Action.....	33
Bharat National Cyber Security Exercise		QS World University Rankings: Asia 2025 and India's Prominence in Higher Education..	33
		Booker Prize 2024 and Samantha Harvey's Orbital.....	34
		Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON) Award.....	35

Highlight Report on the 55th International Film Festival of India 2024.....	35	Digital Infrastructure Growth Initiative for India Framework (DiGi Framework).....	51
Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for 2022 and 2023.....	36	Brazil's Refusal to Join China's Belt and Road Initiative.....	52
India's Ranking on Global Rule of Law Index. 37		RBI and Maldives Monetary Authority Pact on Local Currencies.....	53
India's Esteemed Position in Global Intellectual Property Indicators 2024 Report.. 37		<b>Quick Headlines.....</b>	<b>54</b>
Review of the Henley Passport Index 2024.....	38	<b>Sports Quick News.....</b>	<b>56</b>
EdelGive-Hurun India Philanthropy List 2024. 39		<b>Books And Author.....</b>	<b>59</b>
Global AI Preparedness: India's Position Among Leading Nations.....	40	<b>Appointments And Registrations.....</b>	<b>60</b>
Highlights of FIH Hockey Star Awards 2024... 41		<b>Important Day.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Schemes And Initiative.....</b>	<b>41</b>		
Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi Scheme.....	41		
Namo Drone Didi Scheme under the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.....	42		
Atal Innovation Mission 2.0: An Overview and Enhancement.....	43		
Introduction to Eklavya Online Learning Platform for the Indian Army.....	43		
<b>Science And Tech.....</b>	<b>44</b>		
Biotechnology Experiments for India's Upcoming Space Station.....	44		
NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Satellite.....	45		
Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile by DRDO.....	45		
The Successful Launch of India's GSAT-N2 Satellite by SpaceX.....	46		
Guided Pinaka Weapon System.....	47		
<b>Miscellaneous.....</b>	<b>47</b>		
Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve.. 47			
Bhu-Neer Portal: Groundwater Regulation Initiative.....	48		
National Dolphin Research Centre: Current State and Importance.....	49		
MACE Telescope in Ladakh.....	49		
Telecommunications (Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure and Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024.....	50		



# Economics

## RBI's Repatriation of Gold and Foreign Exchange Reserves Management in India

### Introduction and Background

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently repatriated 102 tonnes of gold from the Bank of England (BoE) and the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).
- The gold repatriated adds up to India's domestically held gold, which stands at 510.46 metric tonnes.
- Overall, India's total gold reserves with the RBI amount to 854.73 metric tonnes.

### Ranking of India in Sovereign Gold Holdings

- According to the World Gold Council's report of June 2024, India ranks 8th globally concerning sovereign gold holdings.
- The United States tops the list, followed by Germany, Italy, France, Russia, China, and Japan.

### Reasons behind RBI's Decision to Repatriate Gold

- Reducing Geopolitical Risks: Repatriating gold minimises risks of foreign sanctions that could restrict access to assets held abroad.
- Increasing Market Confidence: With gold perceived as a 'safe haven' asset, holding gold domestically boosts public confidence in the financial system.
- Economic Sovereignty: This move aids in enhancing India's debt repaying capacity.
- Supporting Domestic Financial Markets: Storing gold within India gives RBI ample flexibility to support gold-backed financial products domestically.
- Cost Savings: Repatriating gold allows the RBI to cut down on costs like insurance and storage fees it pays to international banks.

### Global Trend of Gold Repatriation

- Repatriation of gold is a current global trend, particularly in the last decade, with countries like Venezuela and Austria repatriating their gold from US and European vaults for reasons including geopolitical risks, market stability, and cost savings.

### Improving India's Import Cover

- Repatriating gold also improves India's import cover, a key trade indicator that reflects reserves adequacy. Current foreign reserves can cover about 11.8 months of import.

### Overview of India's Foreign Exchange Reserves

- Besides gold, foreign exchange reserves include assets like bonds, treasury bills, and other government securities held by a country's central bank.
- As of October 2024, India's foreign exchange reserves position stood at USD 688.27 billion.

### Background of Foreign Exchange Rate Management

- Historically, the Gold Standard (1870-1914) and Bretton Woods System (1944-1971) governed exchange rates.
- Post-1971, exchange rates are market-determined under various regimes.
- The RBI's strategy to uphold gold reserves abroad is based on mitigating geopolitical risks, ensuring international liquidity, reinforcing economic resilience, and entrusting gold reserves to reliable custodians.

### Security Measures of Major International Gold Vaults

- Major international gold vaults, such as the Bank of England, BIS in Switzerland, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, USA, have robust security systems including advanced surveillance, reinforced vault doors, biometric access controls, continuous monitoring, and more.

# Reevaluating Development Economics - Insights from the IMF WEO Report and India's Economic Landscape

## Overview of IMF's World Economic Outlook (WEO) Report

- Key information about the WEO: Biannual publication by the IMF, focusing on the assessment of economic development, identification of trends, policy recommendations, economic growth projections, inflation trend insights, financial stability assessment.
- Importance of the WEO: Provides a vital toolbox for policymakers, researchers, and investors to decipher and navigate the economic landscape.

## Understanding Development Economics

- Definition and purpose: Field focused on studying strategies for economic growth and poverty reduction, and improving living standards. It emerged post-World War II to address challenges of newly independent nations.
- Key Focus Areas: Economic growth, poverty reduction, inequality, sustainable development, globalisation and trade, institutional development.
- Various Theoretical Approaches: Includes several schools of thought, like neoclassical theory, structuralist theory, capability approach, and institutional economics.

## Need for Reevaluation of Development Economics

- Challenges in the Current Approach: Overlooking macro-level issues, political realities, global shifts, technological advancements, sustainability, and inclusivity.
- Need for Interdisciplinary Approach: Combining insights from other fields like political science,

sociology, and environmental science for a holistic understanding of economic development.

## India's Alignment with Global Development Economics

- Economic Performance: High growth rate, resilience in face of global slowdowns, and domestic demand driving economic growth.
- Demographic Dividend: Young population providing potential for long-term growth.
- Service Sector Dominance: IT and BPO industries, significant contribution to exports, employment generation, and FDI.
- Infrastructure Development: High public spending in infrastructure projects, digital transformation, and financial inclusion efforts.

## Challenges for India in Development Economics

- Political Economy Constraints: Short-term focus on populist policies hindering long-term reforms.
- Labour Market Issues: Skill gaps, low productivity, rigid labour laws.
- Social Issues: Labour-business tensions, potential for social unrest and investment deterrent.
- Geopolitical Uncertainties: Risks and opportunities due to trade tensions between the US and China, need for diversifying trade partnerships.

## RBI's Framework for Reclassification of FPI to FDI

### Introduction and About

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently introduced a new framework that allows foreign portfolio investors (FPI) to convert their investments into foreign direct investment (FDI).
- The objective of this initiative is to provide greater flexibility and investment options for foreign investors.



- Key highlights and provisions of the framework
- Threshold Crossing: FPI investing above 10% of the total paid-up equity capital can choose to divest or reclassify their investments as FDI.
  - Timely Conversion: The complete reclassification process must be finished within five trading days from the transaction, which results in breaching the 10% limit.
  - Compliance Requirements: FPIs must strictly follow the compliance obligations under the Foreign Exchange Management (Mode of Payment and Reporting of Non-Debt Instruments) Regulations, 2019 (FEM (NDI) Rules, 2019).
  - Sector Restrictions: Reclassification is not permitted in sectors where FDI is restricted, such as Gambling and betting, Real Estate Business, Nidhi company (Mutual Benefit Funds Company), etc.
  - Complementary Measures: This initiative enhances harmonisation with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) regulations, which state that once an FPI exceeds the 10% equity threshold, it may opt to convert holdings to FDI.

#### **Additional Information**

- In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, amendments were made to the FDI Policy 2017, via the Press Note 3 (2020), to prevent opportunistic takeovers/acquisitions of Indian companies.
- This amendment requires entities from countries sharing a land border with India or whose beneficial owner is situated in these countries, to only invest in India through the Government route.
- For this purpose, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, China (including Hong Kong), Bangladesh, and Myanmar are recognised as countries sharing a land border with India (Bordering Countries).

#### **Significance and Importance**

- The new framework supports the monetisation of India's vibrant economy by fostering a more

flexible investment environment for foreign investors.

- It also bolsters measures to protect Indian companies from opportunistic takeovers or acquisitions, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The initiative paints a picture of India as a nation that strategically adapts to changing global economic scenarios to safeguard its interests.
- It projects India as a lucrative destination that balances inflow of foreign investment and safeguards its indigenous industries.

## **Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) and Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs)**

#### **Introduction and About**

- D-SIBs are banks considered as 'Too Big to Fail' (TBTF) within the domestic economy due to their size, complexity, and interconnections with the financial system.
- Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs) are large international banks whose failure could have a global impact.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently affirmed the State Bank of India, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank as D-SIBs.

#### **Historical Recognition of D-SIBs by RBI**

- The RBI acknowledged SBI and ICICI Bank as D-SIBs in 2015 and 2016 respectively, with HDFC Bank joining them the following year, in 2017.

#### **Classification and Importance of D-SIBs**

- D-SIBs are grouped based on possible economic disruption if they fail.
- They are subjected to extra regulatory measures such as capital buffers, stress tests,

and recovery and resolution planning to boost resilience and shock-absorbing capacity.

- Based on their systemic importance scores, D-SIBs are organised into different buckets, with Bucket 1 representing the lowest risk and Bucket 4 the highest.

### **Capital Requirements**

- An additional common equity requirement is applied to a D-SIB depending on the bucket it falls under. For SBI, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank, the additional CET1 requirements are 0.80%, 0.40% and 0.20% respectively.

### **Selection Process**

- The RBI employs a two-step process to identify D-SIBs. Only banks with significant systemic importance, namely those with assets more than 2% of GDP, are considered for evaluation.

- The RBI sets a composite score based on various indicators such as lack of substitutability, interconnectedness, etc and banks that cross a certain threshold are labeled as D-SIBs.

### **Regulatory Framework for D-SIBs**

- The RBI issued a framework in July 2014 that requires D-SIBs to be well-capitalised to absorb losses and prevent systemic disruptions if they fail.

### **Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs)**

- G-SIBs are determined by the Financial Stability Board (FSB), in consultation with the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) and national authorities.

- As of 2023, there are 29 G-SIBs including JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, HSBC and others.

### **Important Terminology**

- Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) refers to liquid bank holdings such as cash and stock, which was brought in as a precaution in 2014 to safeguard the economy against a financial crisis.

- The FSB is an international body that monitors and makes recommendations about the global financial system and was established under the G20 in 2009.

## **Rising Inflation in India**

### **Recent Inflation Statistics**

- The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) reported a surge in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (retail inflation) to 6.2% in October 2024.

- Food inflation, according to the Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI), rose to 10.87%.

- This is the highest inflation rate since August 2023, exceeding the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) tolerance limit of 6%.

### **Factors Contributing to High Retail Inflation**

- High Food Inflation: A major factor was food inflation hitting a 15-month high at 10.8% due to an increase in prices of vegetables, fruits, and pulses.

- Core Inflation Uptrend: Core inflation, excluding food and fuel prices, also showed an upward trend, indicating persistent inflation.

- Global Price Volatility: Rising global edible oil prices affected India's inflation as India is a major importer.

- Extreme Weather Events: Heatwaves affected crop yields, leading to supply shortages and higher prices.

### **Implications of High Retail Inflation on RBI's Monetary Policy**

- Delay in Interest Rate Cuts: The RBI inflation target is 4% and with the current inflation exceeding this threshold, immediate interest rate cuts are unlikely.

- Focus on Inflation Control: The RBI will focus on controlling inflation to maintain price stability.

- RBI's Policy Dilemma: The RBI faces a dilemma as it needs to curb inflation without stifling economic growth.

- Potential Risks of Unchecked Inflation: Continuous inflation could undermine the real



economy. If rising costs are passed on to consumers, it could reduce demand and hamper corporate earnings.

### **Note on Monetary Policy Framework Agreement (MPFA)**

- The MPFA between the Government of India and the RBI aims to maintain price stability while considering growth.
- If inflation stays outside the 2% to 6% range for three consecutive quarters, the RBI has to report to the central government with explanations, corrective actions, and estimates on when inflation will return to the target range.

### **Overview of the Consumer Price Index (CPI)**

- The CPI measures changes in retail prices of goods and services commonly purchased by households.
- It is a widely used indicator of inflation, price stability and is also used to measure the cost of living, and purchasing power.

### **Overview of the Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI)**

- The CFPI measures inflation focusing on the price changes of food items exclusively.
- Tracks price changes of commonly consumed food items like cereals, vegetables, fruits, dairy, meat, and other staples.
- The Central Statistical Office (CSO), MOSPI releases CFPI for three categories: rural, urban, and combined on an all India basis.

## **Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2024 and 21st Livestock Census**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying recently released the Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics (BAHS) in 2024.
- The BAHS is a result of the Integrated Sample Survey (ISS) conducted from March 2023–February 2024.

- The ISS is an extensive survey carried out annually by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and it covers 15% of the country's villages.

### **Key Findings of the BAHS 2024**

- It was revealed that India's total milk production for 2023-24 is estimated at 239.30 million tonnes, a 3.78% increase from the previous year.
- The top three states producing milk in the country are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh.
- There has been an increase in per capita milk availability from 459 grams per day in 2022-23 to 471 grams in 2023-24.
- The total egg production for 2023-24 is estimated at an impressive 142.77 billion numbers, marking a 3.18% increase when compared to 2022-23.
- India sits as the second-largest egg producer worldwide, with Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana being the top three producers.
- Meat and wool production have also seen a growth of 4.95% and 0.22%, respectively.

### **Growth of the Livestock Sector**

- Data shows that from 2014-15 to 2022-23, the sector grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.38% (at constant prices).
- Additionally, the contribution of livestock to agriculture Gross Value Added (GVA) escalated from 24.32% to 30.38%.

### **The 21st Livestock Census**

- Alongside the above, the 21st Livestock Census is currently in progress.
- This census, carried out every half-decade, collates the data on the number of domesticated animals, poultry, and stray animals throughout the nation.
- Furthermore, the 21st Livestock Census launched by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying will compile data regarding the species, breed, age, sex, and ownership status of animals

- A total of 16 animal species will be included, ranging from cattle, buffalo, mithun, yak, to rabbits, and elephants.

- Regarding birds, a multitude of species, such as fowl, chicken, duck, turkey, geese, quail, ostrich, and emu will be taken into account.

Note on National Milk Day

- The Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2024 was released on National Milk Day, celebrated on the birth anniversary of Verghese Kurien, who played a crucial role in making India self-sufficient in milk output through the white revolution.

## Geography And Environment

### Tiger Translocation for Genetic Diversity: A Look at Similipal and Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserves

#### Introduction and Purpose of Tiger Translocation

- The Odisha government recently translocated a tigress named Jamuna from Maharashtra's Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve to the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Odisha.

- The fundamental aim of this translocation is to enhance genetic diversity in Similipal where concerns about inbreeding due to a small population persist.

- The governmental authority responsible for this effort is The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

#### History and Key Facts About Tiger Translocation

- In 2018, a similar translocation took place involving a tigress named Sundari who was

moved to Satkosia Tiger Reserve, also in Odisha.

- The 2024 Odisha Tiger Estimation revealed a total of 24 adult tigers in Similipal, including a notable presence of pseudo-melanistic tigers.

- High numbers of pseudo-melanistic tigers signal inbreeding and a lack of genetic flow in Similipal, necessitating genetic input from external sources.

- Future agendas include establishing a melanistic tiger safari in Similipal, which is anticipated to be a global first.

#### About Pseudo-Melanistic Tigers

- These black or pseudo-melanistic tigers exist due to a genetic trait producing a unique phenotype indicative of limited genetic diversity.

- They are discernible by their wide and amalgamated stripes.

#### An Overview of Similipal Tiger Reserve

- Located in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, Similipal received its official tiger reserve status in 1973 under Project Tiger.

- It gained recognition as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2009.

- The reserve is named after the 'Simul' (Silk Cotton) tree and is famous for its Joranda and Barehipani waterfalls and the Khairiburu and Meghashini peaks.

- The reserve hosts a variety of mammals, avian species, and reptiles. It is also home to various indigenous tribes who hold the sacred groves, Jharia, in religious reverence.

#### A Brief on Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve

- Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, located in Maharashtra, is recognised as the state's oldest and largest national park.

- Its name is derived from the local deity Taru revered by the tribal people, and the Andhari River flowing through the reserve.

- Flanked by two main lakes, Tadoba Lake and Kolsa Lake, and the Tadoba River, it is home to diverse flora and fauna species.



# The 16th Edition of the Conference of Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity - Key Highlights and Updates

## Introduction and Outline of Convention

- The 16th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP 16) to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) recently concluded in Cali, Colombia.
- Major highlights of the COP-16 to the CBD include the launch of the updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) by India, and various conservation strategies at a global scale.

## Operationalisation of Cali Fund and Priority to Indigenous Needs

- Cali Fund was launched at COP-16 to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the usage of Digital Sequence Information (DSI) on genetic resources.
- There is a specific focus on self-identified needs of Indigenous peoples, local communities, women, and youth, making up at least 50% of Cali Fund's target areas.

## Permanent Subsidiary Body on Article 8j and Resource Mobilisation

- Establishment of a new permanent subsidiary body on Article 8j was agreed upon, seeking to preserve and maintain the knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous peoples.
- Parties also agreed to formulate a new "Strategy for Resource Mobilisation" to secure USD 200 billion annually by 2030 for worldwide biodiversity initiatives.

## Synthetic Biology and Invasive Alien Species

- COP-16 introduced a thematic action plan for synthetic biology to address inequities through knowledge-sharing and technology transfer among developing nations.
- Guidelines for managing invasive alien species were proposed to improve cross-border trade regulations and coordination with e-commerce platforms.

## Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) and Plant Conservation

- The conference agreed on an evolved process to identify EBSAs, which identify the most critical marine areas and are a focal point in ocean conservation efforts.
- A decision on sustainable wildlife management emphasised the need for monitoring, capacity building, and inclusive participation of indigenous peoples, local communities, and women in plant protection.

## Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health

- The Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health was approved, aiming to prevent the emergence of zoonotic and non-communicable diseases while promoting sustainable ecosystems.

## Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)

- The KMGBF is a multilateral treaty with the objective of halting and reversing biodiversity loss globally by 2030.
- It seeks to restore at least 30% of degraded terrestrial, inland water, marine, and coastal ecosystems and includes 23 action-oriented global targets.

About India's Updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

- India's updated NBSAP aligns with the KMGBF's global objectives, focusing on reducing biodiversity threats, promoting

sustainable use, and ensuring ecosystem resilience.

- The updated plan outlines seven chapters encompassing contextual analysis, capacity-building, financing mechanisms, and biodiversity monitoring frameworks.
- The plan also targets invasive species management, promotion of sustainable consumption, reduction of pollution, fair and equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources, and community engagement.

### **Conclusion**

- COP 16 marked significant advancements in global biodiversity efforts, primarily through the Cali Fund, updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, and a commitment to the KMGBF, with a focus on equitable resource sharing and sustainable practices.

## **IUCN's Initial Global Tree Assessment and COP16**

### **Introduction**

- Recently, the initial Global Tree Assessment was published as an update to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- The findings were presented at the Convention on Biological Diversity, labelled as COP16, held in Cali, Colombia.

### **The COP16 Conference**

- The 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP16) was organised to review how nations are progressing towards the 2022 Montreal commitment to protect 30% of Earth's land and marine areas by 2030.

### **The Global Tree Assessment Report**

- The Global Tree Assessment, launched in 2015, strives to evaluate all tree species globally for inclusion in the IUCN Red List, aiming to enhance conservation information for decision-making.

- The assessment helps prioritise conservation action, research, and funding for species most at risk of extinction.
- It maintains a collaboration with over 60 botanical organisations, 25 IUCN groups, and numerous international tree experts.

### **Noteworthy Findings of the Report**

- Of the 47,282 tree species evaluated, 16,425 were found to be under threat of extinction; including iconic species such as magnolias, oaks, maples, and ebonies.
- Threatened tree species exceed the combined total of threatened birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.
- The South Western Ghats of Kerala host *Buchanania barberi*, a small tree classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List since 2018.

### **Predominant Threats**

- Land clearing for crop and livestock production, especially in forest-rich regions like South America, is a leading cause of tree extinction.
- Timber exploitation and the usage of other forest products impose additional stress on tree species.
- In addition, non-native species and pathogens significantly impact tree health, particularly in temperate zones.
- Climate change also poses considerable risks, particularly in tropical and island ecosystems.

### **IUCN Red List and Conservation Measures**

- IUCN Red List is a global resource for determining the risk of extinction among animals, fungi, and plant species. It serves as a key indicator for the Sustainable Development Goals and Aichi Targets.
- Conservation initiatives have been successfully implemented in several regions to protect threatened tree species.
- National strategies focused on tree conservation have been developed by countries such as Ghana, Colombia, Chile, and Kenya, with Gabon demonstrating a proactive approach



by designating specific conservation areas for trees.

## Meetings And Submits

### The 2nd India-Australia Annual Summit

#### Introduction and Overview

- The 2nd India-Australia Annual Summit was held on the sidelines of the 2024 Group of 20 (G20) Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- The Prime Minister of India and the Prime Minister of Australia met to discuss various issues ahead of the fifth anniversary of the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2025.
- The main areas of discussion were climate change, trade, defence, education, regional cooperation.

#### Key Highlights of the Summit

- The leaders launched the India-Australia Renewable Energy Partnership (REP) to boost cooperation in solar energy, green hydrogen, and energy storage.
- They committed to developing a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) and extended the Australia-India Business Exchange (AIBX) programme for another four years from July 2024.
- Recognising the importance of mobility, they welcomed Australia's Working Holiday Maker visa programme for India and the Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES).
- They agreed to renew the Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation (JDSC) to further strengthen cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, disarmament, non-proliferation, and maritime security.

- The nations expressed support for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific and pledged further cooperation under the Quad framework.
- They also reaffirmed commitments to supporting Pacific island countries through the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) framework.

#### India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)

- The CSP was established in June 2020, elevating the bilateral relationship from a 'Strategic Partnership' signed in 2009.
- It aims to strengthen ties in areas like regional security, economic growth, global cooperation, science, technology, research collaboration, maritime cooperation, defence, and economic cooperation.
- The partnership also implements regular dialogues at various levels including foreign and defence ministers meeting in a '2+2' format, Annual summits, and ministerial meetings.

#### India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA)

- The Ind-Aus ECTA signed in 2022, aimed to boost trade between the nations.
- It provided India preferential access to 100% of Australia's tariff lines, covering industries like gems, textiles, leather, and agriculture.
- In return, India offered preferential access to over 70% of its tariff lines, including raw materials like coal and minerals.

#### G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration

##### Introduction and Background

- In a recent G20 Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment towards building a sustainable and inclusive world.
- The theme of the summit was "Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet."
- India's Prime Minister also addressed the G20 session on Sustainable Development and Energy Transition.

### **Future G20 Host Nations**

- South Africa is scheduled to host the G20 in 2025, followed by the United States of America in 2026.

### **Key Outcomes of the Summit**

- Progressive Taxation: The G20 declaration endorsed progressive and effective taxation of the super-rich, emphasising respect for fiscal sovereignty.
- Emphasis on Multilateralism: Underrepresented regions such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia-Pacific to get better representation in the UN Security Council.
- Global Alliance: G20 launched the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, aiming to target 500 million people and 150 million children by 2030.
- Bridging the Digital Divide: G20 countries pledged to halve the gender digital divide by 2030 and promote equal gender participation.
- Climate Action and Global Trade: Technology-neutral solutions for low-emission energy were endorsed, alongside reducing land degradation by 50% by 2040.
- Reaffirmation of Commitment to Global Health: G20 participants welcomed the Coalition for Local and Regional Production to enhance access to healthcare resources.

### **About Digital Public Infrastructure**

- Digital public infrastructure (DPI) refers to digital systems designed for efficient provision of economic opportunities and social services.
- DPI comprises a network interconnecting individuals, data, and money, similar to how roads and railways connect people and goods.
- Critical components of DPI include a digital ID System, real-time fast payment system, and a consent-based data-sharing system.

### **India's Sectoral Progress Highlighted in G20 Rio Declaration**

- Significant improvements in social infrastructure, with advancements in access to

housing, clean water, clean cooking fuel, and toilets.

- India is the first G20 country to have fulfilled its commitments under the Paris Agreement ahead of time.
- India has played a major role in initiating global green transition initiatives, including Mission LiFE, and the Global Biofuel Alliance.
- In terms of disaster resilience, India has put the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure in place to better manage future crises.

### **Importance of G20 in Global Order**

- The G20 nations collectively represent a substantial portion of global economic output, global exports, and the world's population.
- The G20 played a critical role in the management of the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, and more recently, the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It offers a more inclusive representation of the world's economic landscape than older blocs like the G7.

## **Prime Minister's Diplomatic Visit to Nigeria, Brazil, and Guyana**

### **Visit to Nigeria**

- Marked the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Nigeria in 17 years.
- The Prime Minister was awarded Nigeria's second-highest national award, the Grand Commander of the Order of Niger.

### **India-Nigeria Relations**

- India is the leading destination for Nigerian medical tourists, providing affordable and high-quality healthcare.
- Nigeria seeks to strengthen defence cooperation with India, especially in areas such as training, equipment supply, and anti-insurgency tactics.

- To stimulate trade and investment, an India-Nigeria Business Council has been proposed, featuring top businesses from both countries.

## Details of the Visit to Brazil

- Discussions were held between India and Brazil at the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro.  
- Both nations focused on enhancing cooperation in energy, biofuels, defense, agriculture, healthcare, and digital technology.

### India-Brazil Relations

- India explicitly supported Brazil's 'Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty' initiative.  
- Brazil encouraged decisive action at the UNFCCC COP29 climate talks in Azerbaijan, ahead of the COP30 summit in Brazil, in 2025.  
- Brazil also supports India's candidature for a non-permanent seat of the UNSC for the 2028-2029 term.

## PM's Visit to Guyana

- This visit was the first by an Indian PM to Guyana in 56 years, highlighting India's growing interest in the Caribbean and Latin America.

### India-Guyana Relations

- Diplomatic ties between India and Guyana were established in 1965 and elevated to a full High Commission in 1968.  
- India provides developmental support to Guyana through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.  
- The Indo-Guyana Joint Business Council aids in economic cooperation while Indian firms are exploring opportunities in diverse sectors like biofuel, energy, minerals, and pharmaceuticals in Guyana.  
- Guyana and India are also collaborating on renewable energy projects, particularly under the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

### National Honours for the PM

- The Indian Prime Minister was bestowed with the highest national honours from Guyana

(Order of Excellence), Barbados (Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados), and Dominica (Dominica Award of Honour).

- These awards were given in recognition of his statesmanship, aid during the Covid-19 pandemic, and efforts to boost India's bilateral relations.

- The awards bring the PM's international accolades count to 19.

## UNFCCC COP29 Baku: Key Highlights and India's Stance

### Introduction to COP29 Baku

- The Conference of the Parties 29 (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was recently concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan.  
- Representatives from approximately 200 countries gathered to discuss and conclude agreements aimed at addressing major global climate challenges.  
- These negotiations are significant in creating an effective mechanism for climate action for the immediate future.

### Key Highlights from COP29

- The conference resulted in the adoption of a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), aiming to triple climate finance for developing countries by 2035.  
- A major agreement was reached on the mechanisms for carbon markets, including specific rules for country-to-country trading of carbon credits and a centralised UN-managed offset and trading system.  
- Over 30 countries endorsed a declaration on addressing methane emissions in the waste sector, which contribute significantly to global methane emissions.  
- The conference underscored the importance of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in addressing climate change, adopting plans to



bridge indigenous knowledge with modern science and include indigenous values in climate dialogue and policy.

- An initiative was launched to consolidate existing climate initiatives in the field of food and agriculture, aiming to streamline support for farmers and facilitate access to finance.
- A decision was made to extend the Lima Work Programme on Gender, reaffirming a commitment to gender equality in climate action.

### **India's Stance at COP29**

- India advocated for a larger commitment of annual climate change funds than what was agreed upon in the NCQG.
- It was critical of the shifting of financial responsibilities from developed countries to all participants, regardless of historic emissions contributions.
- India signified its solidarity with vulnerable nations, voicing support for ignored financial targets of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

### **The Importance of COP for India**

- COP events allow India to assert its leadership in global climate initiatives, such as the International Solar Alliance, and advocate for equitable climate action and finance.
- India has been able to highlight its achievements, such as reducing emissions intensity and increasing non-fossil fuels capacity, through updating its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at these events.
- COP negotiations are vital for India's access to financial support for addressing national climate-induced impacts.
- National platforms, like the COP, provide India with an opportunity to promote its sustainable initiatives at the international level.

### **India's Evolving Role in Global Climate Governance**

- India, once wary of Western environmental propositions possibly hindering its economic progression, has shifted over the decades to actively participate in climate negotiations.

- This was marked by the country's hosting of COP8 in 2002 and the launch of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008, focusing on emission reduction and renewable energy promotion.
- India demonstrated its commitment to climate action with the introduction of flexible Nationally Determined Contributions in the 2015 Paris Agreement.
- Today, India advocates for developed nations providing financial and technological support for developing countries, and leads global initiatives in solar energy adoption, sustainable consumption patterns, and the conservation of mangrove ecosystems.

## **The 11th ADMM Meeting-Plus and the Role of Buddhism**

### **Introduction and About**

- The 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) recently took place in Vientiane, Lao PDR.
- India's Defence Minister attended and lauded the principles of Buddhism in resolving conflicts.
- A notable highlight was his recognition of the success of India's Act East Policy (AEP), which has strengthened ties with ASEAN and Indo-Pacific nations over the last decade.

### **Highlights of the 11th ADMM Meeting-Plus**

- India advocated for adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 to ensure freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region.
- There was a call for greater adoption of Buddhist principles of peaceful coexistence in a world becoming increasingly divided into blocks and camps.
- India's belief in open dialogue for border disputes and other challenges was demonstrated.
- The proposal of an ADMM-Plus Defence Strategy on Climate Change to tackle

interconnected security and environmental challenges was a significant point.

- Guarding Global Commons, shared natural resources beyond national boundaries, was underscored.

### **The ADMM-Plus Forum**

- ADMM-Plus is a defence cooperation framework that brings together defence ministers of ASEAN, eight dialogue partner countries, and Timor Leste.
- Established in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, on 12th October 2010, since 2017, the forum meets annually to promote dialogue and cooperation.
- The ADMM-Plus focuses on Maritime security, Counter-terrorism, Humanitarian assistance and disaster management, Peacekeeping operations, Military medicine, Humanitarian mine action and Cybersecurity.

### **Spread of Buddhism and its Role in Conflict Resolution**

- Indian traders, sailors, and monks played pivotal roles in spreading Buddhism to Southeast Asia from the 7th to 13th centuries.
- Indian culture was absorbed into Southeast Asian cultures, with Buddhism often blending with local beliefs and Hinduism.
- Three fundamental Buddhist perspectives that can minimise conflict are respect for all beings, dialogue as a form of understanding and respect, and inner transformation.
- The Buddhist text Vinaya Pitaka provides principles for conflict resolution among monks and can be applied in a broader context.
- Buddhist ideals advocate for balanced policies which consider all stakeholders' needs, promote mutual understanding to address global issues, and prioritise humanitarian aid in conflict zones.

### **The Role of the Act East Policy**

- The Act East Policy was introduced in November 2014, during the 12th ASEAN-India Summit in Myanmar.
- This policy has played a significant role in strengthening ties between India and ASEAN and Indo-Pacific countries.

- The success of the Act East policy over the past decade was one of the highlights at the 11th ADMM-Plus.

### **The Importance of Global Commons**

- India stressed the significance of protecting Global Commons, which includes the High Seas, Atmosphere, Antarctica and Outer Space.
- Sri Rabindranath Tagore's 1927 remark, symbolising the deep cultural and historical ties between India and Southeast Asia, was quoted: "I saw India everywhere, yet I couldn't recognise it."

## **6th ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Joint Committee Meeting**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- The 6th ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Joint Committee and associated meetings were recently held in New Delhi.
- This meeting marked a crucial phase in the review of AITIGA to augment trade relations between India and ASEAN nations.

### **Key Highlights of the Meeting**

- India's request for a review of AITIGA, implemented in 2010, was a key highlight due to disproportionate trade benefits for ASEAN countries.
- While exports from India to ASEAN rose from USD 25.62 billion (2010-11) to USD 41.2 billion (2023-24), imports surged from USD 30.6 billion to USD 79.66 billion in the same duration.

### **India's Objectives in the Review**

- One of India's objectives is to secure enhanced Market Access, with a special appeal for countries, specifically Vietnam, to make more significant market-opening commitments towards Indian goods.
- Stringent Rules of Origin (ROO) is another objective of India aiming to prevent Chinese

goods from being routed through ASEAN nations at preferential rates.

### **Advancements in Negotiations**

- India and ASEAN nations achieved initial progress in commencing tariff negotiations, which is a crucial part of the review process.

### **ASEAN's Contribution to India's Global Trade**

- ASEAN accounts for about 11% of India's global trade.
- Bilateral trade tallied at USD 121 billion in FY 2023-24 and recorded USD 73 billion (April-October 2024), indicating a 5.2% growth.
- India's trade deficit with ASEAN escalated from USD 4.98 billion in 2010-11, the first full operational year of AITIGA to USD 38.4 billion in 2023-24.

## **Military Defence and Exercises**

### **3rd Edition of MAHASAGAR: An Initiative by Indian Navy for Virtual Interaction within IOR Littorals**

#### **Introduction and About MAHASAGAR**

- MAHASAGAR is an initiative of the Indian Navy, proposed to promote virtual interaction among Indian Ocean Region (IOR) littorals.
- The acronym MAHASAGAR stands for Maritime Heads for Active Security And Growth for All in the Region.
- It was launched in the year 2023 and is conducted twice a year, ensuring a constant and consistent dialogue and cooperation.

#### **3rd Edition of MAHASAGAR and Why it's in the News**

- The 3rd edition of MAHASAGAR was recently held, gaining media attention.
- The theme for this edition was "Training Cooperation to Mitigate Common Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)".
- The Indian Navy's flagship outreach programme, MAHASAGAR, intends to address the shared maritime security challenges of the region, hence the chosen theme.
- It engages maritime nations in the region, including Bangladesh, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

#### **Historical and Geographical Relevance of MAHASAGAR**

- Since its inception in 2023, MAHASAGAR has strived to promote maritime security, inclusive growth, and mutual cooperation among IOR littorals.
- The Indian Ocean Region, a geostrategically important area, is of utmost relevance in MAHASAGAR due to its focus on this specific region.
- The initiative embodies the commitment and efforts of the Indian Navy to maintain peace and prosperity in the region by addressing common maritime security challenges.

#### **Importance of MAHASAGAR**

- MAHASAGAR facilitates the active engagement of countries, promoting communication and collaboration.
- It addresses common challenges faced by the IOR littorals, such as maritime security, providing them a platform for dialogue and cooperation.
- This initiative significantly contributes to regional security and stability by building a common understanding and fostering bilateral and multilateral partnerships.
- The initiative plays a pivotal role in promoting India's outreach to other nations, fostering mutual understanding, and solidifying its position in the region.



## Antariksha Abhyas 2024: India's First-ever Space Exercise

### Introduction and Background

- Recently, the Defence Space Agency under the Ministry of Defence conducted the first-ever Space Exercise called 'Antariksha Abhyas' in New Delhi, India.
- The main objective incepted was the simulation and analysis of threats posed to and from space-based services, with the aim of securing national strategic objectives in space.

### Key Focus Areas

- The exercise focused on enhancing the integration of space capability into military operations.
- It aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of operational dependencies on space assets.
- The initiative targeted the identification of vulnerabilities and the development of methods to handle disruptions or denial of space-based services.

### Military Use of Space

- The armed forces utilise space capabilities for various security operations including detecting border infiltration, artillery movements, and missile launches.

#### India's Capability in Space Defense

- In March 2019, India successfully executed an anti-satellite (ASAT) test under Mission Shakti designed to destroy or disable enemy satellites in orbit, showcasing India's capabilities in space defence.

### Regulation of Space Use

- The Outer Space Treaty of 1967, to which India is a part, dictates that outer space should be utilised only for peaceful operations.
- This Treaty sets a boundary, known as the Kármán line, 100 kilometres above mean sea level, which is acknowledged as the edge where

the Earth's atmosphere ends, and outer space begins.

## Bharat National Cyber Security Exercise 2024

### Introduction and About

- Bharat National Cyber Security Exercise, abbreviated as Bharat NCX 2024, is an initiative aimed at strengthening India's cyber defence capabilities.
- The exercise, spread over a period of 12 days, is geared towards preparing the country's cybersecurity professionals to tackle looming threats.

### Why It's in News

- The Bharat NCX 2024 was recently launched with the objective of bolstering India's resilience against cyber threats.
- This exercise is a significant step towards proactive prevention of cyber incidents and efficient incident response.

### Key Features of the Exercise

- The Bharat NCX 2024 exercise offers a multifaceted strategy designed to enhance cybersecurity.
- Cyber Defence Training: This feature of the program involves extensive training in defence against cyberattacks and how to respond effectively to such incidents.
- Live-Fire Simulations: Cybersecurity professionals gain real-time experience through simulations of cyberattacks on various IT systems.
- Strategic Decision-Making: During a national cyber crisis, the exercise provides a simulated decision-making framework for senior management.
- CISO's Conclave: Chief Information Security Officers from various sectors gather to discuss trending issues, challenges, and government initiatives in the field of cybersecurity.

### **Cybersecurity Startup Exhibition**

- A highlight of the Bharat NCX 2024 exercise is the cybersecurity startup exhibition.
- It showcases innovative cybersecurity solutions from Indian startups, demonstrating the role of innovation in bolstering cybersecurity.

### **Importance and Significance**

- The Bharat NCX 2024 exercise, with its multifaceted approach, stands to significantly enhance India's cyber resilience.
- It aims to stimulate innovation in cybersecurity by showcasing novel solutions developed by Indian startups.
- The exercise prepares the country's cybersecurity professionals to tackle evolving cyber threats and enables them to respond effectively.
- It also promotes strategic decision-making and open dialogue about cybersecurity through discussions among chief information security officers.

### **In Conclusion**

- Summarily, the Bharat National Cyber Security Exercise 2024 is a step towards making India's cyber environment more secure and resilient. It not only prepares the nation's professionals to tackle cyber threats but also promotes innovation and strategic decision-making in the field.

## **'Sanyukt Vimochan 2024'**

### **Introduction and About**

- Sanyukt Vimochan 2024 is a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) practice operation organised and conducted by the Indian armed forces.
- This exercise was held recently in the cities of Ahmedabad and Porbandar located in the western state of Gujarat.

### **The Focus of the Exercise**

- The main theme underlined in this exercise was 'Cyclone in Coastal Region of Gujarat'.

- This choice of focus is critical and relevant given Gujarat's geographical location and its historic susceptibility to cyclones.

### **Objective and Participation**

- The activity aimed to demonstrate the Indian Army's capability for disaster response and their readiness to deal with such emergencies.
- An extension to that, the exercise also aimed at strengthening the bonds of multilateral collaboration in terms of humanitarian assistance.
- A variety of entities participated in this endeavor, including the Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, Indian Coast Guard, National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force, together with other Central and State agencies.
- In total, 15 organisations from nine different friendly foreign countries marked their presence in this exercise.

### **Indigenous Capabilities Displayed**

- Sanyukt Vimochan 2024 also served to be a platform to showcase India's indigenous HADR capabilities.
- The Indian military utilised indigenous HADR equipment such as fire-resistant clothing to demonstrate their strength and readiness.
- Such usage of indigenous HADR equipment was in accordance with the Indian government's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, a vision of a self-reliant India.

### **Why is it Newsworthy?**

- The Sanyukt Vimochan 2024 exercise assumes significance as it reflects India's readiness and preparedness for disasters.
- The exercise helped amplify trust and understanding among participating agencies and nations, and highlighted the importance of their collective strengths.
- It also helped in setting a benchmark for the response mechanism that needs to be in place for disasters, specifically related to cyclones hitting the coastal region of Gujarat.

## **Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024 – A Joint Military Exercise between India and the US**

### **Introduction and Brief Overview of Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024**

- The Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024 is a joint military exercise conducted between the Indian and the US Army.
- The 15th edition of this India-US joint Special Forces exercise recently saw the departure of the Indian Army contingent.
- This exercise is set to take place at the Orchard Combat Training Centre located in Idaho, USA.
- Representing the Indian Army will be Special Forces units, with Green Berets standing for the US Army.

### **Purpose and Dynamics of Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024**

- The intention behind Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR is to augment military cooperation between India and the US.
- It looks to enhance interoperability, consolidate jointness, and facilitate the mutual exchange of special operations tactics.
- The focus of the exercise is to improve joint Special Forces Operations performance in desert/semi-desert environments.
- The exercise will lay emphasis on maintaining a sophisticated level of physical fitness, systematic joint planning, and coordinated joint tactical drills.

### **Key Aspects and Activities of Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024**

- Multiple drills and aspects will be practised during the exercise, including planning Joint Team Missions and Reconnaissance Missions.
- Unmanned Aerial Systems' employment, execution of Special Operations, Joint Terminal Attack Controller's actions, and Psychological

Warfare in Special Operations will also be among the rehearsed aspects.

- The exercise will test the ability to execute these drills in a joint scenario harnessing the expertise from both the Indian and US armed forces.

### **The Importance and Significance of Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024**

- Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR, with its diverse range of planned activities, will allow the two sides to share their best practices and experiences from joint Special Forces Operations.
- It is designed to foster interoperability, bonhomie and camaraderie among soldiers from both countries.
- The overall aim is to develop effective tactical strategies for joint Special Forces operations in war-like conditions.

## **Exercise GARUDA SHAKTI 2024**

### **Introduction and Brief Overview**

- Exercise GARUDA SHAKTI 2024 is the ninth edition of the India-Indonesia Joint Special Forces exercise.
- For this exercise, an Indian Army contingent of 25 personnel travelled to Cijantung, Jakarta, Indonesia.
- The major aim of the exercise is to familiarize both sides with their respective operating procedures, enhance mutual understanding and boost cooperation and interoperability between the Special Forces of both armies.

### **Participating Troops and Exercise Duration**

- The Indian contingent participating in the exercise is represented by troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces).
- The exercise is set to be conducted between the 1st and 12th of November, 2024

### **Amplification of Military Skills**



- Participants in the exercise will be engaged with planning and executing special operations, advancing Special Forces skills, and sharing information about weaponry, equipment, tactics, techniques, and procedures.
- This will also include joint practice of Special Forces Operations in jungle terrain, striking terrorist camps, and validation exercises integrating basic and advanced special forces skills.

### **Cultural Exchange and Cooperation Enhancement**

- As part of the exercise, the participants will have the opportunity to understand the lifestyles and cultures of both countries, further fostering military cooperation.
- The aim here is to strengthen the bond between two armies and additionally understand and appreciate cultural differences and similarities.

### **Importance and Significance of GARUDA SHAKTI 2024**

- The exercise holds substantial significance as it provides a platform for both contingents to strengthen their bond and exchange best practices.
- It is also expected to play a cardinal role in achieving shared security objectives and fostering bilateral relations between two friendly nations, India and Indonesia.
- Such international exercises are vital for the strengthening of global peacekeeping forces and the mutual assurance of support and cooperation.

## **Exercise Sea Vigil – Pan-India Coastal Defence Exercise**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- Exercise Sea Vigil is a Pan-India Coastal Defence Exercise initiated by The Indian Navy.
- This national level exercise was first conceptualised in 2018 with the objective to validate maritime security measures that have been instituted post the 26/11 attacks.
- The exercise is planned to run its fourth edition, Sea Vigil-24, on 20th & 21st November 24.
- This exercise aims to activate and assess the Coastal Security apparatus across the entirety of India.

### **Exercise Sea Vigil-24: Involvement and Impact**

- The forthcoming fourth edition of Exercise Sea Vigil involves the collaboration of six Ministries and 21 Organisations/ agencies.
- The exercise is aimed at strengthening the security of various coastal assets such as ports, oil rigs, Single Point Moorings, Cable Landing Points, and crucial coastal infrastructure, including the coastal population.
- The 2024 edition has seen a rise in participation from other Services including the Indian Army and Air Force, and intends to deploy a large number of ships and aircraft, thus raising the tempo of the exercise.
- The exercise will engage the complete coastal security infrastructure and all maritime stakeholders, including the fishing community and coastal populace, simultaneously.

### **Awareness and Community Participation**

- Exercise Sea Vigil also focuses on raising awareness amongst coastal communities about maritime security.
- Various fishing communities, coastal populace, and students from NCC and Bharat Scouts and Guides will be actively involved, adding to the fervour of the endeavour.

### **National Level Initiative and its Relevance**

- Coordinated by the Indian Navy, Exercise Sea Vigil stands as a national level initiative providing a holistic appraisal of India's maritime defence and security capabilities.

- Moreover, it serves as a stepping stone to the Theatre Level Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX), which is conducted biennially by the Indian Navy.

## **Exercise VINBAX 2024: A Bilateral Army Exercise between India and Vietnam**

### **Introduction and Schedule of Exercise VINBAX 2024**

- The VINBAX 2024 is a bilateral army exercise set to take place from 4th to 23rd November 2024.
- This military exercise will be conducted at Ambala and Chandimandir.

### **The Noteworthiness of VINBAX 2024**

- This edition of the exercise marks a significant increase in its scope, with Bi Service level participation for the first time by personnel of Army and Air Force from India and Vietnam.
- The Indian Army contingent, comprising 47 personnel, will be represented by a Regiment of the Corps of Engineers along with additional personnel from other arms and services.

### **The Aims and Objectives of VINBAX 2024**

- The primary aim of VINBAX-2024 is to augment joint military capability of both sides specifically in terms of employment and deployment of Engineer Company and Medical Teams.
- This is to execute engineering tasks as part of United Nation contingents in Peacekeeping Operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- The conduct of VINBAX-2024 as a field training exercise with an enhanced scope from previous iterations of the bilateral exercise is seen as a way to bolster mutual confidence and interoperability.

- It will also facilitate the sharing of best practices between the Indian Army and Vietnam People's Army.

### **Special Demonstrations and Cultural Exchange**

- A 48-hour validation exercise is also planned, which will showcase Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief demonstration and equipment display to assess the standards achieved by both contingents.
- Another salient aspect of this joint exercise is that it will give an opportunity for the troops from both contingents to gain knowledge about each other's cultural and social heritages.

## **Exercise Poorvi Prahar of the Indian Military**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- The Indian Army is conducting a high-intensity multi-service military exercise, 'Poorvi Prahar', in the strategic forward locations of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The military exercise seeks to enhance the combat proficiency of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, particularly in coalescing and executing Integrated Joint Operations in the challenging topography of the region.

### **Objectives and Military Technologies**

- The exercise brings together a broad range of modern military platforms and systems, highlighting India's progress in contemporary warfare technology.
- This includes the integration of innovative technologies that are revolutionising the nature of military operations.
- The troops are using and improving skills with Swarm Drones, First Person View (FPV) Drones, and Loitering Munitions. These cutting-edge technologies significantly bolster situational awareness, precision strikes, and operational flexibility.

- The integration of these advanced tools signifies the military's dedication to leveraging next-generation technologies to strengthen defence capacities.

### **Collaboration and Operations**

- The exercise aims to improve the synthesis and utilisation of advanced technological tools and joint command structures that enhance cooperation across different military services.
- A paramount aspect of the exercise is the development of a Common Operating Picture (COP) via joint control arrangements that streamline coordination between terrestrial, aerial, and naval forces.
- Real-time information is fluently disseminated via systems employing satellite communications, supported by AI-driven analytics. This facilitates more accurate decision-making and quicker response times.

### **Impact and Significance**

- By executing Ex Poorvi Prahar, the Indian Armed Forces are augmenting their capacity to perform harmonious, multi-domain operations across land, air, and sea domains.
- This, in turn, solidifies India's strategic deterrence capabilities, contributing to the broader defence strategy of the nation.

## **The 3rd Edition of Exercise AUSTRAHIND**

### **Introduction and About**

- Exercise AUSTRAHIND is a joint military initiative between India and Australia.
- The exercise is scheduled to take place at Foreign Training Node, Pune in Maharashtra from the 8th to 21st November 2024.
- This will be the third instalment of this annual exercise.
- The drill is alternately conducted in Australia and India. The last edition took place in Australia in December 2023.

### **Structure and Participation**

- The Indian contingent is to comprise 140 personnel, mainly from the DOGRA Regiment and 14 from the Indian Air Force.
- The exercise will run in two phases: the combat conditioning and tactical training phase, and the validation phase.
- Various drills and aspects to be reheated include reaction to a terrorist capturing a defined territory, the establishment of a Joint Operations Centre, conduct of joint counter-terrorism operations like Raid and Search and Destroy Missions, securing of a helipad, and employment of drones and counter-drone measures, amongst others.

### **Aim and Significance**

- The primary goal of Exercise AUSTRAHIND is to promote military cooperation between India and Australia. This is achieved through improving interoperability in conducting joint sub conventional operations in semi-urban environments and semi-desert terrains.
- It is conducted under Chapter VII of the UN mandate that affirms the UN's role in maintaining peace and security around the world.
- This annual exercise enables both countries to share their best practices in tactics, techniques, and procedures of conducting tactical operations, thereby enhancing their collective military expertise.

## **Exercise Sanyukt Vimochan 2024**

### **Introduction and About**

- 'Exercise Sanyukt Vimochan' is an annual multilateral joint exercise focusing on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) measures.
- The exercise is managed by the Konark Corps of Southern Command of the Indian Army.
- It was conducted in Ahmedabad and Porbandar, Gujarat on 18-19 November 2024.



- A diverse selection of individuals, including representatives from the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority, National Disaster Management Authority, the Meteorological Department, and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, were present for the exercise.

#### **Details of the Exercise**

- The inaugural event of the exercise focused on 'Cyclone in Coastal Region of Gujarat' and featured a detailed 'Tabletop Exercise'.
- The exercise is aimed to address areas of improvement in interagency integration, fostering swift and coordinated responses to natural disasters.
- The event included a Multi-Agency Capability Demonstration at Porbandar's Chowpatty Beach.

#### **Multi-Agency Capability Demonstration**

- **The demonstration included different agencies practising coordinated logistics, rapid response, and effective disaster management strategies in a simulated cyclone scenario.**
- This collaborative effort included the Indian Army, Navy, Airforce, Coast Guard, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and other key Central and State agencies.

#### **International Participation & Significance**

- Fifteen senior officials from nine friendly foreign countries across the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Indian Ocean Region, and SouthEast Asia were in attendance.
- Exercise Sanyukt Vimochan has not only enhanced national disaster response capabilities but has also given valuable insights to the broader international discussion on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

## **SAREX-24 - Indian Coast Guard's National Maritime**

## **Search and Rescue Exercise & Workshop**

#### **Introduction to SAREX-24**

- SAREX-24 is the 11th edition of Indian Coast Guard's National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise & Workshop.
- This event is set to take place in Kochi, Kerala on November 28-29, 2024.
- The main governing entity of the exercise is the National Maritime Search and Rescue Board.

#### **Theme and Goal of SAREX-24**

- The central theme of SAREX-24 is 'Enhancing Search and Rescue Capabilities through Regional collaboration'.
- This theme underlines ICG's will to provide aid during large-scale emergencies regardless of location, nationality or circumstances.
- The ultimate goal stretches beyond the Indian Search & Rescue Region, projecting a global reach.

#### **Structure and Features of SAREX-24**

- SAREX-24 will host various programmes like table-top exercise, workshops, and seminars.
- The participation of high ranking officials from government agencies, Ministries, Armed Forces, stakeholders, and foreign delegates will be seen.
- A sea exercise, involving two large-scale emergencies, will be conducted off the Kochi coast. This will witness participation by ships and aircraft of ICG, Navy, Indian Air Force, Passenger Vessel & Tug from Cochin Port Authority, and boats from Customs.

#### **Technological and Operational Innovations at SAREX-24**

- The sea exercise's response mechanism will use multiple methods to evacuate distressed passengers.
- Innovative applications of new-age technology such as satellite-aided distress beacons, drones to deploy a life buoy, air droppable life rafts, and operation of remote-controlled life buoy will be demonstrated.

### **Evaluation and Diplomatic Outcomes of SAREX-24**

- This exercise aims to evaluate efficiency of operations and coordination with national stakeholders.
- It also provides an opportunity for cooperative engagements with littoral states and friendly countries, enhancing diplomatic ties through the process.

- For the first time ever, Jammu and Kashmir celebrated Constitution Day, symbolising a new chapter in its alignment with India's legal and political framework.
- The Minister of Labour and Employment participated in the "Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman" campaign.
- The President of India highlighted the contributions of 15 women members of the Constituent Assembly, acknowledging their roles in shaping the Constitution

## **Polity**

### **Constitution Day 2024 - India**

#### **Introduction and Current Significance**

- Constitution Day marks the adoption of the Indian Constitution on 26th November 1949.
- The Prime Minister of India joined the 2024 celebrations, emphasizing the Constitution as a living document crucial for socio-economic progress and justice.
- The same day also commemorates the victims of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, signifying India's resilience.

#### **Historical Context and Importance**

- Constitution Day promotes awareness of India's democratic values: justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity.
- In 2015, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment declared 26th November as Constitution Day to deepen citizens' connection with the Constitution. Before 2015, the day was observed as National Law Day.
- The day also honours the Constituent Assembly's vision in drafting the Constitution and Dr B.R. Ambedkar - the Chairman of the Drafting Committee and the father of the Indian Constitution.

#### **Constitution Day Celebrations 2024**

#### **Uniqueness of the Indian Constitution**

- The Indian Constitution is a "Living Document" due to its amendability, responsiveness to contemporary needs through judicial interpretation, federal structure, and hybrid nature.
- The Constitution also has provisions for social change, enabling it to respond to societal shifts such as protecting marginalized communities and promoting social justice.

#### **Facts about the Indian Constitution**

- Drafted by the Constituent Assembly over approximately three years, the Constitution contained a Preamble, 395 Articles (across 22 Parts), and 8 Schedules.
- Currently, it includes a Preamble, over 450 Articles (divided into 25 Parts), and 12 Schedules.
- As of September 2024, the Constitution has been amended 106 times.
- The Indian Constitution is the lengthiest written Constitution in the world, reflecting the diverse and vast country it governs.
- Developed under the influence of international constitutions such as those of America, Ireland, Britain, Canada, Australia, and Germany, the Constitution maintains its comprehensive nature due to the diversity and vastness of India, the influence of the Government of India Act 1935, and a single unified governance structure.

## **Strengthening Understanding on UP**

## Madarsa Education Board Act, 2004

### Introduction to the Recent Supreme Court

#### Verdict

- The Supreme Court has recently in part upheld the constitutional validity of the Uttar Pradesh Madarsa Education Board Act, 2004, revoking the Allahabad High Court's previous ruling (March 2024) which pronounced it unconstitutional.
- The Court declared provisions regarding higher education (Kamil and Fazil) unconstitutional due to their contradiction with the University Grants Commission Act (UGC Act) 1956, governed by Entry 66 of List 1.

#### Factors Contributing to the Supreme Court's Decision

- The Madarsa Act, 2004 regulates education standards, aligning with the state's commitment to ensuring students reach a competent level to actively participate in society.
- The Supreme Court affirmed that the Madarsa Act falls within the State Legislature's legislative competence, specifically under Entry 25 of List 3 (Concurrent List) of the Constitution.
- A distinction was drawn between religious education and religious instruction.
- The Supreme Court stated in *Ms. Aruna Roy vs Union of India*, 2002, that while religious education fostering communal harmony is allowed, religious instruction such as mandatory worship is prohibited in state-recognised institutions under Article 28.
- The validity of a statute cannot be constitutionally challenged for violation of the Basic Structure of the Constitution (*Indira Nehru Gandhi vs Raj Narain Case*, 1975), unless it violates the Constitutional provisions pertaining to secularism.
- The Supreme Court underlined that the state can lay down rules under the Act ensuring madrasas impart secular education along with religious instruction, without violating secularism.

- By upholding the Act, the Court has fortified the right of religious minorities to establish educational institutions under Article 30 of the Indian Constitution.

- The Court has commanded that the state must ensure madrasa students are not deprived of the equality of education available from the State in other institutions.

### Deriving the Foundation of UP Madarsa Education Board Act, 2004

- The Act is a legislative framework proposed at organising and formalising madrasa education in Uttar Pradesh, ensuring they meet defined educational standards.
- The Act aimed to integrate religious education parallel to the secular syllabus outlined by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), amalgamating formal education with Islamic teachings.
- The Act led to the establishment of the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education to oversee and regulate madrasa education in the state.
- The Act set out the conduction of exams for madrasa students, offering courses from the 'Maulvi' level (equivalent to Class 10) to the 'Fazil' level.

### Why Allahabad High Court Declared the Act Unconstitutional

- The Court found that the Act violated secularism by making Islamic education compulsory whilst treating contemporary subjects as optional or absent.
- The Court held that the Act contravened Article 21A which mandates free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 and 14.
- The Act was held to violate Articles 14 and 15 by creating discrimination between madrasa and mainstream school students and by establishing a separate, unequal education system for madrasa students.
- The Act was found to conflict with the UGC Act, 1956 as only universities or institutions deemed to be universities are authorised to award degrees.



### **Implications of the Supreme Court Ruling on the Act**

- The act reinforces the state's duty in setting educational standards to uphold quality.
- The act safeguards the rights of religious minorities to establish educational institutions providing they follow the educational standards.
- The act empowers the state's obligation to make sure all children receive quality education, as mandated by Article 21A of the Constitution.
- The act backs the integration of madrasas into the wider educational framework.

## **Supreme Court Ruling on Limits for Private Property Acquisition**

### **Introduction and About**

- The Supreme Court, in the Property Owners Association v State of Maharashtra Case 2024, has set limitations on state authority to assume control of privately-owned resources for public distribution.
- The petitioners challenged state power to take over private properties under the provisions of Articles 39(b) and 31C of the Constitution.

### **Key Highlights of the Supreme Court Verdict**

- Private resources qualifying for state acquisition should be rare or critical to community well-being, ruling out general private properties.
- The 'Public trust doctrine' may help determine such resources.
- Two key tests were established: a resource must be both "material" and "serve the community."
- The 'materiality' of resources and their community aspect must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- The Court overturned the argument from the Ranganath Reddy case, 1977, that all private property could be regarded as "material resources of the community" for redistribution.

- Judicial caution was urged against an expansive interpretation of Article 39(b) to potentially harm property rights under Article 300A.
- The Supreme Court outlined five ways to transform private resources into community material resources: Nationalisation, Acquisition, Operation of law, Purchase by the state, and Donation by the owner.

### **Right to Property and Constitutional Provisions**

- Article 31, an original fundamental right to property, was repealed and replaced by Article 300A, a constitutional right, through the 44th Amendment Act, 1978.
- The 1st Amendment Act, 1951, introduced Articles 31A and 31B, adding the Ninth Schedule, to ensure laws in this Schedule could not be declared inconsistent with fundamental rights.
- The 25th Amendment Act, 1971, added Article 31C to fend off constitutional challenges to state laws intended for resource distribution as per Article 39(b) and (c).
- The scope of Article 31C was expanded by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, to include all Directive Principles.
- Article 19(1)(f) and Article 31, which safeguarded the right to acquire, hold, and dispose of property, were abrogated by the 44th Amendment Act, 1978, making Property no longer a fundamental right but a constitutional right under Article 300A.

### **Judicial Interpretation Related to the Right to Property**

- Numerous rulings, starting from Sankari Prasad Case, 1951 to Vidya Devi Case, 2020, have significantly influenced the interpretation of property rights in constitutional jurisprudence.

### **Significance of the Supreme Court Judgment**

- The judgment maintains a delicate balance between potential state intervention and mindful protection of indivisible rights.

- It promotes economic democracy envisioned by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar by retaining liberty for citizens to determine their socio-economic organisation.
- The ruling underlines that articles like 39(b) should be implemented in accordance with changing societal and economic realities.

### **Impact of State Control over Property**

- Positive Impacts: Social justice promotion, sustainable resource management, and facilitation of public welfare projects.
- Negative Impacts: Limitations on private ownership potentially dampen private investment, entrepreneurship, and incentives to invest or improve properties.

## **Appointment of the Chief Justice of India**

### **Introduction and Recent Appointment**

- Recently, Justice Sanjiv Khanna was sworn in as the Chief Justice of India (CJI), by the President of India.
- He has replaced Justice D.Y. Chandrachud is the 51st CJI.

### **Key Judicial Rulings of Justice Sanjiv Khanna**

- Justice Khanna has been part of several significant rulings in the Constitution Bench, including the endorsement of Article 370's abrogation.
- He also participated in the striking down of the 2018 electoral bonds scheme.
- He was a key figure in the majority ruling on the Aligarh Muslim University's minority status.
- He has supported the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for elections, going against appeals to revert to paper ballots.

### **Key Provisions Related to the Appointment of CJI**

- A Supreme Court judge is appointed by the President under Article 124 (2) of the

Constitution, with the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court being conventionally appointed as the CJI.

- To qualify, the person must be an Indian citizen, have been a judge or an advocate of a High Court for at least five or ten years respectively, or be deemed a distinguished jurist by the president.
- In his role as CJI, the individual is responsible for case allocation and setting hearing schedules in the Supreme Court, consulting with the President for the appointment of judges, appointing ad-hoc SC judges, and more.
- The CJI can only be removed by the President following a special majority vote in Parliament.

### **Appointment of CJI in Other Democratic Countries**

- In the United States, the Chief Justice holds a life tenure unless impeached.
- In the United Kingdom, the Lord Chief Justice is appointed by the Judicial Appointments Commission through a special panel drawn from the Appeal Court Judges or the Supreme Court. This individual also has a life tenure, with mandatory retirement at 75.

## **Supreme Court Guidelines on "Bulldozer Justice"**

### **Introduction and About "Bulldozer Justice"**

- Bulldozer Justice refers to the practice of demolishing properties, often of individuals accused of crimes, without appropriate legal procedures.
- Recently, India's Supreme Court has issued extensive guidelines under Article 142 of the Constitution to assure due process between citizens and demolition of their properties.
- The case was brought to attention following the extra-legal demolition instances in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

### **The Supreme Court Guidelines on Bulldozer Justice**

- Providing Notice: A minimum of 15 days' notice is compulsory before demolition; the notice should include structure details and the rationale for demolition.
- Fair Hearing: A schedule for a personal hearing should be provided, allowing concerned parties to contest the demolition.
- Transparency: Relevant authorities must notify local officials and provide an acknowledgment of notice to prevent forged claims.
- Issuance of Final Order: The final order should entail the arguments, the authority's justification for demolition, and the portion of the structure to be demolished.
- Post-Final Order Period: A 15-day grace period has been mandated following the issuance of a demolition order.
- Documentation of Demolition: Proper records consisting of video recording and preparation of an inspection report beforehand must be maintained.
- Test for Dual Violations: Provision for a separate test for scenarios where the property in question violates municipal laws in addition to housing an accused.
- Exception: The guidelines will not apply for unauthorised structures built in public places or in situations where a demolition order has been decreed by a legal court of law.

#### **Applicability and Power of Article 142**

- Article 142 of the Indian Constitution provides the Supreme Court with the authority to deliver decrees and orders for comprehensive justice in any case.
- This constitutional provision enables the Supreme Court to enforce effectual orders across India and to apply penalties for contempt of court.

#### **Importance of Supreme Court Guidelines**

- Upholding the Rule of Law: The judgement insists that only an authoritative judiciary can decide upon guilt or punishment, and no executive organ can supersede this power.

- Accountability of Officials: The mandate of public scrutiny and detailed records of every demolition ensures checks against the abuse of power.
- Right to Shelter and Property: The potential unconstitutional demolition infringing upon the fundamental right to shelter and property is safeguarded, following Article 21 and Article 300A of the Indian Constitution.
- Protection of Individual Rights: The insistence on maintaining a due process and separating powers protects citizens from arbitrary actions and ensures the upholding of rights.
- International Laws: Mandatory adherence to the Geneva Convention 1949 and Article 51 of the Indian Constitution ensures respect for international pacts and laws.

#### **Reasons behind Concern of Bulldozer Justice**

- Rising Punitive Demolitions: A significant rise in property demolitions, with numerous families displaced from both rural and urban areas, has been reported.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): Bulldozer justice contradicts ICCPR's Article 17 provision of right to property.
- Collective Punishment: Demolitions don't just target the accused, but also enforce collective punishment on their families by eliminating their abode.
- Instant Justice: The precedent for demolitions are often conceived as a form of "instant justice" against infringement or unauthorised construction.

#### **Other Relevant Judicial Decisions Related to Property Demolitions**

- Various precedents set by the Supreme Court affirm the necessity for just and fair legislation, right to livelihood and shelter, and the ethos of "due process of law". These cases have had a significant impact in shaping the new guidelines.



# Rank Reports and Awards

## The National Gopal Ratna Awards 2024

### Introduction to the National Gopal Ratna Awards

- The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD) has announced the recipients of the National Gopal Ratna Awards (NGRA) 2024, under the authority of the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM).
- It is considered one of the highest honours in the livestock and dairy sector.
- The awards are presented annually on National Milk Day, which falls on the 26th of November. This year the awards will be given on 26th November 2024.

### Award Categories

- The award categories include Best Dairy Farmer Rearing Indigenous Cattle/ Buffalo Breeds, Best Artificial Insemination Technician (AIT), and Best Dairy Cooperative/Milk Producer Company/Dairy Farmer Producer Organisation.
- In 2024, special awards for the North Eastern Region (NER) were introduced.

### The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)

- **The Rashtriya Gokul Mission was launched in 2014 with the purpose of conserving and developing indigenous breeds.**
- This mission is carried out under the National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development (NPBBDD).

### The National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development

- The National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development consists of two main components.

- The first component, the National Programme for Bovine Breeding (NPBB), is responsible for the conservation and development of recognised indigenous breeds.
- The second component, the National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD), is focused on creating infrastructure related to production, procurement, processing, and marketing by milk unions and federations.

## Importance of the National Gopal Ratna Awards

- The awards aim to recognise and honour the exceptional contributions made towards the conservation and development of indigenous breeds in the livestock and dairy sector.
- They serve as motivation for dairy farmers and organisations to continue their efforts in improving the dairy sector.
- The awards also highlight the importance of indigenous cattle breeds and their role in our economy and biodiversity.

## Global Nature Conservation Index 2024

### Introduction and About

- India holds the 176th rank in the 2024 Global Nature Conservation Index.
- India features among the five lowest-ranked countries, joined by nations like Kiribati, Turkey, Iraq, and Micronesia out of a total of 180 nations.

### India's Low Ranking and Reasons

- The main factors contributing to India's low ranking are ineffective land management and the escalating threats to biodiversity.

### About Nature Conservation Index (NCI)

- The NCI is developed by the Goldman Sonnenfeldt School of Sustainability and Climate Change at Ben-Gurion University, in

collaboration with BioDB.com, a biodiversity database.

- Its inaugural version was launched in October 2024, aiming to analyse conservation efforts.
- The NCI evaluates countries based on four crucial aspects: land management, biodiversity threats, capacity and governance, and future trends.

### **Observations of the NCI**

- The NCI highlights the importance of sustainable land use, as 53% of land globally is repurposed for urban, industrial, and agricultural use.
- The index points to high pesticide usage as a worrying factor and reinforces the threat of soil pollution.
- Marine conservation practices need enhancements considering only 0.2% of national waterways are protected, and no areas are protected within India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- India is listed as the fourth-largest illegal wildlife trading nation worldwide, with annual sales amassing to approximately 15 billion Euros.
- Between 2001 and 2019, deforestation led to a loss of around 23,300 sq. km of tree cover in India.
- India's ecological wealth is persistently endangered by an ever-growing population.

### **Importance and Implications**

- Global Nature Conservation Index is a crucial tool for understanding the state of nature conservation in the world.
- It inserts higher accountability on nations to preserve their natural resources and biodiversity.
- Countries, including India, can utilise the insights from the NCI to implement better practices, policies, and planning for improved nature conservation.

### **Historical Context**

- There has been an increasingly noticed decline in India's biodiversity due to multiple factors such as deforestation, land degradation,

overpopulation and over utilisation of natural resources.

- The NCI report provides valuable data reflecting the need for more considerable efforts towards nature conservation. It defends the urgency to control threats to biodiversity, thus endorsing sustainable and ecological growth.

### **Concluding Remarks**

- Although the 2024 Global Nature Conservation Index indicates an alarming situation for India, it can be used as a catalyst for change.
- It can aid in enhancing the understanding of the importance of ecological balance, initiating more robust conservation efforts, and setting India on a path toward sustainable development.

## **WMO's Greenhouse Gas Bulletin 2023: Key Findings and Impacts**

### **Introduction**

- The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) released its annual Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Bulletin for the year 2023.
- This bulletin provides the latest analysis from the WMO Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) on atmospheric concentrations of GHGs.

### **Understanding GHGs and Their Key Types**

- GHGs are atmospheric gases that trap heat from the sun, causing the Earth's surface to warm known as the greenhouse effect.
- Key GHGs include Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), Water Vapour (H<sub>2</sub>O), and Industrial Fluorinated Gases.
- Human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation and industrial processes have significantly increased the concentration of these gases, leading to global warming and subsequent climate change.

### **Bulletin Findings – GHG Levels and Trends**

- GHGs including CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, and N<sub>2</sub>O reached record levels in 2023.

- Since 1990, the cumulative warming effect on our climate by GHGs has increased by 51.5%, with CO<sub>2</sub> accounting for approximately 81% of this effect.
- Global temperatures in 2023 were 1.48°C above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average.

#### **Causes of Increased CO<sub>2</sub> Levels**

- Persistent high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are due to human activities including fossil fuel usage and industrial processes.
- The El Niño phenomenon brought warmer and drier conditions causing drier vegetation and forest fires, which released more GHGs into the atmosphere.

#### **Climate Concerns**

- The bulletin warns of a vicious cycle where rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels and climate change risk transforming natural ecosystems into GHG sources.
- There was a surge in Methane levels due to warmer and wetter La Niña conditions.

#### **Policy Responses**

- According to the UNFCCC's assessment, current NDCs fall short of the 43% reduction needed to limit warming to 1.5°C. Countries are urged to submit stronger NDCs by 2024.

#### **Understanding the Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW)**

- GAW, involving 100 countries, provides scientific data on atmospheric changes due to both natural and human influences.
- Core Monitoring Targets of the GAW programme include ozone, UV radiation, GHGs, aerosols, selected reactive gases and precipitation chemistry.

#### **About the World Meteorological Organisation**

- WMO, a UN agency, is responsible for atmospheric sciences, including Earth's atmosphere, weather, climate, water resources, and their interaction with land and oceans.
- WMO has a membership of 193 Member States and Territories, including India.

#### **Key Initiatives to Curb Greenhouse Gas Emission**

- Globally, measures include the Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement, International Solar Alliance, and Global Biofuel Alliance.
- India has implemented initiatives including Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) Emission Norms, National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), and India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).

## **Ballon d'Or Awards 2024: Shining Moment for Spanish Football**

#### **Introduction and Overview**

- Ballon d'Or awards 2024 went to Spanish players Rodri of Manchester City and Aitana Bonmatí of FC Barcelona.
- These awards mark extraordinary achievements in both male and female international football.
- Men's Ballon d'Or Award
  - Manchester City's Rodri received his first Ballon d'Or award in 2024.
  - Rodri becomes the first Spanish man to secure this honour since 1960.
- The current record holder of the award is Argentine player Lionel Messi, who has received the award eight times.

#### **Women's Ballon d'Or Award**

- Aitana Bonmatí of FC Barcelona successfully defended her title by winning the Ballon d'Or for women's football once again.
- Like her male counterpart Rodri, she too hails from Spain, showcasing a remarkable achievement in the world of Spanish women's football.

#### **Notable Mentions**

- Cristiano Ronaldo, the popular Portuguese footballer, has received the prestigious Ballon d'Or Award five times in his remarkable career.



### **Club recognitions**

- In the team awards, Real Madrid was awarded the Men's Club of the Year.
- Women's Club of the Year title went to FC Barcelona, reflecting the exemplary overall performance of the club.

### **About the Ballon d'Or**

- The Ballon d'Or is a prestigious annual award presented by France Football magazine since 1956.
- This award commemorates the top-performing football player from the preceding season.
- The recipient of this award is determined by football journalists, national coaches and captains.

## **Asia-Pacific Climate Report 2024 by ADB**

### **Introduction and About**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) unveiled the Asia-Pacific (APAC) Climate Report 2024 recently.
- The report lays out the grave consequences of climate change on the Asia-Pacific economy.

### **Key Findings: Economic Impacts and Major Drivers**

- The report suggests a potential decrease in the APAC's GDP by around 17% by 2070, given high greenhouse gas emissions.
- A worrying 41% reduction is expected by 2100 under high emissions conditions.
- India, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Indonesia may face serious economic losses, with India potentially facing a 24.7% GDP decline by 2070.
- Key drivers fuelling economic losses include sea-level rise, depreciated labour productivity, and augmented cooling demands stemming from temperature rise.

### **Impacts on Natural Disasters and Environment**

- Climate change-related natural disasters, such as river flooding and intensifying rainstorms, could have a significant toll on the APAC economy by 2070.
- And can affect more than 110 million people and result in heavy residential and commercial damages.
- APAC's forests and ecosystems could also see a decrease in productivity by up to 30% due to climate change.

### **Suggestions for Improvement & Mitigation Measures**

- More economies in Asia need to set net-zero-emission targets, with just 36 out of 44 having done so and only four having legally cemented these targets.
- Enhanced policies and elevation in financial support are heavily required to prompt climate actions, with ADB being a viable asset in this course of action.
- The region will need an annual finance of USD 102–431 billion for climate adaptation.
- The report also stresses the importance of scaling up climate finance and accelerating adaptation responses.

### **Renewable Energy and Carbon Markets**

- The report showcases the opportunity to utilize renewable energy for a net-zero transition in the APAC region.
- The adoption of domestic and international carbon markets represent a cost-effective method for climate action.

### **About Asian Development Bank**

- The ADB, founded in 1966, is dedicated to facilitating economic growth and poverty reduction in Asia through a mix of loans, grants, and technical assistance.
- The ADB's pursuit of an affluent, inclusive, and sustainable Asia and Pacific region also involves its resolved fight against extreme poverty.
- The ADB is headquartered in Manila, Philippines and India is its fourth-largest shareholder and top borrower since 2010.

## The World Cities Report 2024 - Cities and Climate Action

### Introduction

- The World Cities Report 2024, released by UN-Habitat, investigates the impact of climate change on urban areas.
- In the report, cities are recognised as significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, whilst also being disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change.

### Key Findings

- Temperature increases: By 2040, approximately two billion people in urban areas will experience a 0.5°C rise in temperature.
- Cities' climates changing: 14% of cities are projected to transition to drier environments while around 900 cities may experience a shift towards more humid, predominantly tropical climates.
- Rising sea levels: Over 2,000 cities, primarily those less than 5 metres above sea level, will expose more than 1.4 billion people to heightening risks from sea-level elevation and storm surges by 2040.
- Disproportionate impact: Urban areas simultaneously contribute to and are more vulnerable to climate change effects such as floods and cyclones.
- Insufficient funding: A major shortfall in funding is highlighted, with current financing versus the estimated USD 4.5 to USD 5.4 trillion needed annually to invest in climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Riverine flooding: Risks in cities have risen directly contributing to flood exposure increasing 3.5 times faster in urban areas compared to rural areas since 1975.
- Decline in green spaces: Urban green spaces have seen a drop from 19.5% in 1990 to 13.9% in 2020 causing difficulties for the environment and society within these cities.

- Increased vulnerability: Informal settlements or 'slums' are particularly at risk due to their location in flood-prone areas, lack of protective infrastructure, and eviction fears preventing investment.

### UN-Habitat's role

- Mandate: UN-Habitat's mandate is to promote environmentally and socially sustainable urban development.
- Global Focal Point: The agency is a vital component of the UN system addressing urbanisation and human settlement issues.
- Core Mission: The organisation aims to reduce inequality, discrimination, and poverty by fostering inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.
- Global Presence: It operates in over 90 countries and provides knowledge, policy advice and technical assistance.
- Strategic Approach: A holistic and integrated strategy to tackle modern urban challenges.

### Urban Areas and Global Warming

- Cities contribute to global warming mainly through high energy consumption associated with urban lifestyles, industrial activities and changes in land use.

### Impact of Global Warming on cities

- Through rising global temperatures, the effects of global warming pose increasing threats to cities in the form of heatwaves, urban heat islands (UHIs) and heightened coastal flooding owing to melting glaciers.
- Additionally, wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense due to higher temperatures and prolonged periods of drought.

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## QS World University Rankings: Asia 2025 and India's Prominence in Higher Education

**Introduction to QS Asia Rankings 2025**

- The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings: Asia for 2025 showcases the progress India is making in the field of higher education.
- Two Indian institutions have made it into the top 50 positions, and seven are in the top 100. This indicates the escalating competition amongst Indian academic institutions on the Asian platform.

**India's Performance in QS Asia Rankings**

- Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi secures the 44th position, while IIT Bombay ranks 48th, placing them both in the top 50.
- Other top 100 entrants include IIT Madras (56th), IIT Kharagpur (60th), Indian Institute of Science (62nd), IIT Kanpur (67th), and the University of Delhi (81st).
- Other eminent institutions such as IIT Guwahati, IIT Roorkee, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Chandigarh University, and Vellore Institute of Technology also feature, many of them securing places within the top 150 on a global level.

**Factors Influencing India's Ascending Rankings**

- Keys to the rise include high research productivity and academic excellence. Anna University, for example, stands out for its number of papers per faculty.
- Growing international research networks, such as those fostered by the University of Delhi, are boosting global recognition, while larger proportions of PhD-qualified staff are a sign of increased academic rigour.

**Implications of QS Rankings on India's Education Sector**

- Increased global recognition through enhanced rankings could potentially increase India's appeal to international students and academic faculty, thereby solidifying its position as a hub for higher education.
- The Indian education sector has seen significant growth, with the number of Indian

institutions included in the QS ranking rising from 11 in 2015 to 46 in 2025 – a 318% increase.

- These achievements could lead to higher Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the sector, strengthening the economy and opening up more job opportunities.

**About Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**

- QS is a world-renowned higher education analyst headquartered in London and famous for the QS World University Rankings.
- QS evaluation relies on six indicators categorised into four broad areas: research reputation, learning and teaching environment, research impact, and internationalisation.

## Booker Prize 2024 and Samantha Harvey's Orbital

**Introduction and About the Booker Prize**

- The Booker Prize is a prestigious award, established in 1969 in the UK.
- It is awarded annually to the best sustained work of fiction.
- Initially, it was given to writers from Commonwealth nations but is now open to writers worldwide, irrespective of their origin.
- It mandates that the fiction work be written in English and published in the UK or Ireland.

**Samantha Harvey and Orbital - The Winner of Booker Prize 2024**

- British author Samantha Harvey recently bagged the Booker Prize 2024 for her novel titled 'Orbital'.
- Harvey is the first woman to win this award since 2019 when it went to Margaret Atwood.

**About 'Orbital'**

- 'Orbital' is a unique novel, marking its place as the first 'space' book to ever win the Booker Prize.
- It traverses the theme of observing Earth through the experiences of six astronauts aboard



the International Space Station (ISS), witnessing 16 sunrises and sunsets daily.

- Despite being the second-shortest novel in the Booker Prize history, it has won high acclaim, with the shortest being 'Offshore' by Penelope Fitzgerald, comprising only 132 pages.

#### **Significance and Uniqueness of the Award**

- Samantha Harvey's win captures the essence of literature's evolution, as her space-themed novel distorts traditional boundaries.

- The win also emphasizes the inclusivity of the prize, with 'Orbital's' unique theme departing from customary terrestrial-centred narratives.

## **Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON) Award**

#### **Introduction and Background**

- The Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON) is the 2nd-highest national award given in Nigeria.

- The prestigious award is conferred upon significant individuals for their notable achievements and contributions on a national or international level.

- Just recently, India's Prime Minister became the second foreign dignitary to receive this impressive distinction.

#### **Award in Recent News**

- The GCON award has gained recent news coverage due to its conferral onto the Prime Minister of India.

- This significant event places the Prime Minister as the second foreign dignitary to ever receive the GCON award.

- Queen Elizabeth was the first foreign dignitary to be bestowed this honour, having been conferred the award in 1969.

#### **Key Facts about Nigeria - Award's Country of Origin**

- Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is the most populous country on the African continent.

- With the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria also holds the title for being the richest oil resource centre across the continent.

- Geographically, Nigeria is situated in West Africa and opens in the Atlantic Ocean.

- The country shares its borders with several African nations, including Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin.

- Nigeria's prestigious GCON award underscores the nation's commitment and dedication to recognizing individuals who have made significant strides in their respective fields.

#### **Importance of GCON Award**

- The GCON award serves as a platform to recognise and honour individuals for their exceptional contributions at both national and international levels.

- This includes recipients who have significantly impacted their fields of work or made significant strides in the economic, political, and social spheres.

- As a prestigious international honour, the GCON award enhances the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the recipient's home country. In this case, it signified a further strengthening of ties between Nigeria and India.

## **Highlight Report on the 55th International Film Festival of India 2024**

#### **Introduction and Overview**

- The International Film Festival of India (IFFI) concluded its 55th edition on 28th November, 2024.

- The closing ceremony was held at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium, Goa.

- The nine-day festival celebrated both Indian and global cinematic achievements and promoted creative innovation.
- This year's theme was "Young Filmmakers: The Future is Now", which showcased 195 films and paid tribute to the legends of cinema.

### **The Closing Ceremony**

- The closing ceremony mixed glamour with meaningful interactions, honouring and celebrating the art of storytelling.
- The event ended with the screening of "Dry Season", a film by Czech filmmaker Bohdan Sláma.

### **Key Awards from the Closing Ceremony**

- The Golden Peacock Award for Best Feature Film was won by the Lithuanian film "Toxic", directed by Saulė Bliuvaitė.
- The Silver Peacock Awards were given to Best Director Bogdan Muresanu (Romania), Best Actor Clément Faveau (France), and co-Best Actresses Vesta Matulytė and Ieva Rupeikaitė from "Toxic" (Lithuania).
- The Special Jury Award went to French filmmaker Louise Courvoisier for her film "Holy Cow".
- The ICFT-UNESCO Gandhi Medal was presented to the Georgian film "Crossing" by Levan Akin.
- The Best Debut Feature Film was won by Sarah Friedland for "Familiar Touch" (USA).

### **Honouring Indian Talent**

- The new award for Best Debut Director of Indian Feature Film was given to Navjot Bandiwadkar for the Marathi film "Gharat Ganpati".
- The Best Web Series (OTT) was awarded to "Lampan", a Marathi series directed by Nipun Dharmadhikari.
- Actor Vikrant Massey received the Indian Film Personality of the Year Award.

### **Lifetime Achievement and Special Felicitations**

- The Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Australian filmmaker Phillip Noyce.
- Indian filmmaker Ramesh Sippy and actress Jaya Prada were also specially felicitated for their significant contributions to Indian cinema.

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## **Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for 2022 and 2023**

### **Introduction and About the Award**

- The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (UBKUP) is a distinguished acknowledgement initiated by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 2006.
- The award is named after Bharat Ratna recipient Ustad Bismillah Khan.
- It aims to motivate and encourage young practitioners (up to the age of 40 years) in various performing arts fields including music, dance, drama, puppetry, and other art forms.
- The award components include a cash prize (£25,000), a plaque, and an Angavastram.
- The intention of this annual award is to celebrate exceptional contributions of young artists to traditional and modern performing arts.

### **Current News**

- The Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat will confer the awards for the years 2022 and 2023 on 22nd November 2024 at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi.
- The presiding officials of the ceremony will be Dr. Sandhya Purecha, Chairman of Sangeet Natak Akademi, and Smt. Uma Nanduri, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture.

### **Post-Event Highlights and performing Arts Festival**

- Following the awards, there will be a festival of performing arts featuring the designated

awardees. This festival will run from 22nd to 26th November 2024.

- The venues include Meghdoot Theatre Complex, Abhimanch Theatre, and Vivekanand Auditorium in New Delhi.

### **Significance of the Award**

- The UBKUP plays a significant role in preserving India's diverse artistic traditions and promoting innovative ideas within traditional frameworks.
- The award ensures the recognition and support of young artists for their global representation of India's cultural richness.

### **Recipients of Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for 2022 and 2023**

- The list of recipients for these years spans across various fields of performing arts such as music, dance, theatre, traditional/folk/tribal arts and puppetry, and includes a category for overall contribution in performing arts.
- A notable recipient in 2022 includes Samit Mallick for Hindustani Vocal in Music and Mandakranta Roy for Bharatanatyam in Dance.
- In 2023, awards will be conferred to Anuja Zokarkar for Hindustani Vocal in Music and Apoorva Jayaraman for Bharatanatyam in Dance, among others.
- The award also felicitates an individual for their overall contribution in performing arts, with Anuthama Murali and Laxminarayan Jena being the recipients for 2022 and 2023 respectively.

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## **India's Ranking on Global Rule of Law Index**

### **India's Position on the Index**

- India has been ranked 79th out of 142 countries in the Rule of Law Index 2024, released by the World Justice Project, a Washington D.C.-based think tank.
- Worldwide, the top five countries are Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Germany.

### **The Criteria of the Index**

- The Rule of Law Index ranks countries based on eight indicators. These are constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice.

### **India's Performance on Governance Indicators**

- India showed acceptable performance on some of the governance indicators.
- It was ranked 60 out of 142 countries on constraints on government powers and 44 out of 142 on the open government criterion.
- These rankings reflect both India's progress towards improving governance frameworks and the numerous shortcomings, including lack of coordination and intentionality.

### **Areas of Poor Performance**

- India displayed poor performance on other indicators, such as the protection of fundamental rights (ranked 102 out of 142), order and security (ranked 98 out of 142), and the efficiency of the criminal justice system (ranked 82 out of 142).
- These low rankings highlight the deficiencies in the policing systems, the lack of government will to protect and respect the rights of the common people, and the slow pace of the criminal justice system.

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## **India's Esteemed Position in Global Intellectual Property Indicators 2024 Report**

### **Introduction and About**

- The World Intellectual Property Organisation's (WIPO) World Intellectual Property Indicators (WIPI) 2024 report has ranked India among the top ten nations for patents, trademarks, and industrial designs.



- This achievement reflects the steadfast growth and resilience in global Intellectual Property (IP) filings, primarily stimulated by China, the US, Japan, South Korea, and India.

### **WIPO and India**

- Established in 1967, WIPO is a specialized United Nations agency aiming to promote creative activity and globally protect intellectual property.
- It manages 26 global treaties and operates from its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.
- WIPO has a membership of 193 nations, with India joining in 1975.
- India is a participant in several significant WIPO-measured international treaties and conventions relating to Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), such as the Budapest Treaty, Paris Convention, Berne Convention, Patent Cooperation Treaty, among several others.

### **Reports Published by WIPO**

- WIPO publishes highly regarded reports such as the Global Innovation Index, World Intellectual Property Indicators and the WIPO Technology Trends report.

### **India's Performance in the World Intellectual Property Indicators 2024**

- India has shown remarkable progress across several aspects of IP, according to the WIPI 2024 report.
- India registered the fastest growth in patent applications in 2023 among the top 20 origins, making it the fifth consecutive year of double-digit growth.
- The sectors of Textiles and Accessories, Tools and Machines, and Health and Cosmetics constituted nearly half of all design filings.
- India also demonstrated substantial growth in its patent-to-GDP ratio, indicating the growing scale of IP activity alongside economic expansion.
- India is currently ranking fourth worldwide in trademark filings. Nearly 90% of these filings are carried out by domestic entities principally in the health, agriculture and clothing sectors.

- Geographical Indication (GI) is an area where India needs to focus more as its GIs lack protection by international agreements.

### **Intellectual Property, Patents, Trademarks, GIs and Industrial Designs**

- IP involves numerous creations of the human intellect: copyrights, patents, and trademarks.
- Patents are exclusive rights bestowed for an invention, whilst trademarks are seen as a distinguishing feature of goods or services.
- Industrial designs relate to the aesthetic elements of a product, whilst a Geographical Indication (GI) denotes a good as originating from a specific geographical area boasting a unique reputation or quality.

### **India's Initiatives to Promote Innovation**

- India has enforced a robust legislative framework to drive innovation, which comprises The Copyright Act, 1957, The Designs Act, 2000, The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, The Patents Act, 1970, among others.
- India's Government has also initiated several programmes such as Make in India, National Intellectual Property (IP) Awareness Mission (NIPAM), and the Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness Campaign (KAPILA).
- India has displayed significant growth in the Global Innovation Index (GII) rankings over the years, ranking 39 out of 133 in GI 2024, improving from 46th position in 2021 and 81st rank in 2015.

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## **Review of the Henley Passport Index 2024**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- The Henley Passport Index, updated in October 2024, presents the latest global ranking

of countries based on the travel freedom that their citizens enjoy.

- Derived from a complex algorithm, this index considers a multitude of factors and offers significant insights into the global mobility of passport holders of different countries.

### **Singapore Stands at the Top**

- In this most recent index, Singapore has managed to maintain its position at the top of the list.
- Granting its citizens visa-free entry to a remarkable 195 countries, Singapore boasts of the world's most influential passport.
- This feat underlines Singapore's strong global footprint and extensive diplomatic relations.

### **Runners-Up and Their Rankings**

- Following Singapore, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain share the second rank, each offering its citizens visa-free access to 192 countries.
- Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Ireland collectively hold the third rank, with each country's passport providing visa-free entry to 191 countries.

### **India's Position**

- India acquired the 83rd position in this global ranking, implying that Indian passport holders can enter 58 countries without requiring a visa.
- This standing underscores the difficulties Indian passport holders encounter in accessing other parts of the world.

### **Future Projections and Implications**

- Despite its lower position, there is ongoing progression in India's international diplomatic ties, which may facilitate better global access for Indian citizens in the future.
- The Henley Passport Index acts as a defining instrument for travel freedom, directly affecting global tourism, international relations, and even economic strategies.
- Overall, the rankings not only reflect the power of the passport, but also the influence of countries in the international arena.

## **EdelGive-Hurun India Philanthropy List 2024**

### **Noteworthy Insights**

- The 2024 edition of the Hurun India Philanthropy list featured a profusion of philanthropic contributions from more than 200 philanthropists, with an approximate total donation value of ₹8,783 crores. This mirrors an escalating commitment by India's affluent population to create social change.
- Social sectors such as education, healthcare, environmental preservation, and rural advancement gained enormous traction among Indian philanthropists.

### **Top 10 Philanthropists of 2024**

- Shiv Nadar, the founder of HCL Technologies, was identified as India's leading philanthropist for the third time in five years, frequently directing his donations towards causes related to education.
- Rohini Nilekani emerged as the most generous female philanthropist in 2024 with her key focus areas being environmental sustainability and grassroots empowerment.

### **Surge in Indian Philanthropy**

- The report sheds light on a commendable 55% increment in donations, in comparison with figures from two years ago.
- Nearly 203 philanthropists were included who collectively donated an estimated ₹8,783 crore.

### **Salient Milestones**

- The 2024 list marked prominent growth milestones for philanthropy in India, with the most notable being a tenfold increase in the number of philanthropists contributing over ₹100 crore annually since 2019.

### **Youth Participation in Philanthropy**

- The youngest philanthropist in the 2024 list was Nikhil Kamath, the co-founder of Zerodha, whose philanthropic actions are oriented towards education, mental health, and financial literacy.

### **New Entrants in the List**

- The 2024 list saw a significant increase in the number of new entrants, with 96 new philanthropists contributing an estimated ₹1,556 crore.
- New philanthropists such as Krishna Chivukula and Susmita and Subroto Bagchi made a significant impact, with Chivukula being recognised as the most generous new entrant on the list.

### **Rise in Individual Donations**

- The list witnessed substantial increments in annual contributions by philanthropists such as Nandan Nilekani and Shiv Nadar who increased their annual donations by ₹118 crore and ₹111 crore, respectively.
- Harish Shah & Family had the largest rank increase, moving up 53 positions to the 22nd spot. These developments underscore the ever-evolving dedication of India's philanthropic community.

## **Global AI Preparedness: India's Position Among Leading Nations**

### **Overview and Sector Insights**

- AI is revolutionising the global economy with profound impacts on labour markets and societal dynamics.
- The global AI market is forecasted to grow at a CAGR of 36.6% from 2024 to 2030, highlighting the sector's increasing significance.

### **Impact on Developing and Advanced Economies**

- The IMF implies that developed economies will likely experience the advantages and pitfalls of AI adoption ahead of emerging markets, largely due to employment structures focused on cognitive-intensive roles.

- Prioritising regulatory frameworks and facilitating labour reallocation should be key focus areas for advanced economies.

### **Global Awareness of AI**

- Over 90% of consumers in India and the UAE are familiar with AI technologies such as "ChatGPT", with notable awareness in China and Saudi Arabia.

### **Global AI Preparedness Index**

- The IMF's AI Preparedness Index measures a nation's readiness for AI adoption based on factors including digital infrastructure, human capital, technological innovation, and legal frameworks.
- Singapore, Denmark and the United States are among the top-ranking countries in terms of AI Preparedness Index scores.

### **AI Preparedness across Key Nations**

- Singapore leads in AI capabilities with a score of 0.80.
- Northwestern European countries like Denmark, Netherlands, and Finland, are also ahead due to early national AI initiatives.
- Finland launched an AI strategy in 2017 to boost corporate competitiveness and data efficiency, while Sweden focused on education, research and infrastructure development.

### **India's Position in AI Preparedness**

- India distinguishes itself with high AI usage rates, as 45% of respondents reported utilising AI software "ChatGPT".
- India is home to a thriving AI startup ecosystem with 338 startups.
- Among 174 countries, India ranks 72nd, holding an AI Preparedness Index rating of 0.49.
- China, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh are other key countries in the region, ranked 31st, 92nd, and 113th respectively in terms of AI preparedness.



## Highlights of FIH Hockey Star Awards 2024

### The Ceremony and Award Winners

- The annual FIH Hockey Star Awards for 2024 were held on November 8, 2024, in Muscat, Oman.
- Recognised for their outstanding performances, two members of the Indian hockey team were awarded. The team's captain, Harmanpreet Singh, won Men's Player of the Year, and PR Sreejesh bagged the title of 2024's Men's Goalkeeper of the Year.
- The winners were decided through a voting process involving national team captains, coaches, hockey experts, fans, and media outlets.

### Harmanpreet Singh: A Banner Year in Indian Hockey

- Harmanpreet Singh, one of the best drag-flickers in today's hockey landscape, was crucial in India's journey to a bronze medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics.
- He led the team in goals, scoring an impressive ten throughout the tournament.
- Beyond the Olympics, he helped secure India's victory at the Asian Champions Trophy in September 2024, earning the title of Player of the Tournament.
- This marks Singh's third win in a row of the FIH Player of the Year award, following wins in 2021 and 2022.

### PR Sreejesh: A Lasting Legacy in Indian Hockey

- Goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, known as the "Great Wall of India," has received the Goalkeeper of the Year award for the third time.
- His defensive skills were put to the test during a tense quarter-final match against Great Britain at the Paris 2024 Olympics. His efforts played a significant role in India's comeback victory which took place despite being down to ten players.
- He announced his retirement after the Olympics, receiving recognition for his immense

contributions to Indian hockey throughout his career.

### Notable Award Winners and Runner-Ups

- Here are other notable award winners at the FIH Hockey Star Awards 2024:
  - Women's Player of the Year: Yibbi Jansen (Netherlands)
  - Women's Goalkeeper of the Year: Ye Jiao (China)
  - Men's Rising Star of the Year: Sufyan Khan (Pakistan)
  - Women's Rising Star of the Year: Zoe Diaz (Argentina)
  - Men's Coach of the Year: Jeroen Delmee (Netherlands)
  - Women's Coach of the Year: Alyson Annan (China)
  - Men's Umpire of the Year: Steve Rogers (Australia)
  - Women's Umpire of the Year: Sarah Wilson (Scotland)

## Schemes And Initiative

### Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi Scheme

#### Introduction

- The Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi scheme is a recent initiative that has received approval from the Union Cabinet.
- The primary intention of this scheme is to provide financial assistance to meritorious students for higher education.

#### Alignment With National Education Policy 2020

- The scheme closely aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

- It strives to offer collateral-free, guarantor-free loans to students.

### **Eligibility Criteria & Beneficiaries**

- Eligible candidates for this scheme are students enrolled in institutions ranked within the top 100 by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- Also, students studying in the institutions falling in the 101-200 rank spectrum operated by state and central government can participate in the scheme.
- With this scheme, over 22 lakh students stand to benefit.
- The beneficiary list will be updated annually based on the latest NIRF rankings.

### **Application Procedure**

- The Department of Higher Education will facilitate the launch of the "PM-Vidyalaxmi" portal.
- This online platform will allow eligible students to apply for education loans and interest subvention.
- Payments under the scheme will be made through E-voucher and Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) wallets.

### **Supplementing Existing Schemes**

- The PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme is designed to complement the Credit Guarantee Fund for Education Loans (CGFSEL) and Central Sector Interest Subsidy (CSIS).
- These two components are already embedded in the existing PM-Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) scheme.
- The PM-USP CSIS offers full interest subvention for loans up to Rs 10 lakh to students with family income up to Rs 4.5 lakh, specifically those pursuing technical courses.

## **Namo Drone Didi Scheme under the Department of**

## **Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- The Nammo Drone Didi Scheme has been unveiled recently by the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DoA&FW).
- The initiative intends to empower roughly 14,500 Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) via the provision of drone technology for agricultural services, under the umbrella of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).

### **Objectives of the Scheme**

- The primary aim of the scheme is to empower women SHGs.
- The scheme facilitates these groups with drones for rental services in order to further the use of technology in agriculture.
- A key focus is on promoting technology adoption to enhance crop yields and reduce operational costs, specifically using drones for the application of fertilisers and pesticides.

### **Key Features of the Scheme**

- Central financial aid is provided, covering 80% of the drone cost up to Rs. 8 lakhs.
- Additional funding options are available through the Agriculture Infra Financing Facility (AIF).
- A comprehensive package inclusive of a drone with essential accessories, such as batteries, spray equipment and tools, is provided along with a one-year warranty.
- The scheme mandates a 15-day training for one of the members of women SHGs to become a drone pilot, supplemented with additional training related to applications for nutrients and pesticides.

### **Governing Agencies**

- At a central level, the scheme is overseen by an Empowered Committee comprising the Secretaries from several departments, including: DoA&FW, the Department of Rural Development, the Department of Fertilisers, the

Ministry of Civil Aviation, and the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

- State-Level Implementation involves Lead Fertiliser Companies (LFCs), which coordinate with state departments and SHGs to ensure effective drone distribution and usage.

#### **Importance and Impact**

- The Namo Drone Didi Scheme marks an important step forward in incorporating modern technology into agriculture.
- It fosters technological adoption while encouraging women's involvement in the agricultural sector, hence promoting both gender empowerment and technological advancement.
- Additionally, the scheme is projected to enhance crop yields and reduce operational costs, making agricultural practices more efficient and sustainable.

## **Atal Innovation Mission 2.0: An Overview and Enhancement**

### **Introduction to Atal Innovation Mission 2.0**

- The Union Cabinet has endorsed the continuation of the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under the guidance of NITI Aayog.
- With an increased budget of Rs. 2,750 crore, AIM 2.0 has been launched to strengthen India's innovation ecosystem until 2028.
- Building on the success of AIM, which includes Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) and Atal Incubation Centres (AICs), AIM 2.0 will pilot and scale new initiatives to further deepen and expand India's innovation and enterprise ecosystem.

### **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) 2.0: Key Programs**

- The key programs under AIM 2.0 include the

### **India's Global Innovation Standing**

- India currently ranks 39th on the Global Innovation Index and is the third-largest hub for startup ecosystems in the world. This indicates the significant potential and scope for AIM and AIM 2.0 to further drive innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.

## **Introduction to Eklavya Online Learning Platform for the Indian Army**

### **Eklavya Platform Overview**

- Eklavya is an online learning platform for the Indian Army inaugurated by the Ministry of Defence recently.
- It's developed by the Bhaskaracharya National Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N) based in Gandhinagar.
- This educational platform is part of the 'Decade of Transformation' (2023-2032) initiative and syncs with the 2024 theme, the Year of Technology Absorption.

### **Purpose & Content of Eklavya**

- The Eklavya platform is designed to enhance the professional education and training of army officers.
- It has hosted 96 courses delivered by 17 Category 'A' Training Establishments of the Indian Army.

### **Breakdown of Courses**

- Courses on Eklavya have been divided into three categories.
  - Pre-course Preparatory Capsules: These capsules aim to transform the basic offline physical courses into online learning experiences.
  - Appointment/Assignment Related Courses: These include information warfare, defence land



management, financial planning, discipline and vigilance works, and others.

- Professional Development Suite: This suite of courses covers strategy, operational art, leadership, organisational behaviour, as well as emerging technology.

#### **Centralised Knowledge Hub**

- In addition to the courses, Eklavya serves a centralised 'Knowledge Highway.'
- This unique feature organises a vast collection of journals, research papers, articles, and more in a searchable format.
- This promotes self-learning, with the resources easily accessible under one platform.

## Science And Tech

### Biotechnology Experiments for India's Upcoming Space Station

#### **Introduction**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) have recently signed an agreement to design and conduct biotechnology experiments for India's upcoming indigenous space station, known as Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS).
- The collaboration is part of the broader BIOE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) policy, which aims to stimulate 'bio-manufacturing' in India, with the objective of creating a bio-economy worth USD 300 billion by 2030.

#### **Purpose of the ISRO-DBT Collaboration**

- The ISRO-DBT collaboration aims to address the key challenges in space missions, such as the continuous availability of nutrients, food preservation, microgravity and radiation.

- The collaboration will help in conducting investigations related to health hazards in space like cancers, cataracts, bone and muscle loss.

#### **Potential Experiments**

- The agreement includes experiments like investigating the effects of weightlessness on muscle loss in astronauts, identifying algae species that could serve as nutrients or extend food preservation, exploring the processing of specific algae for jet fuel production and assessing the impact of radiation on health.

#### **About Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS)**

- BAS is India's proposed indigenous space station dedicated to scientific research.
- The station is set to be built in three phases, with the launch of the first module, BAS-1, anticipated in 2028, and full operation by 2035.
- Key features of the BAS include its orbit height of 400-450 kilometres, an estimated weight of 52 tonnes, facilities for astronauts to stay in orbit for 15-20 days, and the presence of various modules dedicated to crew command, habitat, propulsion, and docking.
- The BAS aims to foster innovation, promote international collaboration, and cater to scientific research needs including microgravity experiments and earth observation.

#### **Other International Space Stations**

- The longstanding International Space Station (ISS) has been operational since 1998, led by collaboration from the US, Canada, Russia, and Japan. Although, due to changing geopolitical dynamics and cost implications, the ISS is scheduled to be decommissioned by 2030.
- China has successfully launched and operated its own space station, Tiangong, since November 2022.

#### **Recent Developments in India's Space Sector**

- The space sector in India has seen prominent missions including Aditya L1, Chandrayaan 3, Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan), and Gaganyaan Mission.

- Advancements have been made in launch vehicles, including GSLV Mark III, Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), and PSLV.
- ISRO has led several missions for international clients, such as the TeLEOS-2 Earth observation satellite for Singapore and the Amazonia-1 satellite for Brazil.
- Other key developments include the implementation of NavIC and Bhuvan projects for enhanced navigation and geospatial technology

## NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Satellite

### Introduction and About NISAR

- The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite is a joint venture between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- It is anticipated to be launched in early 2025 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre located in Andhra Pradesh, India.
- NISAR is the first satellite to incorporate two advanced radar systems—NASA's L-band radar and ISRO's S-band radar.
- The collaboration was initiated after a partnership agreement between the US and India in 2014.
- The satellite will be launched into low earth orbit using ISRO's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark II.

### Objective of NISAR

- NISAR will map the entire globe every 12 days offering consistent data on various aspects related to earth.
- Data collected will provide significant information on ecosystems, ice mass, vegetation, sea level rise, and groundwater.

- Additionally, it will also track natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and landslides.

### Key Features of NISAR

- The satellite is outfitted with gold-coloured thermal blankets, which help regulate its temperature during operations.
- Radar Payload, the core instrument for surface observation, stands as its key component.
- The Spacecraft Bus supplies power, establishes communications, navigates, and provides pointing control for satellite operations.
- NISAR also incorporates a 12-metre diameter drum-shaped wire-mesh reflector, enhancing radar signal focus and observational capabilities.

### Applications of NISAR

- NISAR offers comprehensive earth surface-monitoring (both horizontal & vertical) with highly clear imaging, operational during both day and night even through clouds.
- It is an important tool for disaster mitigation as it tracks seismic activities, landslides, volcanic events, and ice sheet movements.
- It aids in environmental tracking by monitoring areas like forests, wetlands, farmlands, while also observing deforestation to support sustainable resource management.
- For infrastructure stability, NISAR assesses various infrastructures, monitors urbanisation, and tracks oil spills for effective management.
- With its vast data collection capabilities, NISAR supports the understanding of sophisticated tectonic movements, promoting informed, sustainable, and economical use of Earth's resources.

## Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile by DRDO

### Introduction and Recent Developments

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), India, has recently conducted the maiden flight-test of the Long

Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM) off the coast of Odisha.

- Considered a crucial modern military asset, this missile has a precision strike range of about 1,000 km, being strategically significant for conducting stand-off attacks on key locations.
- The development and successful testing of this land attack cruise missile underlines India's progress in advanced military technology and self-reliance in defence capabilities.

#### **Features and Technological Aspects**

- The LRLACM is equipped with advanced avionic systems and software, significantly boosting its reliability and operational efficiency.
- The missile demonstrates excellent navigational capabilities, accurately following pre-set waypoints, performing diverse manoeuvres, and operating effectively at varying altitudes and speeds.
- Similar in function to the US Tomahawk and Russia's Kalibr, the LRLACM stands out in delivering precise, long-range strikes.

#### **Strategic Significance**

- The LRLACM holds strategic significance for modern militaries, enabling stand-off attacks on strategic targets whilst ensuring safety for the launching platform and personnel.
- With an impressive strike range, the missile ensures accuracy and effectiveness in targeting strategic locations, providing India a stronger control in regional geopolitics.

#### **Development and Collaboration**

- The Aeronautical Development Establishment, located in Bengaluru, developed the LRLACM.
- They received support from other DRDO laboratories and industry partners in India, showcasing a successful collaborative effort in enhancing India's domestically produced defence technology.

## **The Successful Launch of India's GSAT-N2 Satellite by SpaceX**

#### **Introduction and Overview**

- The Indian GSAT-N2 (GSAT-20) communication satellite was recently launched successfully by SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket.
- This marks India's first collaboration with Elon Musk's spacecraft manufacturing company, SpaceX.
- The launching location was Cape Canaveral, Florida, US.

#### **Details of the Launch**

- GSAT-N2 was launched into a geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO), an elliptical orbit at an altitude of roughly 37,000 km.
- This is the first step towards reaching a geosynchronous or geostationary orbit (GSO).
- The communication satellite achieves GSO by taking on a circular path parallel to the equator when it is at the apoapsis and firing its rocket engine.
- The apoapsis is the point in the orbit where the object is at its furthest distance from the body it is orbiting.

#### **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) and its Role**

- The GSAT-N2 satellite belongs to NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- NSIL is responsible for building, launching, owning, and operating satellites in a "demand-driven model" aimed to meet the service needs of its users.
- Interestingly, GSAT-N2 is NSIL's second demand-driven satellite; with its first one - GSAT-24 - being launched in June 2022.

#### **Importance and Future Implications**

- The successful launch of GSAT-N2 marks a significant milestone for India in its space exploration journey.



- It also highlights the potential benefits of international partnerships like the one between India and SpaceX.
- The GSAT-N2 is expected to contribute significantly to communication infrastructure, reinforcing India's progress in the era of digital communication.
- Future successful collaborations with international entities like SpaceX could position India as a significant player in global space endeavours, stimulate technological advancement, and promote social and economic development.

## Guided Pinaka Weapon System

### Introduction and About

- The Guided Pinaka Weapon System is a product of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India.
- It is a multi-barrel rocket launcher system, designed by Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), which is a laboratory under the ambit of DRDO.
- The name 'Pinaka' is derived from the bow of Lord Shiva, symbolising its potency and accuracy.
- This sophisticated system is renowned for its speedy response, mobility, and its capability to deliver unparalleled firepower on enemy installations.

### Recent Developments

- Recently, there has been a successful completion of flight tests of the Guided Pinaka Weapon System for Provisional Staff Qualitative Requirements (PSQR) Validation Trials.
- These critical trials focused on validating the system's range, accuracy, consistency and its capability to fire multiple rockets simultaneously in salvo mode.

### Key Features and Advancements

- The initial version of this weapon, known as Mark I, had an operational range of 40 km.
- The latest, upgraded version, referred to as Pinaka Mark II, has an augmented range of 70 to 80 km. Future plans aim to extend this range to 120 km and ultimately to 300 km.
- In recent tests, enhanced launchers have successfully fired 12 rockets per salvo.

### Significance

- The Guided Pinaka Weapon System is a notable example of India's self-reliance in the defence sector and signifies a milestone in its capability for precision strikes.
- Given its increased range and precision, this system provides a substantial advantage in modern warfare scenarios.
- The successful validation of the PSQR parameters will further cement India's standing in indigenous weapon technology development.

## Miscellaneous

### Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve

#### Introduction

- The Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla (GGTP) Tiger Reserve has recently been declared as the 56th tiger reserve of India.
- This constitutes a substantial stride forward in India's tiger preservation initiatives.
- The reserve is situated in the state of Chhattisgarh, which previously boasted three other tiger reserves namely Indravati, Udanti-Sitanadi, and Achanakmar.

#### Key Facts about the Tiger Reserve

- The GGTP Tiger Reserve is ideally nestled between the Chota Nagpur plateau and the Baghelkhand plateau.
- Boasting a core habitat spanning 2,049.2 sq. km, which includes the Guru Ghasidas National

Park and Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary, and a buffer zone of around 780.15 sq. km, it is the third largest tiger reserve in India, after Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem in Andhra Pradesh and Manas in Assam.

### **Biodiversity**

- With about 753 species documented by the Zoological Survey of India, comprising 365 invertebrates and 388 vertebrates, the GGTP Tiger Reserve is marked by its richness in biodiversity.

### **Landscape Approach and Importance**

- The GGTP Tiger Reserve takes on a landscape line of attack, which focuses on maintaining the interconnectedness of habitats crucial for conservation of biodiversity.

- It also provides ecological connectivity with a series of neighboring tiger reserves, such as Sanjay Dubri in Madhya Pradesh, Bandhavgarh in Madhya Pradesh, and Palamau in Jharkhand.

- This is well in alignment with India's National Wildlife Plan (2017-2031), which supports habitat preservation and sustainable conservation.

## **Bhu-Neer Portal: Groundwater Regulation Initiative**

### **Introduction and About**

- The Bhu-Neer portal is a significant initiative launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, during the 8th India Water Week-2024.

- The portal was prepared by the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), both under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

- The goal of the platform is to bolster groundwater regulation in India by ensuring transparency, efficiency, and sustainability in its usage.

### **Why is it Significant**

- The Bhu-Neer portal introduces centralized database structures for groundwater compliance and policies.

- The system enhances the Ease of Doing Business by simplifying the regulatory scheme for groundwater.

- Notably, the portal features a user-friendly interface with a Permanent Account Number-based single ID system.

- It also provides a mechanism for generating No Objection Certificates (NOCs) with QR codes for streamlined administrative processes.

### **Role of the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA)**

- CGWA was established under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986.

- It carries the primary responsibility of regulating and controlling the development and management of groundwater resources in India.

- With the initiation of the Bhu-Neer portal, CGWA plays an integral role in enhancing groundwater regulation.

### **Role of the National Informatics Centre (NIC)**

- The NIC, established in 1976, is a critical builder of e-Government applications.

- It promotes digital opportunities for sustainable development, operating under the Ministry of Electronics.

- In the development of the Bhu-Neer portal, the NIC has made a critical input, combining technology and resources for sustainable water management.

### **Conclusion**

- The Bhu-Neer portal sets a precedent in the persistent effort to better manage and protect groundwater resources in India.

- By centralising data, simplifying regulations and introducing efficiency into the system, the initiative tackles the critical issue of water sustainability.

## National Dolphin Research Centre: Current State and Importance

### Introduction and About

- The National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC) is based in Patna and is dedicated to in-depth studies for the conservation of the Gangetic River Dolphin.
- Despite its establishment, it remains non-operational, highlighting ongoing challenges in conservation work, mainly due to a lack of necessary equipment and skilled personnel.
- The NDRC was inaugurated in 2024. It found its strategic setting close to the Ganga River, which aids the study and understanding of dolphin behaviour, habitat, and various threats to its survival.

### Why is the NDRC in the News?

- The recent focus on the NDRC arose from its ongoing inactive status, months after its inauguration.
- The inactivity has underscored the persistent obstacles and efforts underway for the conservation of Gangetic River Dolphins.

### Brief on Initiatives for Gangetic Dolphin Conservation

- Project Dolphin is one of the significant initiatives to conserve the dolphins in the Ganges.
- A Conservation Action Plan for the Gangetic Dolphin has been conceived by the National Ganga River Basin Authority, detailing particular actions towards habitat protection, community involvement, and resolving human-dolphin conflict.
- This programme also includes conducting studies to estimate dolphin populations and possible threats, while also fostering awareness among local communities.

### Protection Status of the Gangetic River Dolphin

- The Gangetic River Dolphin has several protection statuses owing to its endangered state.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has marked it as Endangered.
- Under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, it has been placed in Schedule I.
- It is also included in Appendix I of both the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

### The Importance and Role of NDRC in Gangetic Dolphin Conservation

- The NDRC is of paramount importance due to its dedicated focus on researching and conserving the Gangetic River dolphin.
- It acts as a potential centre for studying dolphin behaviour, its habitat, and the distinct threats to its survival.
- While the NDRC is currently inactive, once operational, it is expected to make valuable contributions to conservation efforts for the endangered dolphins.

## MACE Telescope in Ladakh

### Introduction and Overview

- The Major Atmospheric Cherenkov Experiment (MACE) telescope was recently inaugurated in Hanle, Ladakh.
- This telescope signifies a significant stride forward in gamma-ray astronomy.
- With the MACE, scientists can study gamma rays of energies above 20 billion electron volts (eV), emitted from cosmic entities like pulsars, blazars, and gamma-ray bursts.

### Insight into MACE

- Located at approximately 4.3km altitude, the MACE is the highest imaging Cherenkov telescope globally and the largest in Asia.
- It uses an Imaging Atmospheric Cherenkov Telescope (IACT) for indirect detection of high energy gamma rays.



- When high-energy gamma rays enter the earth's atmosphere, they produce electron-positron pairs, resulting in Cherenkov Radiation, which the MACE captures.
- The telescope's light collector, which consists of 356 mirror panels arranged in a honeycomb structure, enhances stability and reflection area.

### **Research Objectives**

- The primary aim of MACE is to investigate high-energy gamma rays from astronomical sources.
- The telescope aims to understand dark matter by detecting gamma rays from weakly interacting massive particles (WIMP) annihilation events and exploring WIMPs, potentially constituting a large portion of the universe's mass.

### **Contributing Institutions**

- The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and the Indian Institute of Astrophysics contributed towards the establishment and operation of MACE.

### **Technological Innovations**

- MACE features a high-resolution camera equipped with 1,088 photomultiplier tubes to detect and amplify faint signals from Cherenkov radiation.
- Its high-altitude placement ensures a clear view above atmospheric disturbances, which enhances observational capabilities.

### **Gamma Rays and Related Health Hazards**

- Gamma rays, as high-energy electromagnetic radiation, can penetrate the majority of materials, including human tissue, hence posing potential health hazards.
- Generated by exotic energetic celestial objects and radioactive decay or nuclear reactions, they can damage cells and DNA, resulting in radiation sickness and increased cancer risk.

### **Other Similar Telescope Projects**

- Several other significant telescope projects include the Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO), Dark Sky Reserve, and High Altitude Gamma Ray (HAGAR).

- The IAO, situated in Hanle, is one of the world's most elevated astronomical observatories and is equipped with multiple telescopes, including the Himalayan Chandra Telescope.
- Dark Sky Reserve is an allocated region with regulations maintaining minimum artificial light interference.
- HAGAR in Hanle, Ladakh, is the first high-altitude gamma-ray telescope array utilizing the atmospheric Cherenkov technique with a low-energy threshold and minimum mirror area.

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## **Telecommunications (Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure and Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- The Telecommunications (Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure) Rules, 2024, have been recently released under the Telecommunications Act, 2023.
- They aim to regulate telecom networks designated as Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure (CTI) based on their potential impact on national security, economy, public health, or safety.
- Further, the Telecommunications (Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024, have been put into effect, replacing the Telecom Suspension Rules, 2017.

### **Provisions of the CTI Rules, 2024**

- Data and Network Access: Telecom entities designated as CTI must grant government-authorised personnel access to inspect hardware, software and data of certified CTI parts.

- Oversight and Reporting: A chief telecom security officer (CTSO) is required for oversight. Cybersecurity incidents must be reported within 6 hours.
- Documentation: Entities must provide the government with various details including CTI network details, personnel information, hardware/software inventory, vulnerabilities, crisis management plans, audit reports, compliance records, and service level agreements (SLAs).
- Repair and Upgrade: Remote repair or maintenance of CTI requires prior written government approval. Any upgrades must be submitted for government review.
- Government Standards: All CTI components must comply with government standards.

#### **Provisions of the Temporary Suspension of Services Rules, 2024**

- Mandatory Publication: All suspension orders must be published, including reasons, affected areas, and the duration, which cannot exceed 15 days.
- Competent Authority: Only specific authorities can issue suspension orders, including the union home secretary for the central government and the state home secretary for states.
- Review Mechanism: A review committee must meet within 5 days of an order's issuance to ensure its validity.
- Nodal Officers: Licenced service providers must have a nodal officer per service area to receive and action suspension orders.
- Secure Communication: Only officers above a certain rank can communicate these orders.

#### **Historical Reference**

- Note: In the landmark judgement of the Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India, Case 2020, the Supreme Court highlighted that government-imposed restrictions on Internet access must be temporary, limited, lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

#### **Significance and Impact**

- These new rules represent a major shift in the governance and control of the country's critical telecommunication infrastructure.
- They seek to enhance national security and public safety, whilst also ensuring accountability and transparency in the management of telecom services.
- However, they may also raise concerns about potential government overreach and the rights of service providers and users.

## **Digital Infrastructure Growth Initiative for India Framework (DiGi Framework)**

#### **Introduction and About DiGi Framework**

- The DiGi Framework is an international initiative launched by the US, Japan, and South Korea to strengthen digital infrastructure in India.
- It aims to support projects across India's information and communications technology (ICT) sector, targeting key areas like 5G, Open RAN, submarine cables, optical fibre networks, data centres, smart cities, e-commerce, AI, and quantum technology.
- The collaboration amongst the US, Japan, South Korea, and Indian private sector partners aims to enhance connectivity, improve digital infrastructure, and promote technological innovation across these sectors in India.
- The DiGi Framework represents a shared commitment to advancing digital transformation and sustainable development in India and the Indo-Pacific region.

#### **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and Its Significance**

- DPI refers to the foundational digital systems and services that support public service delivery at scale, such as digital identity systems, payment platforms, and data exchange frameworks.

- India has become the first country to establish all three foundational Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs), known collectively as the India Stack. These include Digital Identification (Aadhaar), Real-time Rapid Payment System (UPI), and Data Sharing Architecture (Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture, DEPA).
- The DPI has revolutionised digital payments through UPI, expanding financial inclusion and supporting programs like direct benefit transfers.
- DPI has spurred innovation and entrepreneurship by providing open digital frameworks for fintech, health tech, and other digital service providers.
- Protection and empowerment of data are central to DPI, as seen in DEPA, which encourages individuals to share data securely and with consent, upholding privacy protection.

### **Challenges Associated with DPI**

- Ensuring the protection of personal data and preventing cyber threats are significant risks to DPI.
- There's a need to address the digital divide between those with and without access to digital technologies, encompassing issues of affordability, digital literacy, and infrastructure availability.
- Implementing DPI requires major shifts within public institutions such as updating policies, training staff, and adopting new technologies.
- Adequate funding and investment for DPI projects, covering initial setup costs and ongoing maintenance and upgrades, remain essential challenges.

### **Realising the Full Potential of DPI: Strategic Steps**

- Integrating impact assessments into the design of DPI initiatives can help ensure they are effective and inclusive.
- Ensuring data privacy and security, through strong encryption standards and transparent data governance policies, is paramount.

- Promoting inclusivity and accessibility is key for DPI to benefit all sections of society, including marginalised and underserved communities.
- Fostering public-private partnerships can accelerate the development and adoption of DPI.

## **Brazil's Refusal to Join China's Belt and Road Initiative**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- Recently, Brazil declined to participate in China's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- This comes after India's refusal to endorse this mega project, making Brazil the second country within the BRICS bloc to deny support.

### **Brazil's Standpoint**

- Brazil intends to elevate its relationship with China to a new level, without needing to enter into an agreement.
- Joining BRI may not provide immediate benefits for Brazil and could potentially complicate relations with the U.S.A.

### **Background on BRICS**

- BRICS stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. It is a grouping of the five major emerging national economies.
- The acronym was first used by economist Jim O'Neill in 2001.
- Member states have met annually since 2009 to discuss critical matters under three pillars: political and security, economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

### **Overview of Belt and Road Initiative**

- China proposed the BRI in 2013, aiming to recreate the ancient Silk Route by connecting Asia, Europe and Africa via various infrastructure projects.
- The BRI is open to all countries, establishing partnerships with over 150 countries and 30 international organisations.



- Its two main components are the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road slated for completion in 2035.

### **India's Perception of BRI**

- India perceives this initiative as a violation of its territorial integrity as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- Indian policymakers are concerned about China's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean and its investment in ports in other South Asian countries.
- Negative events in broader India-China ties have influenced India's view of the BRI, including trade deficit and border tensions.
- India criticises BRI's debt diplomacy, claiming that it traps smaller nations in a cycle of debt, leading to dependency on China.

### **Conclusion**

- India was the first to resist joining the BRI and remains vocal about its criticisms towards the initiative.
- It argues that BRI projects should adhere to universally acknowledged international norms including good governance, openness, transparency and financial sustainability.
- The BRI is seen as a method employed by China to strengthen political ties with capital-importing countries using its infrastructural, intellectual and financial prowess.
- India remains alert to these realities and is eager to assert its geopolitical interests in the Indian Ocean region.

## **RBI and Maldives Monetary Authority Pact on Local Currencies**

### **Introduction and About the MoU**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Maldives Monetary Authority have inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

- The primary purpose for this is to facilitate the use of local currencies, particularly the Indian Rupee (INR) and Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR), in cross-border transactions.
- The scope of the MoU covers current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions, and other mutually agreed upon economic and financial activities.

### **About Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS)**

- LCSS is an agreement between two countries to enable trade transactions to be settled in their respective national currencies, minimising the dependency on a third-party currency like the US dollar.
- The system's purpose is to lower transaction costs, minimise foreign exchange risks, and encourage bilateral trade.
- India has similar arrangements with the likes of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and is considering forging similar agreements with nations in the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

### **Benefits of Using Local Currency**

- The use of local currency facilitates trading as exporters and importers can invoice and settle in their own domestic currencies.
- In the foreign exchange market, it also promotes trading in the INR-MVR currency pair.
- It helps optimise transaction costs, reduces settlement time, and strengthens the economic ties between India and the Maldives.

### **India-Maldives Economic Relations**

- India and the Maldives share robust economic ties, strengthened by geographical proximity, historical links, and cultural commonalities.
- Bilateral trade has been progressively increasing, with India exporting goods worth US\$586.97 million to the Maldives in 2023.
- India is a major investor in the Maldives, with substantial investments in infrastructure, tourism, and other sectors, thus reinforcing the business relationship between the two nations.

## Quick Headlines

- India's first Biomanufacturing Institute, the BRIC-National Agri-Food Bio-Manufacturing Institute (BRIC-NABI), has been launched in Mohali. This institute is a result of merging the National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI) and the Center of Innovative and Applied Bioprocessing (CIAB). BRIC-NABI's goal is to advance India's agri-food sector through biotechnology, developing high-yield, disease-resistant crops and promoting sustainable farming practices. As part of this endeavour, a BioNest Incubation Center has been established to support agri-food startups, and the BioE3 policy has been implemented to boost biomanufacturing in various sectors. The creation of BRIC-NABI supports efforts towards a science-driven economy and positions India as a leader in sustainable development.

- The first Asian Buddhist Summit, organised by India's Ministry of Culture and IBC, took place in New Delhi. The summit aimed to foster dialogue and understanding within the Asian Buddhist community and addressed contemporary challenges. The theme was "Role of Buddha Dhamma in Strengthening Asia", focusing on collective, spiritual development. Key subjects covered included Buddhist art, Buddha's travels, the role of Buddhist relics in society, Buddhist philosophy's relevance in the 21st century, integrating Buddhism with scientific research and a special exhibition displaying India's role in spreading Buddhism. The summit was significant for India nurturing its Act East and Neighborhood First Policies.

- The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has submitted a formal Letter of Intent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to host the 2036 Olympic Games. This bid sits in line with the IOC's sustainability policy, promoting the use of existing infrastructure and limited new construction. The IOA, registered as a non-profit organisation, governs the Olympic Movement

and Commonwealth Games in India. Historically, only three Asian countries - China, South Korea and Japan - have hosted the Olympics previously.

- The first digital population clock in Bengaluru has been inaugurated at the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), a project jointly executed by ISEC and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). Similar clocks are being installed at 18 Population Research Centres across India. The clock, which is precisely maintained via satellite connections, provides real-time population updates of Karnataka every 1 minute and 10 seconds, and of India every 2 seconds. ISEC was founded in 1972 and is an All India Institute for interdisciplinary research and training in social sciences.

- LignoSat, the world's first wood-panelled satellite, was developed by Kyoto University and Sumitomo Forestry to test timber as a sustainable material for future space missions. The magnolia wood panels, crafted using traditional Japanese techniques without screws or glue, serve as a casing for its traditional aluminium structures and electronic components. The satellite will assess wood's resilience in extreme space conditions and its capability to shield semiconductors from space radiation. Unlike aluminium satellites that can harm the ozone layer during atmospheric re-entry, LignoSat could potentially lower space pollution.

- The Titan Arum, one of the world's largest flowers, recently bloomed in Australia despite its natural habitat being the limestone hills of the rainforests in western Sumatra, Indonesia. This towering plant, which grows over 3 metres tall and only blooms once every ten years, is fuelled by an underground 'corm' supporting its long bloom cycle and six-month fruiting period. Its unique feature is its scent, which imitates rotting

flesh to attract carnivorous pollinators such as flies and bees; a process known as Sapromyophily. The species, with fewer than 1,000 individuals left in the wild, is listed 'endangered' by the IUCN.

- The 1st Bodoland Mohotsav was held in New Delhi on 15th and 16th November, under the theme "Peace and Harmony for Prosperous Bharat". The event focussed on showcasing the rich culture, language, education, and heritage of the Bodo community from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), celebrating the region's recovery in the wake of the Bodo Peace Accord 2020. The Bodos, the largest community among Assam's notified Scheduled Tribes, make up about 5-6% of the state's population and had initiated a movement demanding a separate state in the late 1980s. BTR is an autonomous region in Assam consisting of four districts: Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri.

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced an increase in transaction limits on UPI123 and UPI Lite to promote wider adoption of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). The UPI Lite wallet limit has been raised from ₹2,000 to ₹5,000, with the per-transaction limit also increased from ₹500 to ₹1,000. Similarly, the per-transaction limit for UPI123Pay is now ₹10,000, up from ₹5,000. Furthermore, the RBI plans to introduce a beneficiary account name look-up facility for RTGS and NEFT transactions, mirroring UPI and IMPS, to boost security.

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has removed the requirement for issuer companies to deposit 1% of the issue size with stock exchanges before launching public issues of equity shares. This decision aligns with SEBI's reforms to streamline market processes and reduce compliance burdens. Prior to this, the 1% deposit acted as a security measure for resolving investor complaints post-issue. Modern mechanisms like ASBA (Application Supported by Blocked Amount), UPI payments and mandatory demat allotments have rendered this deposit obsolete.

- Canara HSBC Life Insurance has unveiled a generative AI solution called OmniGen AI. The cutting-edge solution optimises risk evaluation in underwriting and provides swift, objective decisions by analysing underwriting guidelines, risk profiles, and model outputs. OmniGen AI, which runs on Amazon Web Services (AWS), reduces underwriting time and enables more consistent and accurate risk evaluations. Furthermore, it offers scalable capacity to handle greater volumes of policies efficiently, promising significant operational cost reductions.

- Moody's recent report predicts that India will experience 7.2% economic growth in 2024, despite concerns about urban growth and geopolitical risks. This growth is anticipated due to factors like improved rural demand, infrastructure spending, and moderated inflation. However, growth is expected to decrease to 6.6% by 2025, and further to 6.5% by 2026. Despite inflationary pressures breaching the RBI's upper limit at 6.2% in October, Moody's anticipates these will cool down as food prices drop due to increased sowing and sufficient buffer stocks.

- S&P Global Ratings has upgraded India's economic growth forecast for FY24 to 6.4%, up from 6%, due to resilience of domestic economic factors. However, it revised the GDP growth projection for FY25 down to 6.4% from 6.9%, due to anticipated slow global growth and the impact of interest rate hikes by the Reserve Bank of India. S&P Global projected a 100 basis point reduction in India's interest rates by March 2024. Taking into account international scenarios, it expects US inflation to gradually decline and China to grow in line with its potential in 2024.

- The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has launched a multilingual mobile application, NSEIndia, and expanded its corporate website to support 12 languages, marking its 30th anniversary and the occasion of Diwali. Aimed at creating a more inclusive financial ecosystem, NSE's new initiatives offer millions of investors across India access to financial information in



their regional languages. The website now supports eight additional Indian languages, namely Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, and Telugu. The mobile app offers real-time updates, access to market overviews, and insights into the derivatives market.

- The 352nd Governing Body meeting of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is taking place in Geneva from October 28 to November 7. Representatives from member countries are gathering to discuss key labour issues and strategies for global working condition improvement. Sumita Dawra, Labour and Employment Secretary of India, showcased India's initiatives to enhance living standards and employment at the event. She reported that India successfully lifted 248 million people from multidimensional poverty in the past nine years.

- India's maritime sector, with its 7,500-kilometer coastline, 12 major ports and over 200 minor ports, handles the majority of the nation's trade, significantly contributing to the GDP. The Sagar Manthan Dialogue 2024 has emphasised India's aim of becoming a global maritime leader, discussing sustainability, innovation, and connectivity. India has the third-largest ship recycling industry globally, with 1,530 ships under the Indian flag, and is the sixteenth-largest maritime nation. Cargo-handling capacity at major ports saw an 87.01% growth from 2014-15, reaching 1,629.86 million tonnes in 2023-24.

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## Sports Quick News

- Chirag Chikkara has historically become the third Indian wrestler to secure a win at the Under-23 World Championship. His victory has placed him amongst the prestigious ranks of champions in Indian wrestling. This achievement contributes to the rising prominence of Indian competitors on the global wrestling circuit.

- India secured a respectable runner-up position in the overall team standings at the Asian Arm Wrestling Cup 2024, hosted at Aurika Skycity Hotel, Mumbai. They finished second in the medal tally, trailing only behind Kazakhstan, the leading nation globally in arm wrestling

- Pankaj Advani secured his 28th world title by triumphing over England's Robert Hall 4-2 at the IBSF World Billiards Championship in Doha on 9 November 2024. This marked his astonishing seventh consecutive World Billiards Championship victory.

- GM Aravindh Chithambaram achieved a notable late advance in the final rounds of the Chennai Grand Masters 2024, securing his victory. He won the last two classical games,

ensuring his title success in this prestigious chess competition

- Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, has initiated a countrywide campaign to tackle doping in sports. Athletes, coaches and the sports community are being urged to utilise the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) India's 'Know Your Medicine (KYM)' app. The initiative aims to promote transparency and fairness in the sporting sphere.

- India has written a Letter of Intent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) expressing its intention to host the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This submission is a significant move towards realising Prime Minister Modi's ambition of hosting the esteemed event in India for the first time.

- Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd), serving as the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, officially opened the eagerly anticipated 4th LG Cup Horse Polo-2024 Tournament. The inaugural match took place at the newly built Polo Stadium at Goshen, Drass. The Department of Youth

Services and Sports, UT Ladakh, were responsible for organising the event.

- India's esteemed badminton player and Olympic medallist, PV Sindhu, laid the foundation stone for the PV Sindhu Centre for Badminton and Sports Excellence. The ceremony took place on November 7, in China Gadili village on the outskirts of Visakhapatnam.

- Indian professional boxer, Mandeep Jangra, won the World Boxing Federation's super featherweight world title. He achieved this title after defeating Britain's Conor McIntosh in a rigorous match in the Cayman Islands. This marks a significant achievement in Jangra's boxing career.

- Max Verstappen achieved a remarkable victory at the Brazil Grand Prix, igniting excitement in the Formula 1 world. Despite starting from 17th place, he displayed exceptional skill and resilience, surging to victory even under challenging rain-soaked conditions at the Interlagos circuit in Sao Paulo.

- Max Verstappen secured an astounding victory at the Brazil Grand Prix creating a stir in the Formula 1 world. Despite beginning from the 17th place, his remarkable skill and resilience propelled him to the lead, undeterred by the challenging rain-soaked conditions at the Interlagos circuit in Sao Paulo.

- Three-year-old Anish Sarkar from Kolkata is now the world's youngest-rated chess player. He achieved an impressive FIDE rating of 1555, setting a new record in the international chess scene. Sarkar has brought prestigious recognition to his home country with this achievement.

- Arjun Erigaisi has achieved an impressive feat in the world of chess by attaining the world No. 2 position in live ratings. This significant milestone was reached on 7th November. This underscores his notable standing in the global chess panorama.

- The 4th National Finswimming Championship 2024, organised by the Underwater Sports Federation of India (USFI), successfully concluded in New Delhi. The championship saw

1500 participants from across 26 states and union territories. West Bengal emerged as the champions, bagging 151 medals, including 67 golds. They were followed by 7999Karnataka with 50 medals and Uttarakhand with 21. The event underscored India's burgeoning success in finswimming.

- India is set to host the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup from January 13 to 19, 2025 at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi. The historic event, aimed at promoting Kho Kho, an indigenous game of India, to an international level, has the backing of the Indian Olympic Association and the Kho Kho Federation of India. The tournament is projected to be a significant milestone in advocating for traditional sports.

- Double Olympic champion Alistair Brownlee has announced his retirement from British triathlon at the age of 36. Highly esteemed for his significant victories in the London 2012 and Rio 2016 games, Brownlee's impact on the sport is notable. His illustrious career continues to inspire a new generation of athletes, including the current Olympic champion, Alex Yee.

- Reetika Hooda secured a gold medal in the women's 76 kg category at the World Military Championships, becoming the second Indian woman to do so. This triumph follows Jyoti Sihag's success in the 55kg category. These remarkable victories mark a significant debut for India's female wrestling team at this prestigious event.

- Emma McKeon, Australia's most decorated Olympian, retired on 25th November 2024 at the age of 30. Over three Olympic games - Rio 2016, Tokyo 2020, and Paris 2024 - McKeon accrued an impressive collection of 14 Olympic medals, comprising six golds, three silvers, and five bronzes. Her record-breaking seven medals at Tokyo 2020 remain the most won by any female swimmer at a single Games, a feat matched only by one other female athlete.

- The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) has imposed a four-year suspension on Olympic bronze medallist Bajrang Punia for an

anti-doping code violation. This verdict came after his refusal to provide a urine sample during selection trials on 10 March 2024. The decision extends the provisional suspension from April 2024, preventing him from partaking in competitive wrestling and overseas coaching opportunities.

- Veteran Australian wicketkeeper-batter Matthew Wade has retired from international cricket after a notable 13-year career. Recognised for his fighting spirit, Wade made significant contributions to the sport. His transformation from a hard-hitting batter to a strategic finisher has been highly inspiring.

- Ravindra Jadeja has ascended to become the fifth-highest wicket-taker for India in Test cricket. This achievement was marked on the first day of the third Test match against New Zealand, held in Mumbai, where Jadeja exceeded Ishant Sharma's record wicket tally. Joining the ranks of India's exceptional bowlers, he now trails only Anil Kumble, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kapil Dev, and Harbhajan Singh.

- Tim Southee, New Zealand's leading wicket-taker of all time, has announced his retirement from international cricket. His departure from the sport will take place after the conclusion of the current ICC World Test Championship campaign.

- Indian wicketkeeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha has confirmed his retirement from all forms of cricket, culminating his almost twenty-year career. He disclosed that his play in the ongoing Ranji Trophy season would be his final competition.

- Mohammad Nabi, the iconic all-rounder from Afghanistan, is set to conclude his prolific ODI career post the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy. The tournament is due to be held in Pakistan. Nabi has contributed significantly towards Afghanistan's cricket over the years.

- India's esteemed cricketer, Jhulan Goswami, is set to be honoured by the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) with a stand named after her at Eden Gardens, Kolkata. This makes her the first

female cricketer to receive such an accolade. The naming ceremony will take place on 22nd January 2025, during the India-England T20I match, as a celebration of Goswami's remarkable contributions to women's cricket.

- On 22nd November, ICC president-elect and chief of BCCI and ACC, Jay Shah, revealed a historic partnership between the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and Sony Sports Networks. The deal will run from 2024 to 2031, providing exclusive broadcasting of all ACC tournaments on Sony Sports. This is set to significantly boost cricket's visibility in the region.

- Rishabh Pant became the costliest player in IPL history after signing with Lucknow SuperGiants (LSG) for ₹27 crore, influenced by uncertainty over his captaincy at Delhi Capitals. Shreyas Iyer and Venkatesh Iyer were also high earners, securing ₹26.75 crore and ₹23.75 crore respectively. Meanwhile, 13-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi from Bihar made history by becoming the youngest player ever signed at an IPL auction, with Rajasthan Royals securing him for ₹1.10 crore, marking him as a promising rising star in Indian cricket.

- 34-year-old fast bowler, Siddarth Kaul, has announced his retirement from Indian cricket following a 17-year career. Kaul, who participated in six international matches and was part of India's Under-19 World Cup winning team in 2008, also achieved IPL success with Sunrisers Hyderabad. Following his cricket career in India, Kaul plans to explore opportunities overseas.

- On 25th November 2024, India achieved a significant 295-run victory over Australia in the first Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at Optus Stadium in Perth. This substantial win gave India a 1-0 lead in the series. Additionally, it shattered a 47-year record, marking India's largest victory against Australia on Australian soil, in terms of runs, surpassing the previous record of 222 runs set in Melbourne in 1977.



## Books And Author

Book Title	Author/Editor	Key Points
Maa-Mother	Dr. Davendra Kumar Dhodawat	The book 'Maa-Mother' was unveiled by Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal in New Delhi, with Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and West Bengal Governor Dr. C.V. Anand Bose present. It delves into the theme of motherhood through poetry.
Why Bharat Matters	Dr. S. Jaishankar	External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar introduced his latest book, Why Bharat Matters, at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Library in Dubai, UAE.
Friends – India's Closest Strategic Partners	Prof. Sreeram Chaulia	This book examines India's foreign relations and provides an in-depth perspective on the country's strongest alliances and strategic partnerships.
Speaking with Nature: The Origins of Indian Environmentalism	Ramachandra Guha	Speaking with Nature: The Origins of Indian Environmentalism highlights the foundational aspects of India's environmentalism.
Beyond the Higgs Boson: The W Boson and Dr. Ashutosh Kotwal's Quest for the Unknown	Manik Kotwal	The book narrates the life and achievements of Dr. Ashutosh Kotwal, an Indian physicist, emphasizing his significant contributions to Higgs boson and W boson research.
My Beloved Life	Amitava Kumar	My Beloved Life by Amitava Kumar tells the journey of Jadunath "Jadu" Kunwar from a small village in Bihar, and his daughter Jugnu, as they face love, loss, and self-discovery in a transforming India.

## Appointments And Registrations

Name	Designation	Organization	Key Points
Deepak Agarwal	Managing Director (MD)	National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED)	A 2000-batch IAS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, selected for the position by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
Ashok Chandra	Managing Director (MD) & CEO	Punjab National Bank (PNB)	Chosen for the role on the recommendation of the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB).
Vipin Kumar	Chairman	Airports Authority of India (AAI)	A 1996-batch IAS officer from the Bihar cadre, who previously served as Additional Secretary in the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education.
Shashwat Sharma	Managing Director (MD) & CEO	Bharti Airtel	Will assume the position effective January 1, 2026.
Sumathi Dharmawardena	Independent Chair, Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU)	International Cricket Council (ICC)	A Sri Lankan legal professional with significant expertise in sports corruption investigations; succeeding Sir Ronnie Flanagan in this role.
Praveena Rai	CEO & Managing Director (MD)	Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX)	Took charge on October 31, 2024, with a tenure set for five years.
Justice Sanjiv Khanna	51st Chief Justice of India	Supreme Court of India	Assumed office as the 51st Chief Justice of India on November 11, 2024, with a tenure lasting until May 13, 2025.
Mara Kocho	Managing Director (MD)	North Eastern Handicrafts & Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHDC)	Appointed under the guidance of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).
Arvindar Singh Sahney	Chairman	Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)	Leads the largest oil company in the country.

Amandeep Johl	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI)	Set to take on the role starting January 2025.
Itaru Otani	Chairman	India Yamaha Motor	Brings over three decades of experience at Yamaha Motor Company, with a focus on enhancing Yamaha's presence in India's two-wheeler market.
India and France	President and Co-President	International Solar Alliance (ISA)	Retained their positions at the 7th International Solar Alliance Assembly in New Delhi.
Mithali Raj	Mentor for Women's Cricket Operations	Andhra Association Cricket	Dedicated to identifying and nurturing young women cricket players across Andhra Pradesh, promoting the growth of women's cricket in the region.
Rahul Bhawe	MD & CEO	IFCI Ltd	Currently serving as Deputy Managing Director at IFCI Ltd; selected for the role by the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB).
Harsha Vardhan Agarwal	President	FICCI National Executive Committee Meeting (NECM)	Official announcement made during the FICCI National Executive Committee Meeting.



## Important Day

Date	Important Days
November 1	World Vegan Day, All Saints' Day, Rajyotsava Day (Karnataka Formation Day), Haryana Day
November 2	All Souls' Day, Govardhan Puja, Parumala Perunnal
November 3	World Jellyfish Day, World Sandwich Day, Bhaidooj
November 5	World Tsunami Awareness Day, US Presidential Elections, Melbourne Cup Day (First Tuesday of the month)
November 6	International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict, National Nachos Day
November 7	Infant Protection Day, National Cancer Awareness Day, Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman Birthday, Chhath Puja
November 8	L.K Advani's Birthday, World Radiography Day
November 9	National Legal Services Day
November 9	Uttarakhand Foundation Day, Kartarpur Corridor Inauguration, World Freedom Day
November 10	World Science Day for Peace and Development
November 10	World Public Transport Day, World Immunization Day
November 11	Armistice Day (Remembrance Day/Veterans' Day), National Education Day
November 12	World Pneumonia Day
November 13	World Kindness Day
November 14	Children's Day, Jawaharlal Nehru Jayanti, World Usability Day (2nd Thursday in November), World Diabetes Day
November 15	Guru Nanak Dev's Birth Anniversary, Jharkhand Foundation Day, Birsa Munda Jayanti

November 16	International Day for Tolerance, National Press Day
November 17	International Students Day, National Epilepsy Day, World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims (Third Sunday in November)
November 19	World Toilet Day, International Men's Day
November 20	Universal Children's Day, Africa Industrialization Day, World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Day or World COPD Day (3rd Wednesday of November)
November 21	World Television Day, World Hello Day, National Philosophy Day
November 23	Fibonacci Day, National Espresso Day, National Cashew Day
November 24	Lachit Diwas, Shaheedi Diwas of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji
November 25	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
November 26	National Milk Day, Constitution Day of India
November 28	Red Planet Day, Thanksgiving Day (Fourth Thursday in November)
November 29	International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People, International Jaguar Day, Black Friday
November 30	Saint Andrew's Day

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