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FOR CIVIL SERVICES PRELIMINARY, MAINS, STATE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND ALL COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS UNDER UPSC, SSC AND STATE PSCs

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HISTORY-
ARTS AND CULTURE

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

CONTEXT: World Press Freedom Day, observed annually on May 3, highlights the essential role of journalism in society. It serves as a reminder of the struggles and triumphs of the press, exemplified by historical figures who laid the groundwork for press freedom. One such figure is James Augustus Hicky, whose pioneering efforts in the late 18th century led to the establishment of India's first newspaper. This story reflects the enduring fight for press freedom and the pivotal role of journalism in shaping public consciousness.

Founding of Hicky's Bengal Gazette

On January 29, 1780, Ireland-born James Augustus Hicky published the first edition of 'Hicky's Bengal Gazette,' marking the birth of India's first newspaper. Initially aimed at the British community in Calcutta, the Gazette soon garnered attention for its coverage of a wide array of issues, including government corruption and civic matters, eventually drawing the ire of colonial authorities.

How the Bengal Gazette Began
Early Life and Ventures of James Augustus Hicky

According to Andrew Otis's 2018 book, "Hicky's Bengal Gazette: The Untold Story of India's First Newspaper," Hicky's early life remains largely undocumented. Born likely in the 1730s in Ireland, Hicky came to India seeking better prospects. Facing financial difficulties upon arrival, he ended up in jail, where he ingeniously began a printing business, which led to the inception of his newspaper. Recognizing the European demand for timely news, Hicky capitalized on this need, creating the first newspaper in Asia and India.

The Content and Impact of Hicky's Bengal Gazette
Stories and Themes in Hicky's Bengal Gazette

Published every Saturday, Hicky's Bengal Gazette cost Re 1 per issue and featured a mix of news, opinion letters, and advertisements. While initially avoiding political content to steer clear of trouble, Hicky eventually addressed local issues and encouraged reader contributions. The paper gained a reputation for its witty and satirical style, often poking fun at prominent figures and highlighting civic issues like road maintenance and sanitation. It also played a crucial role in raising awareness about the frequent fires in Calcutta's poor neighborhoods, leading to government action.

Challenges and Closure of the Gazette
Conflicts with Authorities and Subsequent Shutdown

As the Gazette's influence grew, it faced backlash from powerful colonial figures. Governor General Warren Hastings and missionary Johann Zacharias Kiernander filed several libel cases against Hicky. Criticizing Hastings' policies and mocking Kiernander led to legal battles that financially crippled Hicky. Despite his efforts to continue publishing from jail, the Gazette eventually ceased operations, and Hicky spent his remaining years struggling to support his family.

Legacy of Hicky's Bengal Gazette
Impact on Journalism and Press Freedom in India

Despite its brief existence, Hicky's Bengal Gazette left a lasting legacy. Many of Hicky's colleagues went on to establish their own newspapers, contributing to the growth of journalism in India. The British government's attempts to suppress these early publications only strengthened the resolve of Indian journalists. By the early 1800s, Indian-owned presses were flourishing, significantly contributing to the dissemination of anti-colonial sentiments and the spread of nationalist ideas. Hicky's pioneering work thus paved the way for a vibrant and resilient press in India.

UNESCO'S MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

CONTEXT: UNESCO's Memory of the World programme is a global initiative aimed at preserving and providing access to the world's documentary heritage. This year, three Indian literary works – Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sah dayaloka-Locana – were added to the Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register. This inclusion highlights the enduring cultural significance of these texts and their impact beyond India's borders.

The Inclusion of Indian Texts in the Memory of the World Register

Significance of the Included Works

The Ministry of Culture emphasized the global and timeless appeal of the three works, noting their profound influence on readers and artists both within and outside India. Officials involved in the nomination process pointed out that the Ramayana and Ramcharitmanas are celebrated not only in India but also in countries like Cambodia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. The nomination included two Ramcharitmanas manuscripts: one by Goswami Tulsidas and an 18th-century Arabic translation, illustrating the text's widespread resonance. The Panchatantra was chosen for its universal moral lessons, and the 15th-century Sah dayaloka-Locana was selected for its aesthetic contributions.

Understanding UNESCO's Memory of the World (MOW) Register

Purpose and Mission of the MOW Programme

UNESCO's MOW programme aims to safeguard, protect, and provide access to valuable documentary heritage, especially those that are rare and endangered. Launched in 1992, the initiative seeks to prevent "collective amnesia" by preserving important archive holdings and library collections worldwide. The programme recognizes documentary heritage of international, regional, and national significance, maintains registers of these collections, and awards a logo to identified items. By raising awareness and facilitating access, the MOW programme supports research, education, entertainment, and long-term preservation.

Other Items on the MOW Register
Global and Regional Inscriptions

As of May 2023, there are 494 inscriptions on the International MoW Register. The MOW programme also operates on regional levels, such as the Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Committee (MOWCAP). During the 2024 cycle, MOWCAP included 20 items from various countries, recognizing achievements in genealogy, literature, and science. These inscriptions included documents from China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan, highlighting innovations in business, technology, and regional literary traditions. Notable inclusions were the Philippines' Indigenous Hinilawod chants, the Nine Tripods legend from Viet Nam, and Bangladesh's sci-fi feminist author Rokeya S Hossain's 1905 narrative, "Sultana's Dream."

CONCLUSION: The Legacy of the Memory of the World Programme

The Memory of the World programme underscores the importance of preserving documentary heritage and making it accessible. The inclusion of Indian texts in the regional register not only affirms their historical and cultural value but also enhances global understanding and appreciation of India's rich literary tradition. These efforts contribute to a more comprehensive and inclusive record of human history, ensuring that future generations can learn from and be inspired by these invaluable works.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY RETHINKING THE STONE AGE – THE IMPORTANCE OF WOOD

Stone Age is traditionally recognized for the use of stone tools by early humans. However, new research suggests that wooden tools also played a crucial role in the daily lives of our ancestors. This recent study sheds light on the significant but often overlooked role of wood during this prehistoric period.

The Discovery and Its Implications
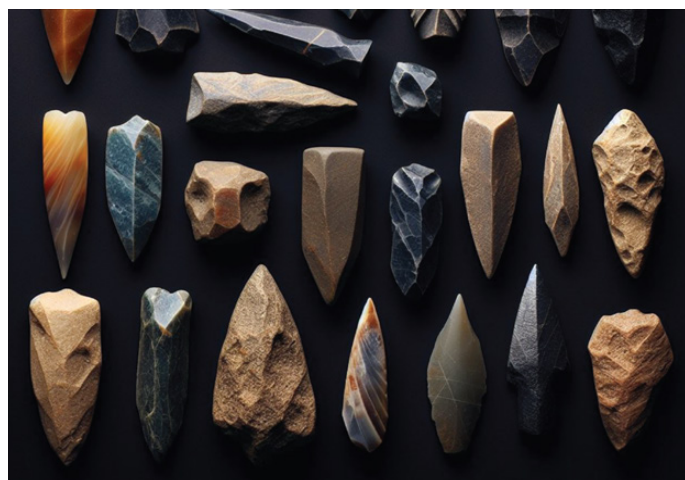
Was the Stone Age Actually the Age of Wood?

Wood from the Stone Age rarely survives in the archaeological record, but a recent study suggests that wooden tools were pivotal in the daily lives of early humans. The study of around 300,000-400,000-year-old wooden artefacts excavated from a coal mine in Schöningen, Germany, indicates that these were not merely "sharpened sticks" but technologically advanced tools requiring skill and precision. The research, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in April, identified 187 wooden artifacts, demonstrating a broad spectrum of woodworking techniques, including splitting, scraping, and abrasion.

Periodising Human Prehistory

Human 'history' began with the advent of writing; everything before that is 'prehistory,' studied primarily through archaeological evidence. Danish archaeologist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen's 19th-century periodisation into the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age is based on technological advancements. The Stone Age, beginning approximately 3.4 million years ago and lasting until about 6,000-4,000 BP, is divided into the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic periods, each marked by distinct technological and cultural developments.

Preservation Bias in Archaeology
Challenges in Wood Preservation

Archaeological evidence forms the basis of the Stone Age classification. However, evidence of woodworking has been limited, even though wood would have been an abundant resource. Of thousands of Lower Palaeolithic sites, wood has been recovered from fewer than ten. This preservation bias distorts our view of antiquity, as wood deteriorates and rarely survives, unlike stone. Archaeologists Aimé Bocquet and Michel Noël noted that the absence of wooden remains does not indicate wood was not used. This sentiment is echoed by Thomas Teberger, the leader of the recent study, who suggests that wooden tools have been around as long as stone ones.

Insights from Schöningen
Significance of the Schöningen Finds

The Schöningen site is unique due to the preservation of wooden tools in damp, oxygen-less soil conditions. This has led to the most well-preserved assemblage of prehistoric wooden artefacts in the world. The study revealed a minimum of 20 hunting weapons and 35 tools made from split wood, likely used in domestic activities. The discovery of the world's oldest preserved hunting weapons, dated to around 400,000 years ago, suggests that systematic hunting, involving foresight, planning, and appropriate technology, was part of early human behaviour.

Technological Complexity

The new study highlighted the technological complexity of Schöningen's wooden artefacts using 3-D microscopy and micro-CT scanners. Researchers identified signs of wear and cut marks, indicating advanced woodworking techniques. The findings suggest that tools were repaired and recycled, demonstrating a high level of sophistication in working with wood.

CONCLUSION: Reevaluating the Stone Age

The findings from Schöningen offer a more comprehensive understanding of our past, emphasizing the importance of wood as a raw material and showcasing the sophisticated capabilities of early humans. This research challenges the traditional view of the Stone Age, suggesting that it might also be accurately described as the 'Wood Age.'

REFLECTING ON 50 YEARS OF POKHRAN-I – INDIA'S FIRST NUCLEAR TESTS

CONTEXT: In 1974, amid global opposition to the spread of nuclear weapons, India conducted its first nuclear tests in Pokhran, Rajasthan. The event was shrouded in secrecy and marked a significant milestone in India's defense and technological capabilities. This article delves into the reasons behind India's decision to conduct these tests and the aftermath of this bold move.

The Background of India's Nuclear Ambitions
Post-World War II Nuclear Landscape

Following World War II, the global balance of power was shaped by nuclear capabilities. The US and the USSR emerged as superpowers, each developing and testing nuclear weapons. The US demonstrated the devastating power of nuclear weapons by bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, while the Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear test in 1949. To prevent further proliferation, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed in 1968, with the P-5 countries (US, UK, France, China, and Russia) agreeing not to transfer nuclear weapons or technology to other states.

India's Opposition to the NPT

India objected to the NPT, viewing it as discriminatory because it allowed the P-5 countries to maintain their nuclear arsenals while prohibiting other states from developing such capabilities. Indian leaders, including scientists Homi J. Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai, laid the groundwork for India's nuclear program, advocating for the development of nuclear energy. However, India's political stance on nuclear weapons evolved significantly in the 1960s and early 1970s, influenced by geopolitical events such as the wars with China (1962) and Pakistan (1965 and 1971).

The Decision to Conduct Pokhran-I
Strategic Considerations and Secrecy

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, unlike her predecessor Jawaharlal Nehru, was more open to the idea of nuclear tests. Despite international treaties and opposition, India decided to proceed with the tests in secrecy. The decision was finalized after intense internal deliberations among top scientists and advisers, ultimately receiving the go-ahead from Indira Gandhi.

Execution of the Test

On May 18, 1974, under the codename 'Smiling Buddha', India detonated its first nuclear device in Pokhran, Rajasthan. The test, conducted by a team of about 75 researchers and scientists, demonstrated a yield of 12-13 kilotons of TNT. The timing of the test coincided with Buddha Jayanti, symbolizing a "peaceful nuclear explosion" as described by the Indian government.

Aftermath and International Reaction
Initial Reactions and Criticism

The immediate international reaction to India's nuclear test was one of criticism and concern. The United States, under President Jimmy Carter, responded by signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act in 1978, ceasing nuclear assistance to India. Additionally, the US led efforts to establish the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to control the spread of nuclear weapons.

Long-term Impact and India's Nuclear Policy

Despite facing significant criticism, India continued to develop its nuclear capabilities. The Pokhran-II tests in 1998 further solidified India's status as a nuclear power. Over the

years, India has positioned itself as a responsible nuclear state, seeking membership in groups like the NSG to gain greater influence over nuclear commerce and policy.

Evolving International Relations

In 2005, a significant shift occurred when US President George W. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced a nuclear agreement, marking a new phase in US-India relations. Since then, several countries, including Australia, Mexico, and Switzerland, have voiced support for India's entry into the NSG. However, resistance remains, particularly from China.

CONCLUSION: Legacy of Pokhran-I

The Pokhran-I tests of 1974 marked a pivotal moment in India's history, showcasing its determination to develop nuclear capabilities despite international opposition. Over the past 50 years, India has navigated the complex landscape of global nuclear politics, striving for recognition and acceptance as a responsible nuclear power.

INDIA'S TRIUMPH AT THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL – UNDERSTANDING ITS ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE

INDIA'S ACHIEVEMENTS AT CANNES 2024

CONTEXT: The 77th Cannes Film Festival, held from May 14 to 25, 2024, saw significant victories for Indian cinema. Director Payal Kapadia's debut feature film, All We Imagine As Light, won the esteemed Grand Prix prize. Additionally, actor Anasuya Sengupta became the first Indian to win Best Actress at Cannes (Un Certain Regard) for her role in Bulgarian director Konstantin Bojanov's The Shameless.

Cultural Impact

Beyond the accolades, the festival also garners attention for its glamorous red carpet, where Bollywood stars often make headlines with their fashion choices. This blend of artistic recognition and cultural spectacle underscores Cannes' influence in the film industry.

The Origins of the Cannes Film Festival

Pre-War Beginnings

The Cannes Film Festival traces its origins to the pre-World War II era. In 1938, geopolitical tensions were high, and the Venice Film Festival was one of the few competitive film festivals. However, the festival's decisions were marred by political influences, such as the awarding of the Mussolini Cup under pressure from fascist leaders Hitler and Mussolini.

Foundation Amid War

In response to these political manipulations, French representative Phillipe Erlanger proposed an independent French film festival. Despite initial concerns about Franco-Italian relations, the idea gained support from key French ministers. The first edition of the Cannes Film Festival was set to launch in 1939 but was postponed due to the war, eventually debuting in 1946.

The Evolution and Appeal of Cannes

Early Days and Growth

The inaugural Cannes Film Festival in 1946 featured stars like Kirk Douglas and Grace Kelly and included a variety of entertainment options beyond film screenings, such as parades and fireworks. This diverse range of activities, coupled with the festival's exclusivity, helped establish its legendary status.

The Festival's Structure

The Cannes Film Festival is renowned for its exclusive premieres and screenings, held at the Palais, a complex with multiple cinemas. Red carpet events, attended by global celebrities, are a significant highlight, with media interactions occurring the day after film premieres.

Award Categories and Notable Winners

The festival's highest honor, the Palme d'Or, was introduced in 1955. Iconic films like Taxi Driver, Apocalypse Now, Pulp Fiction, and Parasite have won this prestigious award. The first and only Indian film to receive the Palme d'Or was Neecha Nagar, directed by Chetan Anand, in 1946.

Modern Challenges and Contributions

Diverse Participation

To enhance diversity, Cannes has invited filmmakers from countries like the Philippines, China, and Argentina since the 1980s. Recent years have seen contributions from Saudi Arabia, supporting films like Jeanne du Barry, starring Johnny Depp.

Controversies and Movements

The festival has faced challenges, including the #MeToo movement, which brought to light issues of sexual misconduct within the industry. While Cannes has been criticized for its handling of such issues, it remains a platform for highlighting critical social movements.

CONCLUSION: Cannes' Enduring Legacy

The Cannes Film Festival continues to be a beacon of cinematic excellence and cultural influence. India's recent successes highlight its growing prominence on the global stage. As Cannes evolves, it remains a celebration of artistry, resilience, and the enduring power of cinema.

UNDERSTANDING THE COLLAPSE OF HAMPI'S VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE – ITS HISTORY AND MODERN THREATS

CONTEXT: A recent incident at the Virupaksha Temple in Hampi, Karnataka, where a portion of the temple's pavilion collapsed due to heavy rains, has brought attention to the site's historical significance and the ongoing restoration efforts. The temple, a nationally protected monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, holds immense cultural and architectural value.

Historical Significance of the Virupaksha Temple
Origins and Development
The Virupaksha Temple, believed to have its origins in the 7th century, rose to prominence during the Vijayanagara Empire (1336 to 1646). The empire, founded by Harihara I of the Sangama dynasty, was strategically located on the banks of the Tungabhadra River and grew to become a dominant power in South India.

Architectural Marvel
The temple is a quintessential example of Dravidian architecture, featuring grand gopurams (towering gateways), a towering shikhara over the sanctum sanctorum, and intricate carvings and pillared halls. The gopuram is adorned with carvings of deities, mythological scenes, and animals. The sanctum sanctorum houses the Shiva lingam, the primary object of worship.

Cultural Hub
During the Vijayanagara period, the temple flourished as a center for religious and cultural activities. It was part of a larger complex of temples and structures that made Hampi the capital city of the empire, often referred to as the last 'great Hindu empire' of South India. UNESCO recognized Hampi's unique cultural heritage and designated it a World Heritage Site.

Recent Collapse and Immediate Causes
Structural Damage
On May 21, 2024, a section of the pavilion at the Virupaksha Temple collapsed due to torrential rains. The pavilion, supported by stone pillars, showed signs of deterioration over time. According to Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) officials, the pillars' condition had weakened due to prolonged exposure to natural elements, causing the pre-emptive collapse.

Restoration Efforts
ASI Superintendent Archaeologist Nihil Das noted that restoration work on the pavilion was already planned. The collapse, however, expedited the process. The ASI had been digitally documenting all monuments in Hampi and had completed several phases of restoration since 2019. The dismantled pavilion will now undergo restoration on a priority basis.

Restoration Challenges and Ongoing Efforts
Funding and Resources
Restoring historical monuments involves significant logistical, financial, and human resource challenges. The Central government allocated Rs 8 crore for the restoration of monuments in the Kalyan Karnataka region, which includes Hampi. The restoration of the pavilion is estimated to cost Rs 50 lakhs and is expected to be completed within three to four months.

Traditional Methods
The restoration process requires the use of traditional methods and materials similar to those originally used. This meticulous approach ensures the structural and aesthetic integrity of the monument is preserved, albeit making the process time-consuming.

Modern Threats
The UNESCO website highlights ongoing concerns about the preservation of the Virupaksha Temple. Continuous worship at the temple has led to modifications and additions that impact its historical fabric. Additionally, the growth of modern shops and restaurants around the temple, as well as infrastructure developments like road asphalting, pose significant threats to its setting. Managing these tensions between modern usage and historical preservation is crucial for maintaining the site's integrity.

CONCLUSION: Preserving Hampi's Heritage
The collapse of a section of the Virupaksha Temple pavilion underscores the urgent need for ongoing preservation efforts. As a site of immense historical and cultural significance, it is essential to address both natural and human-induced threats to ensure its longevity. The ASI's restoration work, supported by adequate funding and traditional methods, aims to protect and preserve this architectural marvel for future generations.

UNVEILING THE SECRETS BEHIND THE CONSTRUCTION OF EGYPT'S PYRAMIDS

CONTEXT: Scholars have long been fascinated by the methods ancient Egyptians used to transport massive stone blocks through the desert to construct the iconic pyramids. A recent study offers new insights into this age-old mystery.

River-Power: The Role of the Nile in Pyramid Construction
Historical Challenge

Moving multi-ton stone blocks is a challenging task even today, but ancient Egyptians accomplished this feat 4,500 years ago to build structures like the Great Pyramid of Giza. This pyramid alone contains approximately 2.3 million blocks, each weighing an average of 2.3 metric tonnes.

New Insights from the Study

A study published on May 16 in the journal Communications Earth and Environment reveals that the River Nile played a crucial role in pyramid construction. Researchers identified segments of an extinct branch of the Nile, located close to the pyramids, which could have been used to transport heavy materials.

Research Methodology

Led by geomorphologist Eman Ghoneim, the research team utilized radar satellite imagery, historical maps, geophysical surveys, and sediment coring to map this now-buried river branch. Named the Ahramat, this branch was likely buried thousands of years ago due to sandstorms and a major drought.

Practical Implications

According to co-author Suzanne Onstine, the discovery of this waterway provides critical evidence supporting the theory that the Nile was used for transporting the heavy blocks needed for pyramid construction. This river branch, measuring 64 km in length, 200-700 m in width, and 2-8 m in depth, could have served as a transportation route for materials, equipment, and workers.

Ancient Marvels: Engineering Feats of the Pyramids
Transportation and Construction Techniques

Using the Nile's energy to transport heavy blocks required significantly less effort than relying solely on human labor. However, this was just one aspect of pyramid construction. Workers also had to precisely place these stones, likely using ramps greased with water or wet clay, sledges, sturdy ropes, and levers.

Advanced Planning and Execution

The construction of the pyramids also demanded advanced knowledge of mathematics and architecture. For instance, each side of the Great Pyramid of Giza has a precise and consistent gradient of 52 degrees, demonstrating the high level of planning and execution involved.

Organized Workforce

The workers lived in well-organized settlements near the pyramids. Evidence from bakeries and animal bones indicates that they were well-fed and that the construction effort was managed by a strong central authority.

Broader Implications: Insights into Ancient Egyptian Life
Cultural Significance

The construction, decoration, and existence of the pyramids offer valuable insights into various aspects of life in ancient Egypt. Egyptologist Peter Der Manuelian noted that the pyramid sites were not just cemeteries but also provided a window into the daily lives, organization, and capabilities of ancient Egyptians.

CONCLUSION

The recent study highlighting the role of the Nile in pyramid construction enhances our understanding of ancient engineering practices and the sophisticated organization of labor and resources in ancient Egypt. The findings underscore the ingenuity of the ancient Egyptians and their ability to harness natural resources to achieve monumental feats.

SUCCESS IS SIMPLE. DO WHAT IS RIGHT, THE RIGHT WAY, AT THE RIGHT TIME.

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GEOGRAPHY

BASEFLOW IN RIVERS

CONTEXT: A recent study (on six major river basins: Narmada, Tapi, Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, and Cauvery) delving **into heavy rainfall, baseflow, and river floods in Peninsular** India sheds light on the factors driving flooding in the region.

WHAT IS BASEFLOW?

Baseflow refers to the **sustained flow of water in a river that originates from groundwater seepage into the river channel.** It represents the portion of river discharge that is sustained between rainfall events and is typically fed by groundwater stored in the saturated zone.

CO-RELATION BETWEEN BASEFLOW AND RIVER FLOOD: During flood events, when rainfall increases river flow, the presence of high baseflow levels can amplify flood magnitudes. This is because higher baseflow indicates wetter conditions, making the catchment more prone to rapid runoff during heavy rainfall.

SHAKSGAM VALLEY OF PAKISTAN-OCCUPIED KASHMIR

CONTEXT: India protests Chinese road construction in the **Shaksgam Valley of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir,** claiming it as part of its territory and raising **concerns over territorial integrity**

India has **never accepted the 1963 China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement** and protests against any attempts to alter the situation.

Shaksgam Valley (also called Trans-Karakoram Tract) is an area of **about 5,200 km2 north of the Karakoram watershed,** administered by China, but claimed by India. While under **Pakistan's control since 1947, Pakistan recognized Chinese sovereignty over it in the 1963** Sino-Pakistan Agreement. India disputes this claim, asserting it is part of the Kashmir region. The Shaksgam Valley is strategically important due to its **proximity to the Siachen glacier,** a critical area amidst India-China tensions.

Map showing Siachen Glacier Region and Shaksgam Valley

MOUNT RUANG (INDONESIA)

CONTEXT: Indonesia's Mount Ruang volcano recently erupted, triggering the highest level of alert.

Indonesia is home to many volcanoes due to its location **along the Pacific Ring of Fire,** where several tectonic plates meet and interact. This convergence **creates intense geological activity,** including the subduction of oceanic plates beneath continental plates, which leads to volcanic eruptions. Indonesia has approximately 130 active volcanoes.

Mount Ruang is a **stratovolcano** situated in Indonesia's Sulawesi Islands. Other notable volcanoes in Indonesia include **Krakatau, Merapi, and Semeru.**

SHINKU LA TUNNEL

CONTEXT: The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is set to begin work on the Shinku La tunnel, which will be the world's highest, facilitating all-weather connectivity from Manali to Leh.

The Shinku La tunnel, constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), will be the world's highest tunnel at 15,800 ft, surpassing China's Mila tunnel. Spanning 4.1 km along the Nimmu-Padam-Darcha route, it will provide all-weather connectivity from Manali to Leh, cutting the distance by 60 km.

This tunnel is significant as it offers an alternative route to Ladakh, streamlining transportation to strategic areas like Kargil, Siachen, and the Line of Control.

Established in 1960, BRO develops and maintains road networks in border areas, playing a crucial role in enhancing connectivity and security.

GEOMAGNETIC STORMS

CONTEXT: Stunning aurora displays illuminated the night sky during the strongest G-5 level geomagnetic storm in 21 years, producing green and blue hues across the Northern Hemisphere.

WHAT ARE GEOMAGNETIC STORMS?

They occur when events like solar flares emit higher-than-normal levels of radiation toward Earth, interacting with its magnetic field. These disturbances, driven by solar coronal mass ejections (CMEs) or high-speed streams of solar wind from coronal holes, lead to geomagnetic storms.

Effects of such storms range from the appearance of auroras to disruptions in communication systems due to high radiation, making communication on Earth challenging.

storms are classified on a scale measuring their effects. At G1, there are weak fluctuations in power grids and minor impacts on satellite operations, with auroras visible. At G5, voltage control problems and grid system collapse occur, radio waves are disrupted for days, and auroras can be seen at lower latitudes.

ANTARCTIC PARLIAMENT MEETS IN KOCHI

CONTEXT: India has hosted the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46) in Kochi, organized by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research through the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

WHAT IS ATCM (ALSO CALLED ANTARCTIC PARLIAMENT)

The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) is an annual gathering of the parties to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, including the original twelve signatories and other nations conducting significant research in Antarctica.

At this year's ATCM, India will introduce a new working group focused on formulating regulations to monitor tourism and protect the continent's fragile ecosystem. Representatives from the 56 member countries of the Antarctic Treaty will attend. This is the first time India is hosting the meeting since 2007.

ABOUT ANTARCTIC TREATY

The Antarctic Treaty, signed on December 1, 1959, and in force since June 23, 1961, is an international agreement governing activities in Antarctica. It designates the continent as a scientific preserve, ensuring it remains exclusively for peaceful purposes. Initially signed by 12 countries, the treaty now includes 56 signatories, with India joining in 1983. Key provisions prohibit military activities, promote scientific cooperation, and ban nuclear explosions and radioactive waste disposal.

INDIA IN ANTARCTICA

Since 1983, India has been a consultative party to the Antarctic Treaty, participating in governance decisions. India operates three research stations: Dakshin Gangotri (1983-1990), Maitri (since 1989), and Bharati (since 2012). India plans to establish a new station, Maitri II, by 2029. In 2022, India enacted the Antarctic Act to reaffirm its commitment to the treaty's principles.

"Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education. — Martin Luther King Jr.

POLITY
AND
GOVERNANCE

THE JUDICIARY'S SHADOW OVER STANDARD ESSENTIAL PATENTS

CONTEXT: India's quest to build a robust domestic telecom industry faces a hurdle as Standard Essential Patents (SEPs) wielded by foreign companies create complex regulatory challenges.

BACKGROUND:

STANDARD ESSENTIAL PATENTS (SEPS) IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- **Definition:** SEPs are patents that are critical for implementing a specific technical standard. These standards, like 3G, 4G, and 5G in telecommunications, ensure that different devices and networks can communicate with each other.
- **Importance:**
  - o Owned by companies or individuals, SEPs are essential for guaranteeing interoperability and compatibility between products adhering to the same standard.
  - o In the cellular phone market, SEPs covering standardized technologies play a vital role in fostering competition and ensuring devices can function together seamlessly.
- **Challenges:** Disputes regarding SEP licensing and potential infringement are common. Companies and patent holders often engage in legal battles or negotiations to determine fair licensing terms.

IMPORTANCE OF SEPS AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES

1. Role of SEPs in Telecom Standards
- SEPs like CDMA, GSM, and LTE are crucial for ensuring compatibility among different cellular phone brands.
- These standards form the technological backbone of the telecom sector.

2. Influence of Standard Setting Organisations (SSOs)
- Standard setting is largely controlled by private SSOs, limiting India's influence in the process.
- Companies owning SEPs can demand high royalties, leading to the "patent holdup" problem.

3. Challenges with Fair Licensing Practices
- SSOs aim for fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory (FRAND) licensing.
- However, opacity and anti-competitive practices persist, with companies like Qualcomm facing significant fines globally.

JUDICIAL RESPONSE TO ISSUES SURROUNDING SEPS

1. Challenges in Competition Law Enforcement
- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) began investigating Ericsson in 2013 following a complaint by Micromax about SEP licensing abuses.
- Ericsson challenged the CCI's authority, resulting in prolonged legal battles.
- Despite a favorable ruling for the CCI in 2016, further appeals delayed resolution until 2023.
- India remains the only major economy that has not scrutinized potentially anti-competitive SEP licensing practices.

2. Judicial Activism in Patent Infringement Cases
- The Delhi High Court has actively heard lawsuits filed by SEP owners against manufacturers accused of patent infringement.

- These cases involve complex trials to determine patent validity, infringement, and damages.
- Instead of staying proceedings until competition law matters are resolved, the court has issued interim remedies favoring SEP owners.
- Manufacturers, often Indian companies, are required to deposit significant sums with the court to continue production during trials.

3. Unprecedented "Deposit" Orders
- The Delhi High Court has issued **"deposit"** orders requiring manufacturers to deposit substantial funds before trials.
- These orders impose a severe financial burden on defendants, depriving them of essential working capital.
- The practice lacks a clear legal basis and fairness but is justified by the court under its "inherent powers to do justice."
- While intended to expedite legal proceedings, these orders raise questions about procedural fairness and equitable treatment of litigants.

IMPACT OF JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS AND PROLONGED LEGAL BATTLES ON INDIA'S MANUFACTURING DREAMS

1. Investor Confidence and Market Stability
- **Erosion of Confidence:** Unforeseen legal battles and judicial involvement create uncertainty, discouraging investors (both domestic and foreign) from setting up shop or expanding operations in India's manufacturing sector.
- **Market Instability:** Unclear SEP licensing practices and the possibility of unfavourable court rulings lead to market instability. This hinders long-term investment planning and strategic decision-making.

2. Stifling Innovation and Growth
- **Misallocation of Resources:** Legal battles divert resources away from productive activities like research and development (R&D) and technology adoption. Companies get bogged down in litigation instead of focusing on innovation and product development.
- **Hindered Competitiveness:** This diversion of resources stifles innovation and hampers India's ability to compete in the global market.

3. Job Creation and Economic Impact
- **Threat to Jobs:** The uncertainty surrounding SEP litigation threatens job stability, particularly in the telecom manufacturing industry. Delays in legal proceedings and financial burdens may force companies to scale back operations, lay off employees, or reconsider investments in India.
- **Undermined Growth:** This can hinder the government's efforts to create jobs and promote inclusive economic growth in the manufacturing sector, a crucial engine for emerging economies like India.

4. Contradictions in Policy Objectives
- **Clashing Goals:** Judicial decisions favoring SEP owners create a policy contradiction. While the government offers incentives like "production linked incentives" to attract investment and boost domestic manufacturing, SEP disputes work against these efforts.
- **Policy Incoherence:** This inconsistency between supporting manufacturers and overlooking the financial

burden of SEPs raises questions about the effectiveness of policies aimed at fostering industrial growth.

5. Long-Term Implications for Industrial Landscape

- **Deterred Investment:** Unresolved issues surrounding SEP licensing and judicial handling can deter both domestic and foreign investment, jeopardizing job creation and India's transition to a knowledge-based economy.
- **Falling Behind:** The lack of regulatory intervention to streamline legal processes, ensure fairness, and uphold competition principles can leave India lagging behind in the global race for manufacturing excellence.

WAY FORWARD: LEARNING FROM EUROPE

- **Europe's Example:** The European Parliament has proactively implemented regulations for SEPs, offering a model for international intervention.
- **India's Compelling Case:** India's limited influence in standard-setting and its commitment to enforcing foreign patents create a strong argument for similar regulatory action.
- **The Need for Regulation:** India must strengthen its regulatory framework to ensure transparency, fairness, and non-discrimination in SEP licensing. This is essential to protect its economic interests and foster domestic manufacturing.

CONCLUSION: The complex interplay between SEPs, standard-setting bodies, and the Indian judicial system creates a significant hurdle for India's aspirations in the telecom manufacturing sector. The legal battles, coupled with a lack of clear regulatory frameworks, erode investor confidence, stifle innovation, and threaten job creation. Learning from Europe's proactive approach, India must urgently establish a regulatory framework that ensures transparency, fairness, and adherence to competition law principles in SEP licensing. Only through such measures can India safeguard its economic interests and foster a robust domestic telecom manufacturing industry.

RULES FOR A NEW DAWN FOR THE INDIAN LEGAL INDUSTRY

CONTEXT: As India ascends to the position of a major cross-border commerce hub, the globalization of its legal sector becomes an undeniable consequence.

BACKGROUND:
GLOBALIZATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF INDIA'S LEGAL INDUSTRY

Delayed Impact:

- **India's Economic Embrace (1991):** India's economic reforms and integration with the global market began in 1991.
- **Legal Sector Lags Behind:** However, the legal industry remained relatively insulated from these initial globalization efforts.

Shifting Tides:

- **BCI Acknowledges Change:** The Bar Council of India (BCI), the governing body for lawyers in India, eventually recognized the inevitable impact of globalization on the legal sector.

The Effects of Globalization on Legal Professionals:

- **Towards Universal Standards:** Globalization strives for a sense of universalism and synchronization in legal practices, aiming to facilitate seamless interaction between legal professionals across borders.

What is Globalization?

- **Breaking Down Barriers:** Globalization refers to the interconnectedness of the world, where forces and influences transcend geographical boundaries. It seeks to replace protectionist tendencies with a focus on universality and coordinated practices.

FOREIGN LAWYERS IN INDIA: A NEW ERA WITH REGULATIONS

BCI's 2022 Rules:

- **Limited Entry Granted:** In 2023, the Bar Council of India (BCI) introduced new rules ("Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India, 2022") that allow foreign lawyers to establish offices in India with a restricted scope.
- **Focus on Transactions:** Foreign lawyers can primarily engage in transactional or corporate legal work under these regulations.

Scope of Practice:

- **Courtroom Restrictions:** Foreign lawyers are still prohibited from appearing before Indian courts, tribunals, or statutory authorities.
- **International Arbitration:** A significant change is their now-permitted role in advising and appearing in international arbitration cases conducted in India, regardless of the involvement of foreign law.

Evolution from Previous Limitations:

- **Pre-2023 Restrictions:** Previously, the Supreme Court of India had barred foreign lawyers from any legal practice in India (litigation or non-litigation) and limited their participation in international arbitration to "fly-in and fly-out" arrangements.
- **Opening the Door (with Regulation):** The BCI's new rules represent a major shift, enabling a more significant role for foreign lawyers within a controlled framework.

Anticipated Benefits and Risks:

- **Short-Term Challenges, Long-Term Gains:** While some Indian law firms might experience initial profit decline due to competition, long-term benefits are anticipated.
- **Reciprocity and Knowledge Exchange:** The reciprocity requirement could lead to increased access for Indian lawyers in foreign legal professions. This could foster a sustained exchange of expertise and skills across jurisdictions.
- **Enhancing the Indian Legal Industry:** Increased competition from foreign firms could potentially improve work culture, remuneration packages, and service quality within the Indian legal sector.
- **Potential Challenges:** However, concerns remain regarding:
  - Regulatory disparities between Indian and foreign law firms
  - Potential ethical conflicts arising from differing regulations
  - Financial disparities favoring well-funded foreign firms
  - Unequal marketing restrictions (Indian lawyers cannot

advertise, unlike many foreign counterparts)

Balancing Growth with Caution:
- **Stringent Registration and Exclusions:** The BCI demonstrates awareness of both advantages and disadvantages through:
  o   Strict registration requirements for foreign lawyers
  o   Exclusion of foreign lawyers from litigation work
- **Consultative Approach:** Ongoing dialogue between the BCI and stakeholders suggests a cautious and consultative approach to ensure a smooth integration of foreign legal expertise.

CONCLUSION: India's legal industry stands at a crossroads. The BCI's measured approach to foreign lawyer entry offers a chance to leverage globalization for growth. By fostering knowledge exchange and competition, while mitigating risks, India can create a world-class legal sector equipped to address the complexities of the globalized economy.

ORGAN DONATION HIT BY POOR IDENTIFICATION OF BRAIN DEATH CASES

CONTEXT: The Union Health Ministry in India has expressed concern over low organ donation rates due to poor identification and certification of brain death cases. This has prompted the issuance of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to facilitate organ donation in hospitals across the country.

UNDERSTANDING BRAIN DEATH AND ORGAN DONATION IN INDIA

Brain Death Explained
- **What is it?** Brain death, also known as brain stem death, occurs when all brain functions permanently cease. This includes the critical functions controlled by the brainstem, such as breathing, heartbeat, and blood pressure.
- **Irreversible Condition:** A person declared brain dead is legally dead and has no chance of recovery. Their body can only be maintained with the help of artificial life support.
- **Confirmation Process:** Two senior doctors, with one uninvolved in the patient's care, conduct specific tests to confirm brain death.

Brain Death and Organ Donation
- **Organs Remain Viable:** Even though brain death signifies legal death, some organs can still be viable for transplantation due to artificial life support.
- **Potential for Donation:** After brain death confirmation, a person's organs can be used for transplants, potentially saving the lives of others in need.

LOW ORGAN DONATION RATES IN INDIA: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Problem:
- India's organ donation rate is very low, with less than one donor per million population per year.
- This is despite the availability of many potential organ donors.
- India still faces a significant challenge. The national organ donation rate remains low, at approximately 0.52 donors per million population.
- **Spain's Leading Example:** For comparison, Spain boasts the world's highest organ donation rate at 49.6 per million population, highlighting the potential for significant improvement in India.
- **Encouraging Rise in Transplants:** Data from the National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) shows a positive trend, with a record-breaking 16,041 transplants performed in India during 2022.

OVER 58,000 TRANSPLANTS IN LAST 5 YEARS

Year	Total transplants	Living donor transplants	Deceased donor transplants
2018	10,340	78.19%	21.81%
2019	12,666	83.72%	16.28%
2020	7,443	86.75%	13.25%
2021	12,259	86.78%	13.22%
2022	16,041	83.15%	16.85%

Highest number of living donor transplants*

Delhi	3,422
Tamil Nadu	1,690
Kerala	1,423
Maharashtra	1,222
West Bengal	1,059

Source: NOTTO

Highest number of deceased donor transplants*

Tamil Nadu	555
Telangana	524
Karnataka	478
Gujarat	398
Maharashtra	303

*In 2022

Cause:
- Poor identification and certification of brain stem death/ brain death cases.

Solutions:
- **Improved Identification:**
  - o Health authorities in states/UTs are asked to identify each potential brain death case admitted in the ICU.
- **Family Awareness:**
  - o Hospitals should inquire if the potential donor had pledged for organ donation.
  - o If not, families should be informed about the option to donate organs before cardiac arrest.
- **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):**
  - o The DGHS issued an SOP under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA Act) 1994.
  - o Doctors on duty, with transplant coordinators, will make inquiries after brain death certification.
- **Hospital Responsibilities:**
  - o Facilitate and monitor brain death case certification following THOTA Act and Rules.
  - o Install "Required Request Display Boards" in strategic locations.
    - Educate the public about organ donation after brain death or cardiac arrest.
    - List of donatable organs: kidney, liver, heart, pancreas, eyes, skin, and bones.
- **Additional Information:**
  - In 2022, a total of 16,041 organs (mostly kidneys) were donated.
  - Delhi had the highest number of donations (3,818).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION IN INDIA

Legislation:
- The Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) enacted in 1994 forms the foundation for organ transplantation in India.
- Supplemented by the Transplantation of Human Organs Rules, first established in 1995 and updated in 2014. This update broadened the scope of donation by including transplantable tissues.
- The Act outlaws the commercialization of organs and legally recognizes brain death in India, permitting organ donation from deceased individuals with brain stem death.

Institutional Oversight:
- The National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) is a national body established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- NOTTO sets policy guidelines and protocols, coordinates nationwide organ donation activities, and oversees various transplant-related functions.

RECENT REGULATORY CHANGES (FEBRUARY 2023):
- **Age Limit Removed for Deceased Donor Recipients:** The previous 65-year-old age restriction for registering as a deceased donor organ recipient has been eliminated. (There's no age cap for living donor transplants.)
- **Domicile Criterion Removed:** Previously, patients seeking deceased donor organs had to register in their home state. This requirement has been abolished, allowing patients to register and receive transplants in any Indian state.
- **Unique Patient ID:** NOTTO assigns a unique identification number to registered patients, facilitating continuity of care even if they change hospitals across different states.
- **Free Registration:** States are now prohibited from charging registration fees for patients seeking deceased donor organs (previously ranging from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000).

CONCLUSION: Addressing the issue of poor identification and certification of brain death cases is crucial for improving organ donation rates in India. The implementation of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and proactive measures by health authorities and hospitals are steps in the right direction to facilitate organ donation and save lives. However, sustained efforts and public awareness campaigns will be essential to further enhance organ donation rates across the country.

BUDGETS AND BILLS PASSED WITH LITTLE DELIBERATION

CONTEXT: A new report by PRS Legislative Research reveals a concerning trend - in 2023, Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed a staggering 85% of its budget without legislative debate, followed by similar practices in Kerala and Jharkhand.

State of affairs

The data for the charts were sourced from PRS Legislative Research's Annual Review of State Laws 2023

Madhya Pradesh Assembly building in Bhopal

Chart 1: The chart shows the proportion of the Budget passed without discussion in 10 States in 2023. Figures in %

CG	GA	GJ	HP	JH	KL	MP	TN	TS	WB
0	0	10	60	75	78	85	0	0	74
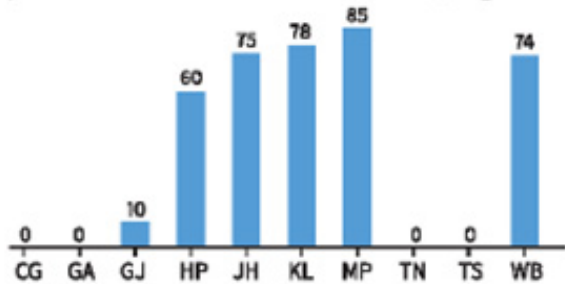
Chart 2: The chart shows the number of sittings and reports tabled by the PAC in 2023

Legend: No. of sittings / No. of reports tabled

	BR	DL	GA	HP	KA	KL	MH	MP	OD	PB	TN	UP	WB
No. of sittings	50	5	4	37	15	30	0	9	23	36	30	53	26
No. of reports tabled	0	0	0	75	3	13	0	8	0	3	95	16	1
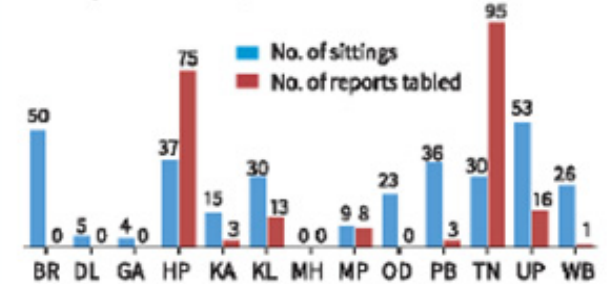
Chart 3: The chart shows the time taken by the State legislatures to pass Bills in 2023

States: AP AR AS BR CG DL GA GJ HR HP JH KA KL MP MH MG MZ NL OD PY PB RJ SK TN TS UK UP WB

Legend: Passed within a day / Passed in 2-5 days / Passed in 5+ days
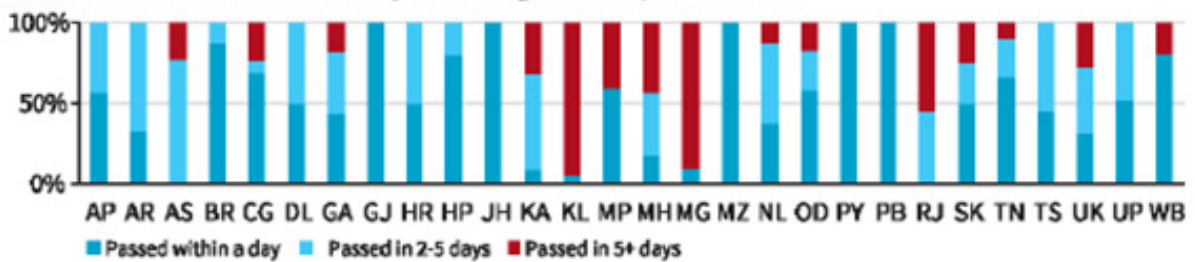
Chart 4: The chart shows the Ordinances promulgated by States in 2023

AP	AS	BR	DL	GA	GJ	HR	HP	KA	KL	MP	MH	MG	OD	PY	PB	SK	UK	UP	WB
11	6	1	0	5	0	2	3	5	4	2	9	7	3	0	0	0	5	20	1
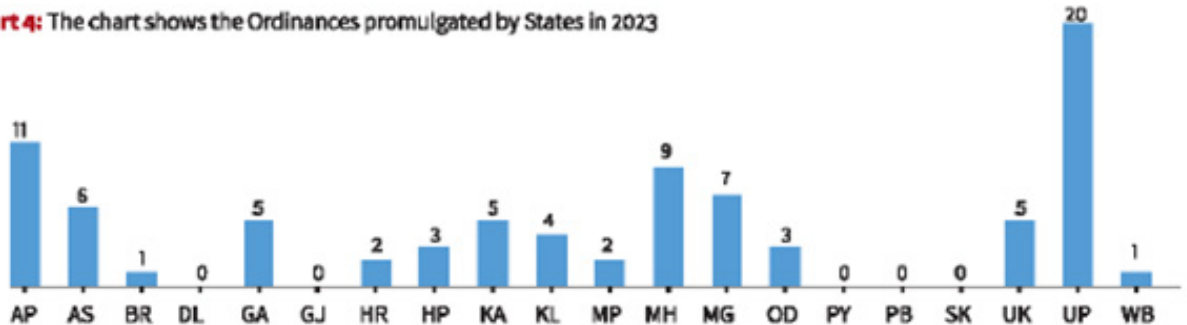
Andhra Pradesh: AP, Jharkhand: JH, Puducherry: PY, Karnataka: KA, Punjab: PB, Assam: AS, Kerala: KL, Rajasthan: RJ, Bihar: BR, Madhya Pradesh: MP, Sikkim: SK, Chhattisgarh: CG, Maharashtra: MH, Tamil Nadu: TN, Delhi: DL, Telangana: TS, Goa: GA, Meghalaya: MG, Gujarat: GJ, Mizoram: MZ, Uttarakhand: UK, Haryana: HR, Nagaland: NL, Uttar Pradesh: UP, Himachal Pradesh: HP, Odisha: OD, West Bengal: WB

REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES IN INDIA IN 2023

Key Points

1. Budget Passing Without Discussion

- Nearly 40% of the ₹18.5 lakh crore budget presented by 10 States was passed without discussion.
- States like Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Jharkhand, and West Bengal passed significant portions of their budgets without debate, highlighting a trend of bypassing legislative scrutiny.

2. Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Inactivity

- In five States (Bihar, Delhi, Goa, Maharashtra, and Odisha), the PAC did not table any reports in 2023.
- Maharashtra's PAC neither met nor released a report during the year, indicating a severe lapse in oversight functions.

3. Fast-Track Passage of Bills

- 44% of bills were passed either on the same day they were introduced or the next day.
- This trend of minimal debate during bill passage reflects a pattern of swift legislative activity consistent with previous years.

4. Promulgation of Ordinances

- 84 ordinances were promulgated in 20 States on subjects including new universities, public examinations, and apartment ownership.
- Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra accounted for the highest number of ordinances, reflecting a reliance on executive orders.

5. Regional Disparities

- States like Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh tabled a significant number of PAC reports, indicating active legislative oversight.
- In contrast, States like Maharashtra and Bihar showed inactivity in PAC functions, demonstrating regional disparities in legislative activity.
- Some states passed bills quickly, while others took more time for deliberation, further illustrating these disparities.

Negative Implications

1. Lack of Transparency

- Budgets passed without discussion indicate a lack of transparency and accountability in the budgetary process.
- This could lead to decisions being made without proper scrutiny or public input, undermining democratic processes.

2. Ineffective Oversight

- The inactivity of PACs in some states suggests a failure of oversight mechanisms.
- This undermines the scrutiny of government expenditure and accountability for public funds, leading to potential misuse of resources.

3. Quality of Legislation

- The fast-track passage of bills with minimal debate raises concerns about the quality of legislation.
- Hasty or poorly scrutinized laws can result from insufficient deliberation, affecting governance and legal frameworks.

4. Overuse of Ordinances

- The high number of ordinances promulgated signifies a reliance on executive orders to bypass the legislative process.
- This can undermine democratic principles and the legislature's role in lawmaking, weakening checks and balances.

Way Forward

1. Enhancing Transparency and Accountability

- **Mandate thorough discussions and debates on budgets before passage:** Ensure that all financial decisions undergo rigorous legislative scrutiny.
- **Establish mechanisms for public participation:** Foster citizen engagement and input in the budgetary process to increase transparency and accountability.

2. Reforming Oversight Mechanisms

- **Strengthen the functioning of PACs:** Ensure regular meetings and timely submission of reports to enhance oversight.
- **Empower PACs with resources, authority, and independence:** Provide adequate support to effectively scrutinize government expenditure and promote accountability.

Additional Recommendations:

- **Implement Legislative Training Programs:** Equip legislators with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively, ensuring better quality debates and decisions.
- **Promote Legislative Transparency:** Use technology to live-stream legislative sessions and publish proceedings and reports online, making them accessible to the public.
- **Review and Rationalize Ordinance Use:** Establish clear guidelines and limitations on the use of ordinances to ensure they are used appropriately and not as a substitute for regular legislative processes.

CONCLUSION: The report exposes concerning trends in Indian state legislatures. Lack of debate on budgets and bills, inactive oversight committees, and overuse of ordinances raise serious questions about transparency, accountability, and the quality of legislation. Urgent reforms are needed to strengthen legislative scrutiny and public participation in the lawmaking process.

ABOUT THE REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court has established a special panel of nine judges to examine how the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) apply to the issue of who owns and controls the country's vital resources.

BACKGROUND: The debate surrounding wealth redistribution has gained prominence during the ongoing election campaign. The dispute over cessed properties, now before the Supreme Court, originated from a challenge to the 1986 amendment to the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act, 1976. It is in this context that Supreme Court has established a special panel of nine judges to examine Directive Principles of State policy.

Exceptions to fundamental rights

Considering the inadequate resources with the government and to provide greater flexibility in acquiring land for public welfare, various amendments were carried out curtailing the right to property. Notable among them are exceptions under Articles 31A, 31B and 31C

Article	Amendment & year	Brief explanation
31A	1st amendment, 1951	Provided that laws made for acquisition of estates etc. shall not be void on the ground that it violated fundamental rights including right to property
31B	1st amendment, 1951	Made laws placed under the Ninth Schedule immune from judicial review on the grounds of violating any fundamental right. In Coelho case (2007), the SC held that laws placed in Ninth Schedule after April 1973 would be subject to judicial review
31C	25th amendment, 1971	Provided primacy to the DPSP under Articles 39(b) and (c). Laws made to fulfil these principles shall not be void on the ground that it violated fundamental rights including right to property

WHAT IS MAHARASHTRA HOUSING AND AREA DEVELOPMENT ACT, 1976 (MHADA)

- The Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act (MHADA) was enacted in 1976.
- It aimed to address the problem of old, dilapidated buildings in Mumbai that were unsafe for tenants.

Initial Measures:

- MHADA imposed a cess on building occupants to fund repairs through the Mumbai Building Repair and Reconstruction Board (MBRRB).

1986 Amendment:

- Article 39(b) of the Constitution empowers the state to secure the material resources of the community for the common good.
- To fulfill this, Section 1A was inserted into MHADA, allowing land and building acquisition for "needy persons" and existing occupants.
- Chapter VIII-A was added, enabling the government to acquire cessed buildings (and land) if 70% of occupants requested it.

Legal Challenge:

- The Property Owners' Association in Mumbai challenged Chapter VIII-A in the Bombay High Court.
- They argued that it violated their right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

High Court Judgement:

- The Court upheld the amendment.
- Article 31C protects laws enacted for implementing Article 39(b), even if they seemingly infringe on other rights.

Supreme Court Appeal:

- The Association appealed to the Supreme Court in December 1992.
- The central question became whether "material resources of the community" in Article 39(b) includes private property like cessed buildings.

Court Proceedings:

- March 2001: A 5-judge bench referred the case to a larger bench due to conflicting views on a previous case (Sanjeev Coke Manufacturing).
- February 2002: A 7-judge bench further referred the challenge to a nine-judge bench, which is currently hearing the matter.

REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

What is it?

- Redistribution of wealth is the transfer of resources from wealthier individuals to less wealthy ones.
- This can happen through various social mechanisms:
  - **Taxation:** Those earning more pay a higher proportion of their income in taxes.
  - **Government programs:** Public services, welfare measures, subsidies, and direct cash transfers all fall under this category.
  - **Charity:** Voluntary donations from individuals or organizations.

Examples in India

- The Indian government uses tax revenue to fund programs that benefit the less fortunate.
  - **Welfare measures:** These can include programs like subsidized food or housing.
  - **Subsidies:** The government can offer financial assistance to reduce the cost of essential goods and services.
  - **Direct cash transfers:** Schemes where money is directly deposited into the accounts of the needy.
- Property tax levied by state governments also contributes to wealth redistribution

THE INHERITANCE TAX:

- It refers to the tax levied on the value of inheritance received by a beneficiary on the death of a person.
- Inheritance tax, or death taxes, or estate duty as it may be called are all taxes which are paid on the estate of the deceased.
- In the past, India had estate duty (a form of inheritance tax), wealth tax and gift tax. They were abolished as the cost of administering them was more than revenue generated.
- PURPOSE: To bridge the inequality gap between members of a society.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION IN INDIA

The Constitution's Goals

- The Preamble of the Indian Constitution outlines the objective of securing social and economic justice, liberty, and equality for all citizens. This vision lays the groundwork for wealth redistribution policies.

Fundamental Rights vs. Directive Principles

- Part III of the Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, ensuring individual freedoms and equality.
- Part IV outlines the Directive Principles of State Policy

(DPSP). These principles are not directly enforceable in court but guide the government in creating laws to achieve social and economic justice (Article 39(b) and (c)).

- o Article 39(b) emphasizes the fair distribution of a society's resources for the common good.
- o Article 39(c) discourages the concentration of wealth, preventing excessive economic disparity.

Right to Property: A Shifting Landscape
- **Original Constitution:** The right to property was a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(f).
- **Post-Independence Challenges:** Land reforms and public infrastructure projects necessitated acquiring private property.
  - o To address this, the government amended the Constitution to provide greater flexibility in land acquisition.

Curtailing the Right to Property
- **Amendments:** The right to property's status as a fundamental right was weakened through amendments:
  - o Article 31A (1st Amendment Act, 1951): Laws for acquiring property by the state are not challengeable on grounds of violating fundamental rights, including the right to property.
  - o Article 31B (1st Amendment Act, 1951): Laws placed under the Ninth Schedule are immune from judicial review for violating fundamental rights (exceptions exist under the "basic structure doctrine").
  - o Article 31C (25th Amendment Act, 1971): Laws enacted to fulfill the principles of Articles 39(b) and (c) (wealth distribution and preventing concentration) cannot be challenged for violating fundamental rights, including the right to property.
- **44th Amendment Act, 1978:** This amendment removed the right to property from the list of fundamental rights and categorized it as a constitutional right under Article 300A. Property acquisition by the state still requires a public purpose and adequate compensation.

SUPREME COURT RULINGS ON RIGHT TO PROPERTY AND WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION

Landmark Cases and Shifting Interpretations
The Supreme Court's decisions have significantly impacted the relationship between the right to property and the government's power to redistribute wealth.

- **Golak Nath Case (1967):** This case initially limited the government's ability to use Directive Principles (DPSP) to curtail fundamental rights like property rights.
- **Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973):** This landmark judgement established the "basic structure doctrine," allowing some limitations on fundamental rights through DPSP, including Article 31C which empowers wealth redistribution measures.
- **State of Karnataka vs Shri Ranganatha Reddy (1977):** A divided court (4:3) initially interpreted "material resources of the community" in Article 39(b) to not include privately owned resources, hindering wealth redistribution efforts. However, Justice Krishna Iyer's dissenting opinion argued for including private resources for equitable distribution.

Justice Krishna Iyer's Influence
Justice Iyer's dissenting view in the Reddy case proved influential in later judgements:

- **Sanjeev Coke Manufacturing Company vs Bharat Coking Coal (1983):** A 5-judge bench adopted Justice Iyer's interpretation, upholding nationalization of coal mines based on Article 39(b)'s ability to regulate private resources for the common good.
- **Mafatlal Industries Ltd vs Union of India (1996):** A 9-judge bench reaffirmed the broader interpretation of "material resources" to encompass private property, enabling the government to utilize it for wealth redistribution objectives. This case established that Article 39(b) applies to "all private and public sources" of meeting material needs.

Balancing Rights and Principles
- **Minerva Mills Case (1980):** The court emphasized the need for a harmonious balance between fundamental rights and DPSP, suggesting that wealth redistribution policies must consider both aspects.

These cases demonstrate the ongoing evolution of how the right to property interacts with the government's power to redistribute wealth in India. The Supreme Court's rulings have expanded the scope of Article 39(b) to allow for the use of private resources for achieving social and economic justice.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICY ON WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION: A SHIFT FROM SOCIALISM TO MARKET ECONOMY

Socialist Model (First Four Decades after Independence)
- **Goal:** Reduce inequality and redistribute wealth to the poorer majority.
- **Measures:**
  - o Land acquisition from wealthy landowners for public benefit.
  - o Nationalization of key sectors like banking and insurance.
  - o High direct taxes (up to 97%), estate duty (inheritance tax), and wealth tax.
  - o Regulations limiting private enterprise growth (e.g., The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act).
- **Concerns:**
  - o Stifled economic growth.
  - o Discouraged investment due to high taxes.
  - o Low revenue generation from estate and wealth taxes due to administrative costs and potential for concealment.

Market-Driven Economy (Since the 1990s)
- **Shift:** Move from a closed economy towards liberalization, globalization, and privatization.
- **Goal:** Empower market forces, improve efficiency, and modernize the industrial structure.
- **Changes:**
  - o Repeal of the MRTP Act (replaced by the Competition Act, 2002) to promote competition.
  - o Significant reduction in income tax rates.
  - o Abolition of estate duty (1985) and wealth tax (2016).
- **Benefits:**
  - o Increased government revenue for poverty alleviation programs.
  - o Overall economic growth.
- **Drawbacks:**
  - o Widening income and wealth inequality.
  - o As per World Inequality Lab reports, the top 10%

hold a staggering 65% and 57% share of the nation's wealth and income, respectively (2022-23 data).

This shift in economic policy reflects a complex trade-off between promoting growth and achieving social justice. While the market-driven approach has yielded economic benefits, the issue of wealth inequality remains a pressing challenge for the Indian government.

WHY WEALTH SHOULD REDISTRIBUTED IN INDIA ?

The Problem of Rising Inequality

- A recent study by the World Inequality Lab paints a concerning picture: the top 1% of Indians now control a massive 40% of the nation's wealth.
- Left unchecked, this gap will continue to widen.

Policy Solutions for Wealth Redistribution

- Economists like Thomas Piketty advocate for stronger measures to redistribute wealth and promote economic justice.
- Specific policy interventions are crucial to bridge the gap:
  o **Taxation on the Wealthy:** Implementing a "super tax" on billionaires and millionaires is a potential approach.
  o **Taxing Wealth:** Broadening the tax base by effectively taxing the wealth of the rich is another possible solution.

Is Inequality Decreasing? A Different Perspective

- A report by the State Bank of India (SBI) offers a contrasting viewpoint.
- It suggests a significant decline in inequality over the past decade, citing a drop in the Gini coefficient from 0.472 (2014-15) to 0.402 (2022-23).
- This 15% reduction implies a potential decrease in wealth disparity.

The Road Ahead

- Addressing wealth inequality is a complex issue in India.
- While the SBI report offers a glimmer of hope, the World Inequality Lab's findings highlight the continued need for effective policies.
- Exploring various approaches, such as wealth taxes and targeted interventions, remains crucial to achieve inclusive growth and ensure a more equitable distribution of resources.

> **GINI COEFFICIENT:** It is a standard measure of inequality that ranges from 0, indicating perfect equality, to 1, indicating perfect inequality.

BENEFITS OF WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION

Wealth redistribution offers a range of advantages for society:

- **Increased Economic Opportunity:** Redistribution aims to bridge the gap between the wealthy and less fortunate. By providing greater economic stability and opportunities for those with lower incomes, it fosters a more inclusive economy.
- **Funding Public Services:** Redistribution efforts often involve allocating resources towards public services like education, healthcare, and social welfare programs. These services are crucial for uplifting weaker sections of society and promoting overall well-being.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Effective wealth redistribution can contribute to inclusive growth, where the benefits of economic prosperity are more widely shared. This fosters a more stable and sustainable economic environment.
- **Enhanced Equality of Opportunity:** Inheritance taxes, for example, can help equalize wealth distribution across generations. This promotes fairer chances for upward mobility and social mobility.
- **Horizontal Equity in Taxation:** Inheritance taxes also contribute to horizontal equity in the tax system. This principle ensures that individuals in similar economic situations bear a similar tax burden.
- **Addressing Social Issues:** Wealth redistribution empowers the government to tackle social issues like poverty, homelessness, and environmental degradation. By addressing these challenges, society as a whole benefits.
- **Social Justice:** Redistribution aligns with the principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution's Preamble, which emphasizes achieving social justice for all citizens.

CHALLENGES TO WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION IN INDIA

Redistribution of wealth, while aiming for social justice, faces several hurdles in India:

Economic Concerns:

- **Stifling Growth:** Critics argue that excessive redistribution can dampen innovation and productivity, ultimately hindering economic growth. High taxes on the wealthy may discourage investment and entrepreneurship.
- **Tax Shifting:** Businesses may try to avoid high taxes by transferring the burden to smaller businesses, employees, or even consumers. This can distort the market and reduce overall efficiency.

Political Resistance:

- **Vested Interests:** Powerful groups like wealthy individuals and corporations often resist wealth redistribution policies that might reduce their profits or influence. Political lobbying can create a hostile environment for such reforms.

Informal Economy:

- **Hidden Income:** A large portion of India's economy operates informally, making it difficult to track income and effectively implement progressive taxation measures. Many low-wage earners in the informal sector remain outside the tax net.

Operational Challenges:

- **Bureaucratic Inefficiency:** Leaks and corruption within the system can undermine the effectiveness of redistribution programs. Implementing and managing these programs efficiently requires robust institutions lacking in some areas.

Social Inequalities:

- **Caste and Discrimination:** Deep-rooted social inequalities based on caste, gender, religion, and ethnicity can hinder the effectiveness of redistributive policies. Marginalized groups may face barriers in accessing resources and opportunities targeted by such programs.

STRATEGIES FOR EQUITABLE WEALTH DISTRIBUTION

Despite the challenges, various strategies can promote a more equitable distribution of wealth and economic inclusion:

Government Responsibility:

- **Protecting the Vulnerable:** The government has a crucial role in safeguarding the interests of the less fortunate

who rely on public services for survival. Economic growth benefits should reach all sections of society, particularly marginalized communities. Resource-based development policies can empower these groups.

Inheritance Tax:
- **Creating a Redistribution Base:** Implementing an inheritance tax similar to those in Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand could generate a steady stream of revenue for wealth redistribution programs.

Strengthening Institutions:
- **Effective Delivery:** Robust institutions and good governance are essential for ensuring the efficient delivery of welfare services and maximizing societal well-being.

Social Consensus:
- **Building Agreement:** Reaching a socio-political consensus among stakeholders, including businesses, civil society, and citizens, is crucial for enacting progressive taxation and welfare programs. Addressing income inequality requires collective action.

Level-Playing Field:
- **Equal Opportunities:** Social justice demands a level playing field for all. This includes access to high-quality education and healthcare for everyone. Revenue generated through direct taxation on income and wealth can be used to fund these essential services.

Democratizing Distribution:
- **Worker Participation:** Some argue for democratizing wealth distribution at the enterprise level. This could involve giving workers a say in how profits are distributed, potentially through a system of one vote per worker on key decisions.

Alternative Approaches:
- **Focus on Opportunity:** Alongside wealth redistribution, efforts to improve access to education, promote economic growth, and foster a business-friendly environment can create a more inclusive economy. This can empower individuals to enhance their economic circumstances through skills development and entrepreneurship. Policies that enhance human capital, promote innovation, and reduce barriers to starting a business can contribute to overall prosperity.

These are just some of the complex issues surrounding wealth redistribution in India. Finding the right balance between achieving social justice, fostering economic growth, and addressing administrative challenges is key to creating a more equitable and prosperous society.

CONCLUSION: Balancing wealth redistribution with economic growth and social justice is crucial for India's development. While challenges like political resistance, bureaucratic inefficiency, and deep-rooted social inequalities persist, strategies such as robust government policies, inheritance taxes, and social consensus can promote equitable wealth distribution. By addressing these issues and fostering inclusive growth, India can work towards a more just and prosperous society for all its citizens.

THE POLL PROMISE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

CONTEXT: Amid the 2024 general elections, political parties are vying for voter support with promises of schemes, freebies, and affordable housing, targeting the 1.7 million homeless individuals reported in the 2011 Census, as well as addressing concerns over housing quality, congestion, and inadequate amenities and infrastructure for those already housed.

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (PMAY): RURAL AND URBAN HOUSING FOR ALL

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) is a flagship initiative of the Indian government that aims to achieve "Housing for All" by 2024. It addresses the need for affordable housing for both rural and urban populations through two main components: **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U).**

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA – GRAMIN (PMAY-G)
- **Objective:** Provide pucca (permanent) houses with basic amenities to rural households living in kutcha (mud) houses, dilapidated dwellings, or with no shelter.
- **Beneficiaries:** Identified through Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data and verified by Gram Sabhas (village councils).
- **Financial Assistance:**
  o Cost shared between Central and State governments:
  - **Plain areas:** 60:40 ratio, with a central contribution of Rs. 1.20 lakh per unit.
  - **Himalayan/North-eastern states & J&K:** 90:10 ratio, with a central contribution of up to Rs. 1.30 lakh per unit.
  - **Union Territories (UTs):** 100% central financing, including the UT of Ladakh.
- **Salient Features:**
  o **MGNREGS support:** Beneficiaries entitled to 90/95 person-days of unskilled labour under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
  o **Toilet construction assistance:** Up to Rs. 12,000 under Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) in collaboration with MGNREGS or other schemes.
  o **Direct benefit transfer:** Electronic payments directly to Aadhaar-linked bank or post office accounts.
  o **Minimum house size:** 25 sq. mt. with a dedicated area for hygienic cooking.

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA – URBAN (PMAY-U)

- **Objective:** Address urban homelessness by providing affordable housing options.
- **Mission duration:** Extended till December 31, 2024 (originally 7 years: FY 2015-16 to FY 2021-22).
- **Focus on women empowerment:** Ownership of houses in the name of female members or jointly encouraged.
- **Concerned Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)
- **Salient features:**
- o **Four verticals:**
    - **In-situ Slum Redevelopment:** Upgradation of slums with beneficiary households receiving Rs. 1 lakh central assistance, potentially matched by state and local bodies.
    - **Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS):** Subsidy offered on home loan interest rates for eligible beneficiaries.
    - **Affordable housing partnership:** Incentives for building affordable housing. Central government provides Rs. 1.5 lakh per EWS (Economically Weaker Section) house in projects allocating 35% of units to EWS.
    - **Beneficiary-led individual house construction/ enhancement (BLC):** Up to Rs. 2.5 lakh for eligible EWS families with land or existing homes needing improvement (Central and state/local body contributions combined).
    - **Cost Sharing:** The central government provides Rs. 1.5 lakh for individual families under BLC. States and urban local bodies may contribute an additional Rs. 1 lakh.

Achievements (as of December 2023)

- **PMAY-U:**
    - o 118.63 lakh houses sanctioned, with 78.15 lakh constructed/delivered.
- **PMAY-G:**
    - o Over 2.94 crore houses sanctioned to beneficiaries.
    - o More than 2.55 crore houses completed.
- **Combined PMAY Budget:** Rs. 80,671 crore allocated in the February 2024 interim budget.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN INDIA: A LOOK AT STATE SCHEMES

While the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) is a pan-India initiative aimed at making housing affordable, many state governments have introduced their own schemes to cater to specific needs and demographics.

1. Kerala State Housing Board (KSHB) Schemes:
- Rajiv One Million Housing Scheme (ROMHS): Launched in 1991, this caters to various income groups.
- Mythri Housing Scheme: Introduced in 1996, this specifically targets economically weaker sections (EWS) by offering subsidized housing.

2. Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Housing Scheme:

This scheme offers flats at discounted rates through a lottery system for various categories like Low Income Group (LIG), Middle Income Group (MIG), and Janta Flats.

3. NTR Urban Housing Scheme (Andhra Pradesh):

This scheme provides financial assistance for low-income families to purchase houses built by the government or approved builders.

4. Tamil Nadu Housing Board Schemes:

The Tamil Nadu Housing Board offers various schemes for different income groups, including LIG, MIG, and Higher Income Group (HIG).

Benefits of State Schemes:

These schemes often complement PMAY by providing additional subsidies or targeting specific demographics within a state. They might focus on:
- Geographical location: Cater to housing needs in specific regions within a state.
- Income bracket: Offer targeted benefits to families below a certain income level.
- Special categories: Provide housing for specific groups like slum dwellers or government employees.

CONCLUSION: The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) demonstrates a significant commitment to addressing India's housing challenges, with substantial progress in both rural and urban sectors. The continued emphasis on affordable housing aims to uplift millions of citizens, ensuring better living conditions and contributing to the nation's socio-economic development.

POLITICS SERVED WITH CONCISE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

CONTEXT: India faces rapid changes in information dissemination due to social media, impacting political narratives and potentially altering election outcomes.

BACKGROUND: The landscape of information consumption in India is rapidly evolving, driven by the surge in social media use, especially in vernacular languages. This shift emphasizes instant gratification and influences political narratives, potentially swaying election results. The largely unregulated digital environment and polarized political climate require vigilance to mitigate the spread of disruptive misinformation.

IMPACT OF SHORT ATTENTION SPANS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL DYNAMICS

- **Attention Span Decline:** Human attention spans have dropped to 45 seconds, driving the rise of viral, short-form content on social media.
- **Political Influence:** Short, viral content on social media can boost the influence of obscure figures and political parties alike.
- **Social Media Power Shift:** The BJP's early adoption of social media is seen as a key factor in its political dominance since 2014.
- **Congress' Response:** The Congress has ramped up its social media presence since 2019, but BJP still leads in engagement.
- **Impact on Political Landscape:** Social media platforms' focus on viral content can overshadow factual narratives, affecting political dynamics globally.

IMPACT OF VIRAL POLITICAL CONTENT ON POLITICAL NARRATIVES

- **Viral Video by Dhruv Rathee:** A video titled "Is India Becoming a Dictatorship" by vlogger Dhruv Rathee went viral, sparking widespread discussion.
- **Content Designed to Go Viral:** The video's format allowed easy splicing into shorter segments, catering to short attention spans and facilitating virality.
- **Political Firestorm:** The video generated hundreds of 'shorts', creating a narrative firestorm challenging BJP sympathizers.
- **Shift in Political Dynamics:** Political roles inverted as an independent content creator set the narrative, later amplified by political parties.
- **Opposition's Social Media Strategy:** Opposition parties now rely on independent influencers to create viral content, changing social media dynamics.

CONCLUSION: The evolving media landscape, driven by social media and instant gratification, has undermined traditional checks and balances, making political analysis more challenging. Election strategies are now shaped by rapidly changing social media narratives, posing uncertainty over who can effectively control this digital turbulence and capitalize on it for electoral gains.

STATE CANNOT ACQUIRE PROPERTY WITHOUT PROPER PROCEDURE: SC

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court ruled against arbitrary state takeovers of private property without proper procedures and fair compensation.

BACKGROUND: The right to property, considered both a constitutional and human right, was affirmed by a Bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Aravind Kumar in a recent judgment. The judgment emphasized that compulsory acquisition of property is permissible only under the power of eminent domain, provided fair compensation and proper procedure are strictly adhered to, to prevent unconstitutional deprivation of property rights.

CALCUTTA HIGH COURT JUDGMENT ON RIGHT TO PROPERTY

- **Court Upholds High Court Order:** The Calcutta High Court order rejecting an appeal by Kolkata Municipal Corporation defending its land acquisition was upheld.
- **Article 300A:** The judgment highlighted Article 300A, which prevents deprivation of property without authority of law.
- **Importance of Procedure:** Procedures and processes of law are crucial for safeguarding property rights under Article 300A.
- **Not Just Eminent Domain:** "Authority of law" in Article 300A is not limited to the state's eminent domain power.
- **Clarity on Legal Requirement:** Mere legislative empowerment is not enough; specific laws are required to deprive a person of their property.

Law of the land

The SC says there are seven procedural rights of citizens which constitute the 'real content of the right to property under Article 300A'

1. The right to notice or the duty of the state to inform a person that it intends to acquire his or her property
2. The right of the citizen to be heard or the duty of the state to hear the objections to the acquisition
3. The right of the citizen to a reasoned decision or the duty of the state to inform the person of its decision to acquire a property
4. The duty of the state to demonstrate that the acquisition is exclusively for public purpose
5. The right of the citizen to fair compensation
6. The duty of the state to conduct the process of acquisition efficiently and within prescribed timelines
7. The right of conclusion of the proceedings

PROCEDURAL RIGHTS OF CITIZENS IN PROPERTY ACQUISITION

- **Seven Procedural Rights:** The court identified seven basic procedural rights that private citizens have under Article 300A in property acquisition cases.
- **Right to Notice:** Citizens have the right to be informed or receive notice from the state about property acquisition intentions.
- **Right to Be Heard:** Citizens have the right to present objections to the state before any decision on property acquisition is made.
- **Right to Reasoned Decision:** The state must provide a reasoned decision to the citizen regarding property acquisition.
- **Public Purpose Requirement:** The state must demonstrate that property acquisition is exclusively for public purpose.

- **Right to Fair Compensation:** Citizens have the right to fair compensation for their acquired property.
- **Efficient Acquisition Process:** The state must conduct the property acquisition efficiently and within prescribed timelines.
- **Possession Completion:** The court clarified that property acquisition is complete only when the state takes physical possession of the land.

RIGHT TO PRIVATE PROPERTY

- **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:** Before 1978, the right to property was a fundamental right, offering strong protection against state interference or deprivation.
- **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT:** The 44th Constitution Amendment in 1978 removed the right to property as a fundamental right, but it remains a constitutional right under Article 300A.

- **Article 300A:** This article states that no person shall be deprived of their property except by authority of law, ensuring due process.
- **PROTECTION UNDER ARTICLE 19(1)(F):** The right to private property is guaranteed under Article 19(1)(f) of the Constitution, allowing acquisition, holding, and disposal of property.
- **JUDICIAL AFFIRMATION:** The Supreme Court has affirmed that the right to private property is a human right and cannot be deprived without due process of law.

CONCLUSION: The Supreme Court reinforces the right to property, requiring fair compensation, proper procedures, and a legitimate public purpose for any acquisition by the state. This upholds citizen rights and prevents arbitrary land takeovers.

SC LIMITS ED'S POWER TO ARREST PMLA ACCUSED

CONTEXT: Supreme Court boosts personal liberty, ruling PMLA summonsed individuals aren't presumed in custody and needn't seek strict bail.

HIGHLIGHTS: The Supreme Court ruled that appearing before a special court in response to a summons does not constitute custody, eliminating the need for bail. The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) must apply separately for custody with specific grounds for custodial interrogation. The special court can require bonds under Section 88 of the CrPC, which is not equivalent to bail.

Easing conditions

The major takeaways from the Supreme Court verdict on the Prevention of Money Laundering Act are:

- An accused is presumed to be not in custody if he appears in court on summons
- The court can direct the accused to furnish bonds in terms of Section 88 of the Code of Criminal Procedure
- The ED has to apply to a special court for custody, giving specific reasons

SUPREME COURT CLARIFIES ED CUSTODY AND BAIL CONDITIONS UNDER PMLA

- **Custody Application:** The ED must separately apply for custody of a person appearing in court, providing specific grounds for necessitating custodial interrogation.
- **Bond Clarification:** The special court can require the accused to furnish bonds under Section 88 of the CrPC, which doesn't equate to bail, bypassing PMLA's twin conditions.

- **Anticipatory Bail:** The judgment stemmed from Tarsem Lal's appeal against a denial of anticipatory bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.
- **Bail Conditions:** Section 45 of the PMLA imposes stringent bail conditions, requiring proof of innocence and assurance against re-offense, heavily burdening the accused.
- **Appearance and Warrants:** An accused can be exempted from future personal appearances; non-compliance after summons can lead to bailable, then non-bailable, warrants.

PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT, 2002

- **Distinct Objective:** The PMLA, 2002 was enacted to combat the destabilizing effects of black money generated through international drug trafficking and integrated into the legitimate economy.
- **Legislative Basis:** Enacted under Article 253 of the Indian Constitution, the PMLA aligns with international conventions and FATF recommendations to address money laundering.
- **Crime Proceeds:** PMLA targets both direct participants in crime and those involved in laundering proceeds, addressing serious economic crimes threatening global stability.
- **Regulatory Authority:** The ED enforces PMLA provisions, investigates money laundering, and has civil court powers under Section 50 for summoning and recording statements.
- **Controversial Provisions:** PMLA's Section 19 and Section 50 have been criticized for infringing on fundamental rights, including the right to be informed of charges and protection against self-incrimination.

WHY WAS PURKAYASTHA'S ARREST INVALIDATED?

CONTEXT: Prabir Purkayastha, founder of news website News click, was released after the Supreme Court deemed his arrest under anti-terror laws illegal due to procedural lapses.

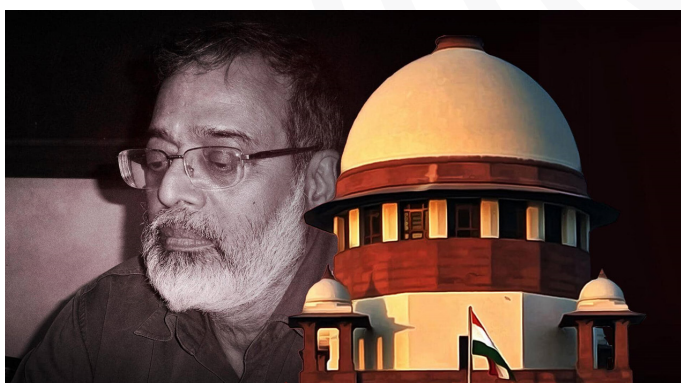**BACKGROUND:**

FIR CHARGES:

- **August 2023:** Delhi Police Special Cell filed a First Information Report (FIR) against Newsclick under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and Indian Penal Code (IPC).
  - o **UAPA Sections:** 13 (punishment for unlawful activities), 16 (punishment for terrorist act), 17 (punishment for raising funds for terrorist act), 18 (punishment for organizing terrorist camps), 22 (punishment for threatening witness)
  - o **IPC Sections:** 153A (spreading enmity between groups) & 120B (criminal conspiracy)
- **Basis for FIR:** A New York Times report alleged News Click received funding from American businessman Neville Roy Singham to promote Chinese propaganda.

PRE-EXISTING INVESTIGATION:

- **Since 2021:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigated NewsClick for money laundering, claiming they received ₹77 crore in foreign remittance (2018-2021).

POLICE RAIDS:

- **October 2023**: Police raided homes and offices of journalists, authors, academics, contributors, and a satirist associated with NewsClick.
- **Focus of questioning**: Delhi communal riots, CAA protests (2019-20), farmers' protests (2020-21), and use of encrypted messaging apps (e.g., Signal).
- **Confiscation:** Phones and laptops of all NewsClick employees, contributors, and consultants were seized.

SUPREME COURT OBSERVATIONS ON RIGHT TO INFORMATION DURING ARREST

- **Right to be informed in writing:** The SC reaffirmed the fundamental right to be informed about the grounds of arrest in writing. This right is guaranteed under Articles 20, 21 and 22 of the Constitution.
- **Article 22(1) and its significance:** The court highlighted Article 22(1) which states that arrested individuals must be informed of the arrest reasons "as soon as may be" and cannot be denied the right to legal counsel.

- **Building on past judgment:** The SC referenced its October 3, 2023 ruling in Pankaj Bansal vs. Union of India, where it mandated providing written explanations for arrests.
- **Importance for stringent laws:** This is crucial for laws like UAPA and PMLA where bail is difficult. Protection against unlawful arrests is even more vital in such cases.

EXTENDING PRINCIPLES AND SAFEGUARDS

- **UAPA now included:** The principle of mandatory written explanation for arrest grounds, previously established for PMLA, has now been extended to UAPA.
- **Strict action for violations:** The SC emphasized that attempts to violate this fundamental right will be dealt with severely.
- **Procedural safeguards for UAPA:** UAPA grants the state broad powers, but the SC has historically been cautious about procedural safeguards due to national security concerns. However, the court has recently shown a willingness to extend some safeguards, like allowing bail in 2021 due to excessive trial delays.

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CONCLUSION: The Supreme Court's ruling strengthens protections against arbitrary arrests under UAPA. It mandates written explanations and emphasizes legal counsel access, ensuring greater transparency and safeguarding fundamental rights.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE PARADOX OF INDIA'S GLOBAL RISE, ITS REGIONAL DECLINE

CONTEXT: India's ambitious rise on the world stage is strangely contrasted by a decline in its influence within its own region, South Asia.

BACKGROUND: India's global influence is on the rise, with a strong economy, military, and participation in important global groups. However, its power in its region, South Asia, is declining. China's growing influence and a shift in regional dynamics are challenging India's traditional dominance. Another major reason is the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, which has allowed China to entrench more closely to the region. This paradox creates difficulties for India's ambitions as a major world power.

INDIA'S PARADOX: GLOBAL RISE, REGIONAL DECLINE

The puzzling situation of India's growing global influence contrasting with its diminishing power in its own neighbourhood, South Asia.

- **India's Global Rise:**
  - o **Absolute Power Growth:** This includes a robust economy, a strong military, and a young population.
  - o **Global Recognition:** Participation in key institutions (G-20, Quad, etc.) highlights India's growing significance.
  - o **Geopolitical Advantage:** India's central location in the Indo-Pacific, a region of strategic importance, adds to its global prominence.

- **India's Regional Decline (Compared to):**
  - o **Cold War Era:** India wielded significant influence in South Asia during this period.
  - o **China's Rise:** China's growing power is the biggest factor behind India's decline in the region.
  - o **Shifting Geopolitical Landscape:** Changes within South Asia itself have also contributed to India's diminishing influence.

- **Factors Contributing to Regional Decline:**
  - o **The US Withdrawal:** America's retreat from the region created a power vacuum that China filled, impacting India negatively. (Paradox here: This withdrawal also made the US more receptive to India's global interests, boosting its global standing.)
  - o **Overstretched Focus:** India's focus on the Indo-Pacific balance of power might have neglected its continental neighbourhood.
  - o **Balancing Act by Smaller Nations:** India's neighbours are strategically balancing their relationships with India and China.
  - o **Obsolescence of South Asia as a Geopolitical Construct:** The concept of South Asia as a unified region may be losing relevance.

- o **India's Indo-Pacific Focus:** In the Indo-Pacific, while attention has grown, India's global importance as a vital player might have strained its capacity to engage with its continental neighbours, given its focus on the great power dynamics in the region.

CHALLENGES TO INDIAN REGIONAL DOMINANCE IN THE FACE OF CHINA'S RISE

1. Shift of Power in South Asia:
- China's meteoric rise as an economic and military giant has fundamentally altered the regional power dynamics.
- Traditionally, India enjoyed a dominant position in South Asia. However, China's growing economic clout and assertive foreign policy are challenging this established order.

2. Realignments in the Neighborhood:
- This shift in power has led to a more competitive geopolitical environment in India's backyard.
- Smaller South Asian nations are increasingly engaging in "balancing acts," forging closer ties with China as a way to hedge against their traditional dependence on India.
- Examples:
  - o China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers significant infrastructure investment in the region, creating economic incentives for closer ties with China.
  - o Some South Asian nations might view China's no-strings-attached approach to development as more appealing compared to India's perceived conditionalities on aid.

3. Erosion of India's Influence:
- This strategic shift by smaller nations weakens India's ability to project its influence in the region.
- India's soft power, built on historical and cultural ties, might be overshadowed by China's growing economic leverage.

Additional Considerations:
- This is not a zero-sum game. Some South Asian nations might choose to maintain close ties with both India and China to maximize their benefits.
- India's own economic development and its ability to offer a compelling strategic and economic partnership will be crucial in countering China's influence.

- **Recommendations for India:**
  - o **Acknowledge the Reality:** India needs to accept the changing dynamics of the region.
  - o **Play to Strengths:** Focus on India's unique strengths rather than simply trying to match China's power in every aspect.
  - o **Leverage Maritime Advantages:** India should utilize its maritime space for trade and partnerships to compensate for continental challenges.
  - o **Include Neighbours in Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Engaging smaller South Asian nations in the Indo-Pacific framework could benefit India.
  - o **Openness to External Partnerships:** India's willingness to collaborate with external friendly powers can help address regional challenges.
  - o **Utilize Soft Power:** Encouraging informal contacts and conflict resolution initiatives can enhance India's influence.

THE UNDERLYING QUESTION: Whether a nation struggling to maintain dominance in its region can truly be a pivotal power on the global stage?

ANALYSIS:

India's ascent on the world stage clashes with its declining influence in its own neighbourhood, South Asia. Economic strength, military power, and participation in global forums like the G-20 highlight India's global rise. However, China's emergence and a shifting South Asian landscape challenge India's traditional dominance.

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan created a space China filled, weakening India regionally but strengthening its global standing as the US became more receptive to India's interests. India's focus on the Indo-Pacific balance of power might have neglected its immediate neighbourhood, while smaller South Asian nations strategically balance relations with both India and China.

To navigate this paradox, India must accept the new reality and leverage its unique strengths. Utilizing its maritime space for partnerships can compensate for continental challenges. Engaging South Asian nations in the Indo-Pacific framework and collaborating with friendly external powers are potential solutions. Additionally, India's soft power, cultural influence, and historical ties can be powerful tools.

India has tried to address this challenge through its neighbourhood first policy. Its mending bilateral relations with Srilanka, resolving boundary relations with Bangladesh etc are testimonial to the effort India undertake in this direction. Better relations with Myanmar in securing Sittwe port, Asian trilateral highway, Kaladan Multi modal transport corridor etc reflects India's constant effort in this direction.

CONCLUSION: India faces a complex challenge: reconciling its global ambitions with a declining regional influence. While India must adapt to the new geopolitical landscape and leverage its strengths, the question remains: Can a nation struggling in its own backyard truly be a global leader? The answer hinges on India's ability to navigate this paradox, forging deeper regional ties while solidifying its position on the world stage. Only time will tell if India can overcome this contradiction and emerge as a truly global power.

AN OVERVIEW OF SUDAN'S CIVIL WAR

CONTEXT: Since independence, the Sudanese have experienced 35 coups and attempted coups, more than any other African country. In the country's southern region, a 56-year rebellion eventually led to the creation of South Sudan in 2011.

BACKGROUND:

- **Power Struggle Ignites Violence:** Sudan descended into chaos last year as rival factions clashed for control of the government. This political turmoil has had a devastating impact on the country.
- **Indian Workers Caught in the Crossfire:** Many Indian citizens, particularly members of the Hakki Pikki tribe from Karnataka, were present in Sudan when the fighting erupted. Their safety and well-being are a major concern.
- **Indian Embassy Issues Urgent Warning:** The Indian Embassy in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, responded swiftly by urging all Indian nationals to exercise extreme caution in light of the volatile situation.
- **Famine Looms Large:** Sudan teeters on the brink of a devastating famine. Nearly half the population, a staggering 25 million people, are now in dire need of humanitarian assistance.
- **Daily Life Devastated:** The ongoing crisis has severely disrupted everyday life for Sudanese citizens. The basic necessities of life are becoming increasingly scarce, causing immense hardship.

WHY THERE IS CIVIL WAR IN SUDAN?

From Autocracy to Uprising:

- **Ousted Dictator:** In 2019, long-time Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir was removed from power by military generals following a popular uprising. The public decried his regime for corruption, rising living costs, and repression of social groups.
- **Sudan's Past and International Isolation:**
  o Between 1992-1996, Sudan harbored Osama bin Laden, leading the U.S. to declare it a "state sponsor of terrorism" in 1993. The U.N. followed suit with sanctions the next year.

Darfur and Power Sharing:

- **Darfur Conflict:** The western Darfur region has faced marginalization for over two decades, leading to rebellion against the central government.
- **Fragile Power Sharing:** After al-Bashir's ousting, a power-sharing agreement was established between civilians and the military. Abdalla Hamdok became Prime Minister until elections could be held.

Military Coup and Power Struggle:

- **Coup D'état (2021):** The fragile transition was shattered in 2021 by a military coup led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).
- **Roots of the RSF:** The RSF, founded by al-Bashir, was originally an Arab militia used to suppress the Darfur rebellion.

Food-insecure areas

June-September 2023, forecast*

- Stressed
- Crisis
- Emergency

Source: FEWS NET   *At April 1st 2023

ABOUT SUDAN:

- Sudan is a country in Northeast Africa with the capital city Khartoum.
- Khartoum, is located roughly in the center of the country, at the junction of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers.
- Sudan Bordering countries: It borders the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, Egypt to the north, Eritrea to the northeast, Ethiopia to the southeast, Libya to the northwest, South Sudan to the south, and the Red Sea.

CONCLUSION: Sudan's path to peace requires international aid for reconstruction and a transparent, civilian government that prioritizes the needs of all Sudanese people. This is crucial for building a truly inclusive post-conflict state.

DEVELOPMENT GOALS STALLS, URGENT ACTION NEEDED

CONTEXT: The UN Summit on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) revealed slow progress on achieving these critical targets. Despite commitment from all countries, the pace of change falls short, particularly concerning environmental goals. The COVID-19 pandemic further hampered progress.

Progress and Emerging Concerns Pertaining to SDGs

1. Insufficient Progress

- **Slow Progress and Emerging Concerns:** The journey towards achieving the SDGs has been marked by slow progress and emerging concerns, raising alarms about the world's ability to meet the 2030 targets.
- **Initial Optimism and Shortfalls:** Despite initial optimism following the adoption of Agenda 2030 by the UN General Assembly in 2015, reports indicate that progress has been insufficient and off track.
- **Limited Improvements (2015-2019):** While there were some improvements from 2015 to 2019, particularly in poverty reduction and access to basic services, these fell far short of what is needed to achieve the ambitious goals set forth in the agenda.

2. Impact of Global Crises

- COVID-19 Pandemic and Socioeconomic Consequences: The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and other global crises have exacerbated challenges in achieving the SDGs.
- Disruption and Inequalities: The pandemic disrupted economies, exacerbated inequalities, and pushed millions into poverty.
- Resource Diversion: Resources and attention were diverted to immediate health and economic concerns, slowing progress towards long-term sustainable development goals.

3. Environmental Sustainability Concerns

- Neglected Environmental Goals: There is a lack of attention to goals related to environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation.
- Critical Environmental SDGs: Goals such as responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, and life on land have received insufficient focus.
- **Existential Threats:** Failure to address these environmental challenges undermines progress towards specific SDGs and poses existential threats to humanity and the planet.

4. Fragmented Approach to SDGs

- **Integrated Nature of SDGs:** The SDGs are interconnected, with progress in one goal often dependent on progress in others.
- **Siloed Efforts:** The fragmented approach taken by many countries and stakeholders fails to recognize these interlinkages, resulting in siloed efforts unlikely to yield meaningful results.
- **Need for a Holistic Approach:** Without a holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development, balancing human well-being with a healthy environment remains elusive.

Global Commitments and Ground Implementation

1. Reaffirmation of Commitment by Global Leaders

- **Urgent Action Identified by UN SDG Report 2023:** The report identified five key areas for urgent action, including accelerated, sustained, and transformative actions to deliver on SDGs, concrete policies to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality, and a focus on advancing the rights of women and girls.
- **Strengthening National and Subnational Capacities:** There is a need to strengthen national and subnational capacities, accountability, and public institutions to deliver accelerated progress.
- **International Community's Role:** Recommitment of the international community to deliver and mobilize resources

to assist developing nations is crucial, along with continued strengthening of the UN development system.

- **Global Leaders' Commitment:** World leaders have reaffirmed their commitments and agreed to step up efforts to deliver SDGs by 2030, but the effectiveness of these commitments at the ground level remains a question.

2. Implementation Barriers on National Level

- **Gap Between Rhetoric and Action:** Despite global commitments, there are often significant gaps between rhetoric and action at the national level.
- **Political and Resource Constraints:** Political considerations, competing priorities, and resource constraints hinder effective implementation of SDG-related policies.
- **Lack of Coordination:** The lack of coordination across government departments and levels of government results in fragmented efforts, undermining overall SDG implementation effectiveness.

Scholarly Insights and Recommendations
1. Limited Political Impact

- **Discourse and Reforms:** While the SDGs have generated discourse and led to some normative and institutional reforms, their direct political impact at national and local levels remains limited.
- **Need for Political Outcomes:** The SDGs have yet to translate into tangible political outcomes in many countries, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of factors influencing SDG implementation.

2. Systemic Approach to Realizing SDGs

- **Managing Trade-offs and Maximizing Co-benefits:** Adopting a systemic approach involves identifying and managing trade-offs while maximizing co-benefits across different goals.
- **Unlocking Synergies:** Addressing interconnected challenges holistically can unlock synergies and amplify the impact of interventions. For example, promoting

renewable energy can contribute to climate action (SDG 13), economic growth (SDG 8), and access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6).

3. Tailored Approaches to Implementation

- **Reflecting Regional and National Priorities:** Tailored approaches reflecting regional and national priorities are essential for effective SDG implementation.
- **Locally Best-suited Solutions:** Policymakers should identify locally best-suited entry points and leverage existing resources to drive progress towards the goals.
- **Engaging Marginalized Communities:** It is important to engage marginalized and vulnerable communities to ensure their needs and perspectives are considered.

4. Practical Recommendations for Enhancing Implementation

- **Strengthening Governance and Accountability:** Strengthening governance structures and accountability mechanisms is crucial for effective SDG implementation.
- **Mobilizing Financial Resources:** Mobilizing financial resources, promoting innovation and technology transfer, and fostering partnerships between governments, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders are necessary.
- **Multi-dimensional Approach:** Adopting a multi-dimensional approach addressing political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development can create an enabling environment for transformative change.

CONCLUSION

Despite initial progress, slow advancement, global crises, and fragmented implementation threaten the SDGs' 2030 deadline. Urgent action is needed. Leaders must address environmental challenges, overcome political and resource constraints, and promote a systemic approach. By recognizing the SDGs' interconnectedness and engaging all stakeholders, we can achieve a truly sustainable future.

POLICY MISMATCH

CONTEXT: The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, highlights the challenges faced by U.S. President Joe Biden in managing the situation. The perceived policy mismatch of supplying arms to Israel while advocating for a halt to Gaza strikes undermines American values and weakens both his moral stance and domestic political standing in an election year.

BACKGROUND: Amidst the Israel-Hamas conflict, President Biden faced mounting pressure to address the escalating violence. Despite initial attempts to prevent regional escalation, criticism grew over the U.S.'s support for Israel's actions in Gaza. Biden's response, including warnings to Israel and diplomatic efforts, was deemed insufficient, leading to concerns about moral consistency and America's role in the conflict. Calls for a shift in policy, including halting arms sales to Israel, intensified amid rising casualties and global condemnation.

NEWS IN BRIEF
Background: Israel-Hamas Conflict

- **Conflict Initiation:**
- War began on October 7, sparked by Hamas's attack.
- Biden prioritized preventing regional escalation.
- **Biden's Strategy:**
- Initially Offered unconditional support to Israel's Gaza offensive.
- Deployed diplomatic efforts to ease tensions.
- **Escalation and Consequences:**
- Conflict persisted for months with significant civilian casualties.

- Over 34,000 deaths, mostly women and children, in Gaza. With this US is finding it difficult to prevent escalation of conflict.
- Israel threatens to invade Rafah despite Biden's warnings.
- Conflict spills over with Houthi attacks and Israel-Iran tensions.

Biden's Response and Critique:
- **Ceasefire Efforts:**
- Biden administration works on ceasefire and hostage deal.
- Biden's warnings to Israel and Iran contribute to easing tensions.
- **Flaws in Approach:**
- U.S. support for Israel contradicts stated values on human rights.
- Continuous arms supply to Israel amid allegations of indiscriminate bombing.
- Biden signs $17 billion defense aid bill despite frustrations with Netanyahu.

Policy Critique:
- Biden's words are not matched by strong actions to pressure Israel.
- Continuation of arms support undermines moral arguments on foreign policy.
- Weakness in reining in Israel damages U.S. standing in the region.

Call for Change:
- Pressure mounts on Biden to reconsider Israel policy.
- Urgent need for Biden to address flaws in Israel-Palestine policy.
- Past examples suggest hard pressure on Israel can lead to peace.

Recommendations:
- Biden urged to call for a permanent ceasefire and suspend arms sales to Israel.
- Crucial for Biden to demonstrate commitment to peace in the region.

ANALYSIS: The conflict erupted on October 7, initiated by Hamas's attack, prompting President Biden to prioritize preventing regional escalation. Initially, the U.S. extended unconditional support to Israel's offensive while concurrently engaging in diplomatic endeavours to alleviate tensions.

Despite attempts to contain the conflict, it persisted for months, resulting in significant civilian casualties, especially in Gaza, with over 34,000 deaths, predominantly women and children, highlighting the severity of the situation. Further complicating matters were Israel's threats to invade Rafah and escalating tensions with Iran, alongside Houthi attacks.

While the Biden administration worked on ceasefire efforts and issued warnings to Israel and Iran, criticisms emerged over the inconsistency between U.S. support for Israel and its professed human rights values. The continuous supply of arms to Israel, despite allegations of indiscriminate bombing, raised concerns about moral integrity. Biden's approval of a $17 billion defense aid bill to Israel, despite frustrations with Netanyahu, further intensified policy critique.

Mounting pressure on Biden to reassess the Israel policy underscored the need for a paradigm shift. Historical examples suggested that exerting significant pressure on Israel could pave the way for peace. Recommendations included advocating for a permanent ceasefire and halting arms sales to Israel, emphasizing the imperative of demonstrating unwavering commitment to peace in the region.

Persisting and escalating conflict in the Middle East has been exposing the limitations of President Biden's administration in reining in an ally. This does not show him as a strong President in control of the situation in an election year.

CONCLUSION: Given the persisting conflict and escalating tensions, President Biden faces increasing scrutiny over his handling of the Israel-Hamas crisis. The inability to effectively address the policy mismatch between supporting Israel and advocating for peace jeopardizes his credibility and leadership ahead of the elections.

IT IS TIME TO OPERATIONALISE THE INDIAN DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

CONTEXT: Several nations have established 'defence universities' to promote academic rigour and enhance strategic thinking in their armed forces. In India's own neighbourhood, it is reported that Pakistan has created two universities for its armed forces, while China has three.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION (PME)

Adapting to Modern Warfare: The ever-changing nature of warfare, as evidenced by conflicts in Europe and West Asia, demands a high level of military education and adaptability from officers. Unclear initial information and rapidly evolving situations require them to perform effectively under pressure.

Empowering Officers through PME: A well-structured Professional Military Education (PME) system equips officers with the knowledge and skills to navigate complex challenges throughout their careers. This PME continuum allows them to adjust to changing assignments and take on greater responsibility as they progress in rank.

THE U.S. MODEL AND INDIA'S THEATREIZATION AIMS

- **Learning from the U.S. Experience:** The evolution of PME in the U.S. offers valuable insights for India, particularly in the context of its theatreization goals.
- **Skelton Report and PME Reforms:** The U.S. military's strong focus on professional education can be partly attributed to the "Skelton Report" submitted to the U.S. Congress.

Key Recommendations of Ike Skelton's Report:

- Focus educational institutions on specified learning objectives.
- Enhance the quality of both civilian and military faculty.
- Establish a two-phased system for the education of joint officers.
- Form an Institute for National Strategic Studies at National Defense University.

THE INDIAN DEFENCE UNIVERSITY (IDU)

- **Addressing Gaps in PME:** The Indian Defence University (IDU) aims to bridge existing shortcomings in India's Professional Military Education system. It will provide advanced military education with a qualified faculty comprised of academics, serving, and retired military officers.
- **Diverse Curriculum:** IDU's curriculum will encompass a wide range of subjects relevant to national security and defense, ensuring a balanced blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application.
- **Long-Overdue Initiative:** Despite its critical importance for defense preparedness, fostering a strategic culture, and promoting inter-service integration, the establishment of the IDU has been delayed.
- **Foundation for Joint Warfare:** Operationalizing the IDU is essential to lay the foundation for effective joint warfighting through a forward-looking military education program.

THE LONG ROAD TO IDU: CHALLENGES IN ESTABLISHING INDIA'S DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

Historical Background:

- **Early Proposal (1967):** The concept of a unified Defence Services University was first proposed by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) as early as 1967.
- **Post-Kargil Committee (1999):** Following the Kargil War's shortcomings exposed the need for improved military education. A committee led by Dr. K. Subrahmanyam was formed to examine the establishment of a Defence University.
- **In-Principle Approval (2010):** Based on the committee's recommendations, the Indian government granted "in-principle" approval in May 2010 to establish the IDU in Gurgaon.
- **Stalled Progress (2017-Present):** Despite some initial optimism in 2017-18, the IDU's establishment has faced significant delays.

Impact of Delayed IDU:

- **Fragmented PME System:** The absence of a unified IDU hinders the development of a comprehensive Professional Military Education (PME) framework in India.

CHALLENGES IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM:

- **Lack of Integration:** India possesses world-class military training institutes, but they lack a unified PME framework and an interdisciplinary approach to strategic thinking.
- **Limited Military Focus in Curriculum:** Existing affiliations with universities for degree courses often fail to adequately address the specific needs of military education.
- **RRU vs. IDU Distinction:** Comparing the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) to the IDU is inaccurate. The RRU's objectives and curriculum are not specifically designed to meet the unique demands of military leadership, including battlefield management and strategic planning.

CONCLUSION: India's current PME system lacks the cohesion and strategic focus found in established "defence universities" around the world. Delaying the IDU's operationalization hinders India's military modernization and joint warfighting capabilities. By following the U.S. model and learning from past reports like the Skelton Report, India can establish a world-class IDU to empower its officers and ensure national security in the face of evolving threats.

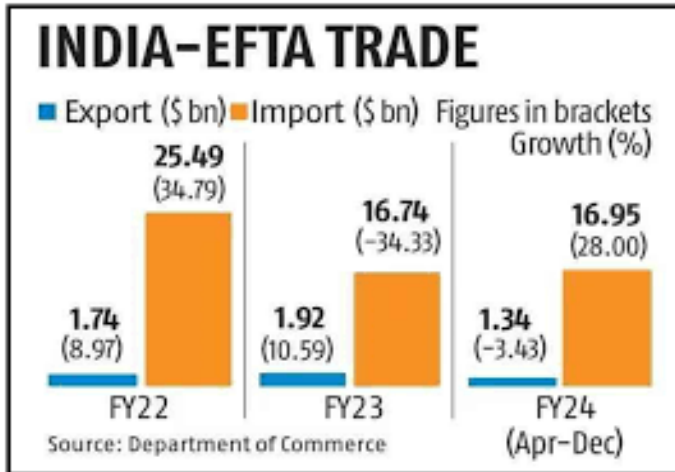## INVESTMENT LESSONS FROM THE INDIA-EFTA TRADE DEAL

CONTEXT: In a landmark achievement, India signed a comprehensive trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), encompassing Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

BACKGROUND: The India-EFTA trade deal is a culmination of 15 years of talks, after a previous attempt stalled in 2013. Recent geopolitical shifts and a desire by both sides to diversify trade partnerships (especially away from China) reignited negotiations. This deal marks India's first free trade agreement with a major European bloc, aiming to boost exports, attract investment, and create jobs.

KEY POINTS OF INDIA-EFTA TRADE DEAL: ENVIRONMENT, LABOR, AND INVESTMENT

- **Expanded Scope:** The deal incorporates environment and labour standards, areas India previously resisted including in trade agreements.
- **Investment Focus:** Unlike recent Indian FTAs, this deal features a dedicated investment chapter emphasizing investment facilitation, not just protection.
- **FDI Boost:** EFTA nations have pledged to "aim for" $100 billion in total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India over 15 years:
  - $50 billion within 10 years of the agreement's implementation.
  - An additional $50 billion in the following five years.
- **Job Creation Target:** The agreement includes a provision (Article 7.1(3)(b)) where EFTA countries will "aim to" facilitate the creation of one million jobs in India.
- **Obligation of Conduct:** These articles establish an "obligation of conduct," requiring EFTA countries to make a genuine effort towards achieving the investment and job creation goals, regardless of the outcome.

INDIA–EFTA TRADE

Export ($ bn) ■ **Import ($ bn)** Figures in brackets Growth (%)

	FY22	FY23	FY24 (Apr–Dec)
Export	1.74 (8.97)	1.92 (10.59)	1.34 (−3.43)
Import	25.49 (34.79)	16.74 (−34.33)	16.95 (28.00)

Source: Department of Commerce

INDIA'S FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

- **Traditional FTAs (2000s):** Earlier FTAs with Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asian nations followed a standard model. These agreements included:
  o Binding rules governing both trade and investment.
  o Investment chapters with provisions to safeguard foreign investments.
- **Shifting Strategy (2020s):** India's recent FTAs reflect a decoupled approach, separating trade and investment aspects:
  o FTAs with Australia, Mauritius, and the UAE contain binding trade rules but lack investment chapters.
- **Separate Agreements:** This trend is particularly evident with the UAE. India signed a trade agreement in 2022 and followed it up with a separate bilateral investment treaty in 2024.
- **UK Negotiations:** India appears to be negotiating separate trade and investment agreements with the UK as well.

LOOKING AHEAD

Need for a Clear FTA Policy
Importance:

- India needs a clear Free Trade Agreement (FTA) policy to effectively manage international trade and foreign investment laws.

Integrating Trade and Investment
Higher Investment Flows:

- India expects not just trade but also higher investment flows from partnering countries.
- Key elements to incorporate into its FTA policy:

Comprehensive Economic Treaty:

- Trade and investment should be negotiated as part of one comprehensive economic treaty.
- Decoupling trade from investment is not advisable.
- Combining both aspects provides India with clear negotiating leverage.

Example:

- India can seek more trade concessions in return for offering benefits in investment, or vice-versa.

Strengthening Investment Protection
Scope Expansion:

- The scope of investment issues should be expanded from mere facilitation to effective protection.
- Include an efficacious dispute settlement mechanism under international law.

Boosting Investor Confidence
Legal Protection:

- Providing enforceable legal protection to foreign investors under international law will boost their confidence in investing in India.

Importance of Clear FTA Policy
Economic Growth:

- With the decline in foreign direct investment levels in India, a well-defined and inclusive FTA policy is crucial to propel the country towards heightened economic growth.

CONCLUSION

The India-EFTA trade deal sets a new precedent for India's trade agreements, emphasizing the integration of trade and investment, environmental and labor standards, and robust investment protection. A clear and comprehensive FTA policy is essential for enhancing foreign investment, boosting exports, and driving economic growth in India.
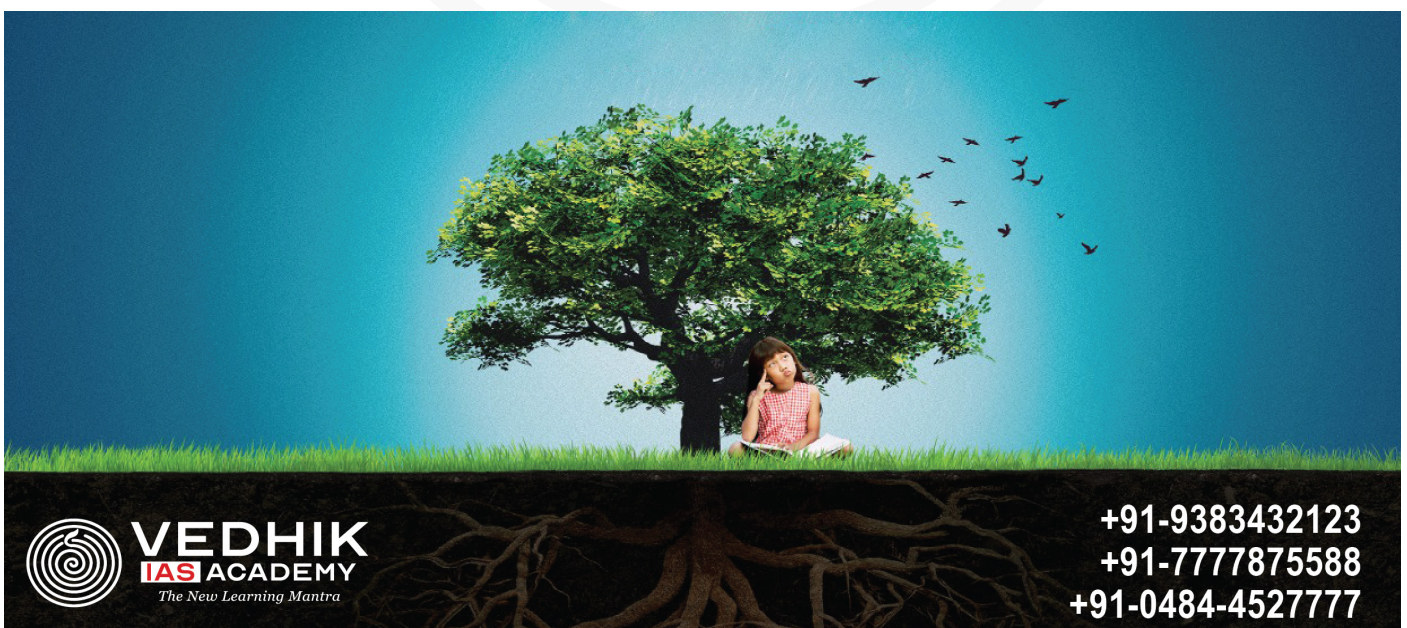
GOVT. TO SPEND ₹2 CR. PER KM ON ROADS ALONG CHINA BORDER

CONTEXT: The Indian government is investing heavily in bolstering border infrastructure along the China frontier. Under the Vibrant Village Programme (VVP), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved the construction of 113 roads in Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim over the past five months.

BACKGROUND

The Vibrant Village Programme (VVP) was launched by the Indian government to enhance connectivity, curb migration, and bolster security in border villages, particularly along the China border.

SANCTIONED ROADS AND CONNECTIVITY ENHANCEMENT

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Sanction:
- 113 roads sanctioned under the Vibrant Village Programme (VVP).
- Locations: Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim.
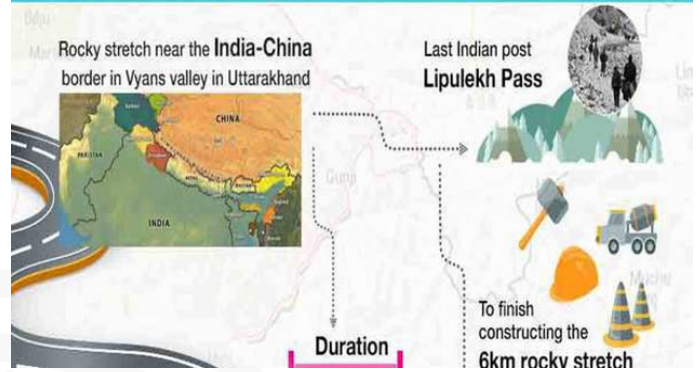- Objective: Enhance connectivity along the China border.

Target Villages:
- Approximately 168 villages along the border to benefit from improved connectivity.

Cost and Construction Details
General Cost:
- **Planned expenditure:** Over ₹2 crores per kilometre for road construction along the China border in Uttarakhand and Sikkim.

UTTARAKHAND (PITHORAGARH DISTRICT):
- Road length: 43.96 km.
- Total cost: ₹119 crores.
- Cost per kilometre: ₹2.7 crores.

SIKKIM (CHUNGTHANG AND MANGAN BLOCK):
- Road length: 18.73 km.
- Additional construction: 350 meters of steel bridges.
- Total cost: ₹96 crores.
- Cost per kilometre: ₹2.4 crores.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING
Monitoring Measures:
- State governments were instructed to install GPS-enabled vehicle tracking devices on key machinery and equipment.
- Objective: Ensure efficient execution of VVP projects and proper utilization of allocated funds.

THE NOWHERE ROADS

J&K
Road: Hanle-Photile & Koyal-Fukche
Project name: Himank
Length: 56.5km
Estimated/approved cost:
₹16.68 crore

HIMACHAL PRADESH
Road: Wangtu-Pooh
Project name: Deepak
Length: 89 km
Estimated/approved cost:
₹253.86 crore

UTTARAKHAND
Road: Ghatiabgarh-Lipulekh
Project name: Hirak
Length: 75.74km
Estimated/approved cost:
₹189.88 crore

ARUNACHAL PRADESH
Road: THIMBU-MAGO-CHINA
Project name: Vartak
Length: 48 km
Estimated/approved cost:
₹182.22 crore

OBJECTIVES AND BUDGET ALLOCATION
Program Overview:
- Vibrant Village Programme (VVP) approved by the Union Cabinet in February 2023.
- Target: 2,967 villages in 46 border blocks across Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh.

Budget Allocation:
- Total budget: ₹4,800 crore for financial years 2023-24 to 2025-26.
- Road construction budget: Approximately ₹2,500 crore (more than half of the total budget).
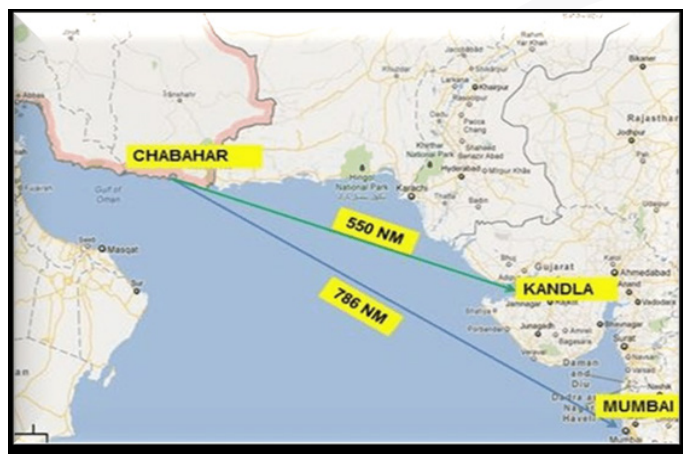
Primary Objectives:
- Curb migration from border villages.
- Encourage residents to stay, facilitating intelligence gathering and bolstering border security.

CONCLUSION: The Indian government allocates significant funds for road construction along the China border, with over ₹2 crores per kilometre expenditure, aiming to enhance connectivity and security in border villages under the Vibrant Village Programme.

INDIA, IRAN SIGN 10-YEAR CONTRACT FOR CHABAHAR PORT OPERATION

CONTEXT: After eight years of laying the groundwork for collaboration, India and Iran have finalized a long-term agreement that governs Indian operations at the strategic Chabahar port.
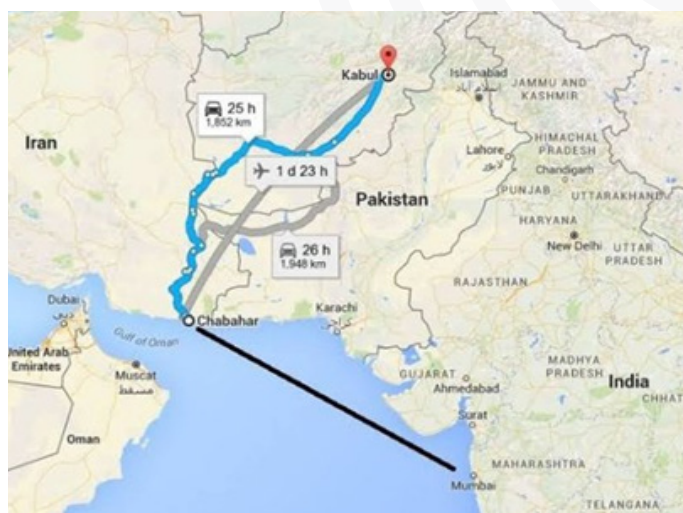

BACKGROUND:
CHABAHAR PORT: A STRATEGIC GATEWAY FOR INDIA

Location and Significance:
- Chabahar Port is a deep-water port situated in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, bordering the Gulf of Oman.
- It holds the distinction of being the closest Iranian port to India, offering a convenient and secure passage for large cargo ships.
- As Iran's first deep-water port, Chabahar serves as a critical link, placing the country on the global maritime trade map.

Development and Operations:
- **AGREEMENT & EXECUTION:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the development of Chabahar was signed by India and Iran in May 2015. This collaboration was further solidified with a contract signed in May 2016 during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Iran.
- **INDIAN CONTRIBUTION:** India has actively contributed to the port's development, supplying essential equipment like mobile harbour cranes and investing $25 million.
- **OPERATIONS:** Since December 2018, India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) has been managing Chabahar port through its subsidiary, India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ).

Current Status and Future Potential:
- The port has witnessed significant cargo movement, handling over 90,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of container traffic and exceeding 8.4 million metric tonnes (MMT) of bulk and general cargo.
- Looking ahead, Chabahar Port presents a strategic opportunity for India to enhance trade connectivity with Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. This strategic location can act as a vital transit hub, bypassing Pakistan and facilitating efficient trade routes.

Additional Information:

- The Chabahar port project has faced challenges due to US sanctions on Iran. However, exemptions have been granted for port development activities.
- The completion of a planned railway line connecting Chabahar to Zahedan in Iran, and further on to Central Asia, is expected to significantly boost trade volumes and regional integration.
- Chabahar Port serves as a crucial link in the North-South Transport Corridor, a trade route aiming to connect India, Russia, and Europe via Central Asia.
- Chabahar Port is also being developed as a free trade zone, attracting further investment and economic activity.

Dual Strategic Significance for Iran and India:

- **Countering Sanctions for Iran:** Chabahar offers Iran a vital economic lifeline, potentially mitigating the impact of Western sanctions by facilitating international trade.
- **Bypassing Pakistan for India:** For India, Chabahar serves as a game-changer, providing an alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan's land restrictions. This 800-kilometer advantage over Karachi port in Pakistan makes Chabahar a more efficient gateway for Indian goods.
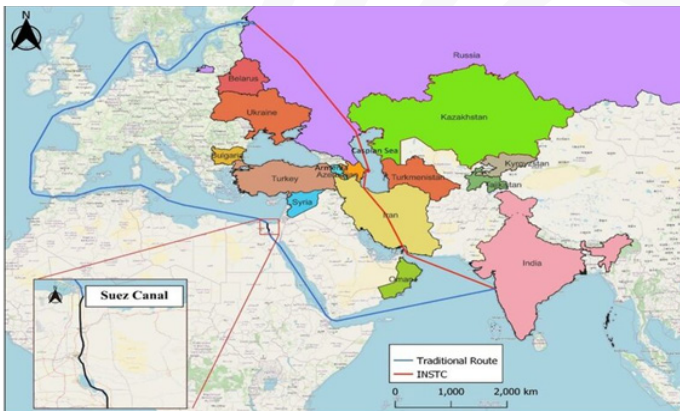
Humanitarian Aid Corridor:

- **Delivering Crucial Support:** Chabahar has emerged as a critical corridor for delivering humanitarian assistance, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Case in Point:** Over 2.5 million tonnes of wheat and 2,000 tonnes of pulses have been successfully shipped from India to Afghanistan through Chabahar. Additionally, in 2021, India combatted locust attacks in Iran by sending 40,000 liters of eco-friendly pesticide through this port.

Chabahar and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):

- **Connecting Regions:** The INSTC, a brainchild of Russia, India, and Iran, is a multimodal transport network designed to link the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and beyond.
- **Seamless Movement of Goods:** The INSTC envisions a seamless flow of goods:
  o Mumbai to Bandar Abbas (Iran) by sea
  o Bandar Abbas to Bandar-e Anzali (Caspian Sea, Iran) by road
  o Bandar-e Anzali to Astrakhan (Russia) by ship
  o Onward to Russia and Europe by rail

- **Synergy for Connectivity:** The INSTC and Chabahar Port will work in tandem, optimizing India's trade connectivity with Russia and Eurasia.

Strengthening Regional Ties:

- Boosting Trilateral Trade: Chabahar holds the potential to usher in a new era of trade, maritime cooperation, and transshipment in the region. This strategic development is expected to significantly enhance trilateral trade between India, Iran, and Afghanistan.

10-Year Agreement for Chabahar Port Operation: Key Highlights

- **Long-Term Partnership:** A landmark agreement was signed between India Ports Global Ltd. (IPGL) and Iran's Port and Maritime Organisation (PMO), granting India operational rights over the Shahid-Behesti terminal at Chabahar.
- **Investing in the Future:** IPGL has committed to investing roughly $120 million in port infrastructure development.
- **Financing Infrastructure:** India has additionally offered a credit line of $250 million for mutually agreed-upon projects aimed at bolstering Chabahar's related infrastructure.
- **Unveiling Opportunities:** This long-term agreement paves the way for larger investments in the port, unlocking significant economic potential.
- **Overcoming Hurdles:** The signing of this agreement had been delayed due to complex issues like arbitration. Previously, the two nations relied on short-term leases in the absence of a long-term agreement.

CONCLUSION: The signing of the 10-year agreement for Chabahar Port operation marks a significant milestone in India's strategic ambitions. This long-term commitment not only secures India's operational role in the vital port but also unlocks immense potential for boosting trade ties with Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. As Chabahar emerges as a key hub within the International North-South Transport Corridor, it promises to reshape regional connectivity and economic cooperation in the years to come.

SUCCESS IS SIMPLE. DO WHAT IS RIGHT, THE RIGHT WAY, AT THE RIGHT TIME.

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- **INCLUDING TEST SERIES WITH VIDEO DISCUSSIONS.**
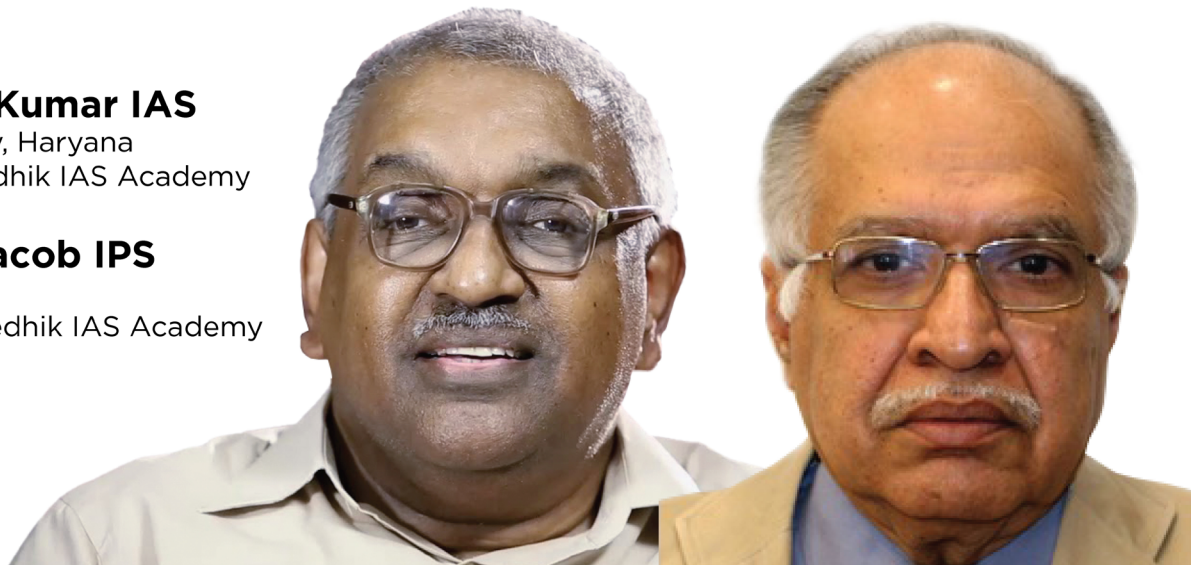- **COMPREHENSIVE SESSIONS FOR CURRENT AFFAIRS DISCUSSIONS**

MAY 8TH
WEDNESDAY
EVENING
7PM TO 9PM

DR. G. Prasanna Kumar IAS
Former Chief Secretary, Haryana
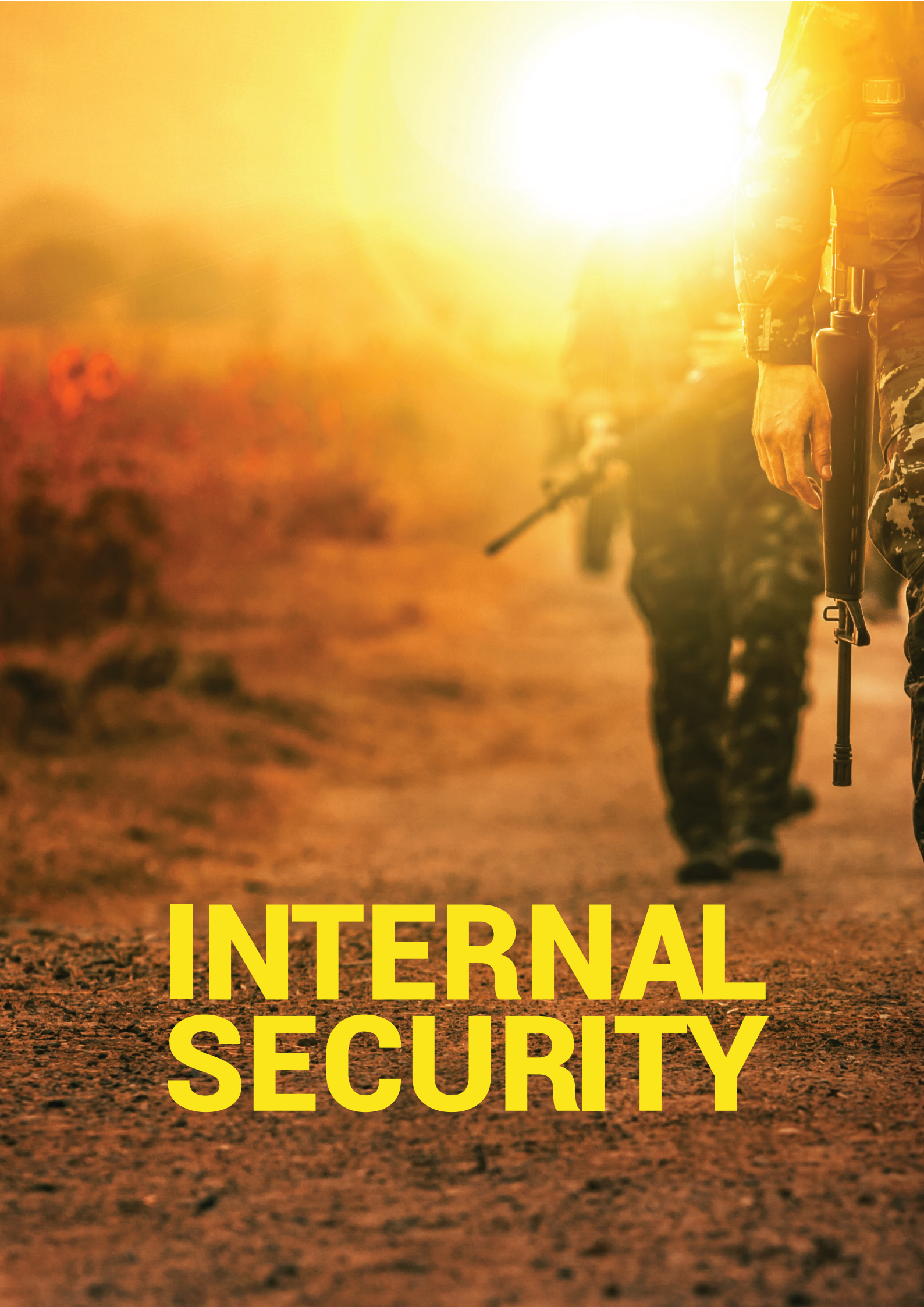Chairman, Samkalp Vedhik IAS Academy

DR. Alexander Jacob IPS
Former DGP, Kerala
Dean of Academics, Vedhik IAS Academy

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INTERNAL SECURITY

GAGAN STRIKE-II: INDIAN ARMY, IAF CONDUCT JOINT EXERCISE IN PUNJAB

DRISHTI-10 DRONE

INDIA, FRANCE SET FOR 7TH JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE SHAKTI

INDIA TO SPEND ₹ 2 CRORE PER KM ON CHINA BORDER ROADS

NAGALAND GOVERNMENT TO FORM COMMITTEE TO RESOLVE LONG-STANDING NAGA CONFLICT

INDIAN AIR FORCE TESTS BHISHM PORTABLE HOSPITAL CUBES

INDIAN ARMY SET TO RECEIVE RUSSIAN IGLA-S, ISRAELI UAVS

INDIAN ARMED FORCES TO SHIFT TO INTEGRATED THEATRE COMMANDS

GOVERNMENT SETS UP COMMITTEE TO TACKLE SOUTHEAST ASIAN CYBERCRIMES

CERT-IN WARNS OF CRITICAL FLAWS IN GOOGLE CHROME

Gagan Strike-II: Indian Army, IAF Conduct Joint Exercise in Punjab

The Indian Army's Kharga Corps, part of the Army's Western Command, recently concluded a three-day joint military exercise Gagan Strike-II with the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Punjab.

The primary goal of Gagan Strike-II was to refine the processes involving the Indian Army's mechanised units and to validate the employment of attack helicopters in developed terrain. The exercise focused on integrating Apache and ALH-WSI helicopters, Unarmed Aerial Vehicles, and the Army's special forces. This array of forces participated in various combat simulation scenarios to emphasize the synergy between ground operations and aerial support.

Indian Army Kharga Corps

The Kharga Corps, also designated as III Corps, is a significant strike corps of the Indian Army, founded in 1971 and headquartered in Ambala, Haryana. Named after the deadly "Kharga," a scimitar representing its offensive capability, the corps plays a crucial role in India's defence strategy, especially geared towards operations against Pakistan. It was actively involved in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, playing a key role in the conflict. The corps is structured to be a rapid mobilization force, capable of engaging in quick, decisive actions in a battle. Its prominent offensive positioning and readiness ensure that it is pivotal in maintaining the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India.

Apache helicopters

The Apache helicopter is a four-blade, twin-engine attack helicopter developed for the United States Army by McDonnell Douglas (now Boeing). First flown in 1975 and introduced in 1986, it is designed for all-weather and night-time operations. Known as the AH-64, it is heavily armed with a 30mm M230 chain gun, Hydra 70 rocket pods, and AGM-114 Hellfire missiles. Primarily used for destroying armour and fortifications, it can also provide direct and accurate close air support. Apaches have been exported globally and played crucial roles in conflicts like the Gulf War and Afghanistan.

Drishti-10 Drone

Indian Army is set to receive the first Hermes-900 Starliner drone, known as the Drishti-10, on June 18. The delivery of the Drishti-10 drone is facilitated by Adani Defence Systems under a contract that utilises emergency powers granted by the Defence Ministry.

Hermes-900 Starliner is capable of long-duration flights of over 30 hours and covers distances up to 2,000 km, making it ideal for extensive surveillance missions. Its advanced technology is partly sourced from Israeli firm Elbit, with an agreement in place for technology transfer to boost indigenous manufacturing by Adani Defence.

This deal includes an obligation for the systems to be domestically sourced, adhering to the 'Make in India' initiative with more than 60% indigenous components.

Hermes-900 Starliner

Hermes-900 Starliner is an advanced unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) developed by Elbit Systems, an Israeli company known for its defence electronics. The UAV is designed primarily for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and communications relay roles. It has a wingspan of about 15 meters and can stay airborne for up to 36 hours, operating at altitudes above 30,000 feet.

Launched in the late 2010s, the Starliner features cutting-edge technologies like satellite communication capabilities, collision avoidance systems, and advanced payloads, allowing it to operate in both civil and military airspace. It is an expanded version of the earlier Hermes-450 UAV, offering greater payload capacity and extended endurance, which significantly enhances its operational flexibility and effectiveness in complex missions worldwide.

Deployment and Operational Strategy

Post-delivery, the drones will be stationed at the Army's Bhatinda base in Punjab. This location is strategic for monitoring the entire western frontier with Pakistan, enhancing both reconnaissance and security operations.

India, France set for 7th Joint Military Exercise Shakti

India and France are set to conduct the 7th edition of the Joint Military Exercise 'Shakti' between May 13-26, 2024, in the Umroi region of Meghalaya. This version of the drill builds on the strong defence ties that have been gaining a lot of strength, as shown by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan's trip to France from April 22–25.

Exercise Shakti 2024 - Objectives

The primary aim of the upcoming joint exercise is to improve the joint military capabilities of India and France to carry out Multi-Domain Operations in a Sub-Conventional scenario. In modern warfare, where conventional and unconventional tactics are used in many areas, such as the air, land, sea, and cyberspace, these kinds of activities are very important.

The goal of Exercise Shakti 2024 is to improve the ability of the armed forces of the two countries to work together and get along with each other. For joint operations to go well, different armed groups must be able to work together without any problems. This is especially true in complex combat situations.

Precedence and legacy

The sixth Ex Shakti 2021, which is held every two years, took place at the Military School of Draguignan in France. It saw participation from a contingent of the Indian Army, including officers and soldiers from the Gorkha Rifles. The training was mostly about working together to plan operations, knowing each other during operations, and working together to fight terrorism under a UN mandate. The last exercise improved combat fitness and tactical training, and it ended with a tough 36-hour mission that proved the skills learned.

Joint Military Exercise Shakti

Joint Military Exercise Shakti is a bilateral exercise conducted between the Indian Army and the French Army. Established in 2011, the exercise is focused on improving military cooperation, counter-terrorism tactics, and interoperability between the two forces. Exercises typically involve infantry tactics, counterinsurgency, counter-terrorism operations, and

tactical joint exercises including physical education and dozing courses. Shakti aims to promote mutual understanding and learn best practices from each other, underlining the strategic military and diplomatic ties between India and France. The fact that both countries worked together to plan and carry out the action shows their dedication to world peace and stability.

India to Spend ₹2 Crore Per Km on China Border Roads

The Vibrant Village Program (VVP), which was approved by the government on February 15, 2023, wants to improve infrastructure and settlement stability along the border between India and China. The goal of this project is to improve the lives of people in 2,967 villages spread out over 46 border blocks in 19 districts in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh. The main goal of the VVP is to keep people from leaving border towns, raise living standards, and improve border security by keeping a populated frontline.

Road Construction under VVP

Building and improving road connections will take up a big chunk of the VVP's 4,800 crore spending over three years. There are currently 113 roads approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The biggest projects are in Arunachal Pradesh (105 roads), Uttarakhand (5 roads), and Sikkim (3 roads). The building project includes building roads and steel bridges. The expected cost per kilometre is 2 crore, which shows that a lot of money is being spent on infrastructure to make sure strong connectivity.

Project Specifics

Uttarakhand Pithoragarh Project:
- Location: Pithoragarh district, Uttarakhand, India.
- Total Road Length: 43.96 km.
- Total Cost: 119 crore.
- Cost Per Kilometre: Approximately 2.71 crore.

Sikkim Chungthang-Mangan Project:
- Location: Chungthang and Mangan blocks, Sikkim, India.
- Total Road Length and Bridges: 18.73 km of roads plus 350 meters of steel bridges.
- Total Cost: 96 crore.
- Cost Per Kilometre: Approximately 5.03 crore.

Strategic considerations

India is building more infrastructure under the VVP as part of a larger strategic reaction to China building "moderately prosperous" Xiaokang villages along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), especially in areas that face Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. India wants to strengthen its border areas by making it easier for people to make a living and by making it easier to keep an eye on things and control the border.

Vibrant Village Programme (VVP)

The Indian government started the Vibrant Village Program (VVP) to bring border towns that are falling behind on development back to life while making sure they have access to basic services like healthcare, education, and internet. The VVP is mostly interested in border towns with few people, like those in Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. In order to keep people from leaving these areas, the program builds physical and digital infrastructure, makes the borders safer, and helps the native people make a living, which improves the general social and economic situation in the border areas.

Nagaland Government to form Committee to Resolve Long-Standing Naga Conflict

The Government of Nagaland has announced plans to establish a Political Affairs Committee (PAC) with the overarching aim of finding a fair and inclusive solution to the pervasive Naga political issue. This decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on May 9.

Role of the PAC

The PAC will include the council of ministers and leaders from all political parties within the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA). As a facilitator, the primary role of the PAC will be to bring about an amicable resolution to the Naga political conflict.

Formation of Political Consultative Committees

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, KG Kenye, has tasked Legislature Party leaders with forming "Political Consultative Committees" (PCCs). The creation will be conducted in conjunction with their representative party organisations. With renewed effort to continue the spirit of the all-party opposition-less government, the aim is to reach a broad consensus for an early and peaceful settlement to the political deadlock.

Structure of PCCs

The number of members forming the PCCs will be determined by the size of the party legislators in the NLA. A seven-member committee will be formed for 10 MLAs and above, five-member committee for five MLAs and above, three-member committee for one MLA and above, and a convener and co-convener for Independent MLAs.

Concerns Over Stalemate

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) has expressed concern that should the current talks fail, there could be a return to a severe human rights situation in Nagalim. The Naga people are increasingly pressing for a conclusion to the lengthy Naga political talks. Currently, there is lingering tension between the Government of India and NSCN-IM over the contentious issue of establishing a separate flag and constitution for Nagaland – a demand which the Indian Government has rejected.

Notes: Naga political issue

The Naga political issue dates to the British colonial era, wherein Nagas claimed independence in 1947. The Naga National Council launched an armed rebellion but was subdued by the Indian government in the late 1950s. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), later split into NSCN(IM) and NSCN(K) factions, continues the fight for a sovereign Nagaland. A ceasefire agreement was signed in 1997 but the issue remains unresolved. Negotiations face difficulties due to demands for a separate flag and constitution by NSCN(IM). Moreover, other Northeast Indian states object to potential territorial concessions given to Nagas.

Indian Air Force Tests BHISHM Portable Hospital Cubes

BHISHM portable cubes were dropped from an airplane by the Indian Air Force in Agra as part of an important test. These mobile hospitals are meant to provide emergency medical care anywhere, and this event was their first test run.

Introduction to Project BHISHM

Project BHISHM, which stands for "Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita, and Maitri," involves putting up mobile hospital units that can treat up to 200 people at once. The goal of this effort is to respond quickly and provide complete care in emergencies.

Features of BHISHM Portable Cubes

- **Advanced Tools Integration:** Aid Cubes come with cutting-edge technology, like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics, that will change the way crisis relief is done forever.
- **Better Response to Disasters:** Using AI and data analytics in Aid Cubes makes it easier for disaster response teams to work together, making sure that aid efforts are coordinated and done on time.
- **Better M0edical Help:** These movable cubes are made to improve medical care in the field, which is especially important after disasters.
- **Effective Management:** AI and data analytics make it possible to keep an eye on resources and people in real time, which improves the performance of medical and aid services.

- **Real-Time Tracking:** Aid Cubes allow continuous, real-time tracking of the situation on the ground. This lets people make quick changes and smart decisions when things are changing quickly.
- **Coordination and Communication:** The technology in Aid Cubes makes it easier for teams and agencies working on crisis relief to talk to each other and work together, which makes operations run more smoothly and efficiently.

Design and Mobility

BHISHM cubes are made up of 72 light, strong, and waterproof parts that are meant to be deployed quickly and in a variety of ways. These parts can be moved by hand, bike, or drone, which gives you options for how to handle different kinds of emergencies. The cube can also be fully set up in just 12 minutes, which is very important during events with a lot of casualties.

Deployment & Applications

The Aid Cubes are unique because they can be sent out quickly. This was shown at the Pran Pratishtha event in Ayodhya on January 22, earlier this year. These two Arogya Maitri Disaster Management Cube-BHISHM units were used to improve medical preparedness and reaction during the event, showing how useful they are in real life.

Indian Army Set to Receive Russian Igla-S, Israeli UAVs

The Indian Army will be able to defend itself better in the air after getting more Russian Igla-S very short-range air defence weapons (VSHORAD). The Army's defensive actions will depend on these systems, which should arrive by the end of May or the beginning of June. Under a deal with Rosoboronexport, Adani Defence Systems and Technologies Limited (ADSTL) in India puts together the Igla-S pieces. The 260 crore deal includes 48 Igla-S launchers, 100 missiles, 48-night sights, and a station for testing missiles.

Acquisition of Hermes-900 UAVs

The Indian Army is also going to get its first Hermes-900 Medium Altitude Long Endurance Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) from Israel at the same time. As part of the Army's plan to improve its monitoring and reconnaissance skills, ADSTL in Hyderabad put this unmanned aerial vehicle together. After the arrival of four Heron-Mk2 UAVs in 2021, which are already in use in the Eastern area, the Hermes-900 was introduced.

Resolution of Payment Issues with Russia

The main reason for the payment problems between India and Russia was the sanctions put in place after Russia's role in the conflict in Ukraine. The fact that these problems have been resolved is a big step toward this purchase. In the past, these financial problems slowed down several military deals, such as the purchase of the S-400 air defense system. The problem was solved by switching to national currencies for payments. This let India use the Russian rubles it had saved up for these transactions.

Future Air Defence Strategy

Adding the Igla-S and Hermes-900 is part of a larger plan to improve India's complex air defence system. This includes orders for advanced missile systems and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The goal is to boost the development of defense technologies in the country itself through partnerships and the sharing of technology. The Indian military is still working to improve both their very short range and middle to long range air defence systems. This is to make sure they have a strong defence against a wide range of aerial threats.

Igla-S VSHORAD systems

- It is a Russian man-portable infrared homing surface-to-air missile system that is also known as the SA-24 Grinch.
- It is an improved form of the Igla (SA-18) system that was made in the early 2000s.
- Compared to its predecessor, the Igla-S has a longer range and is more deadly.
- The system can shoot at objects up to 6,000 meters away.
- Up to 3,500 meters away, it can aim at things.
- The target and warhead on the Igla-S are better, which makes it more powerful.
- Made to not be affected by thermal defences, which makes it more reliable in battle.
- Reports say that the system has a high chance of killing with every shot (0.7).
- Strong enough to destroy planes, drones, and cruise missiles.
- Many countries around the world use the Igla-S.
- It has been sent to several places where there is strife, such as Ukraine and Syria.

Hermes-900 UAV

- The Israeli company Elbit Systems made the Hermes-900, a medium-sized robotic aerial vehicle (UAV) that can do a lot of different things.
- The first flight of the drone happened in 2009.

- It can go up to 30,000 feet in elevation and last for 36 hours.
- Built mainly for data relay and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).
- It also helps on the ground and patrols the water.
- The length of the plane is 15 meters, and it can carry 350 kg of cargo.
- The Hermes-900 is used by Brazil, Switzerland, and Mexico, among other places.
- Especially useful for managing disasters, such as assessing damage from wildfires in Chile.

Indian Armed Forces to shift to Integrated Theatre Commands

Since 2019, the Indian government has taken big steps to reorganize its military to make operations run more smoothly by suggesting the creation of integrated theatre commands. The goal of this plan is to bring the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force together under one set of commands so that military operations can be coordinated based on common threats and battle zones.

What are Theatre Commands?

When theatre commands are used, certain units from all three defence forces work together under one commander. This integration makes it easier to organize operations during conflicts, making the best use of people and resources and directing the military's efforts toward clear strategic goals in particular operational areas.

Steps Towards Integration

Setting up the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in 2019 was the first step toward a more unified defence organization. These were very important for keeping an eye on the change to theatre-based orders. The Indian Armed Forces started small-scale integrations over time, like setting up joint supply nodes and thinking of Mumbai as a single tri-service defence station.

Proposed Theatre Commands and Their Headquarters Locations

According to the most recent military drafts, which came out in January 2023, three main theatre commanders focus on enemies:

- The Western Theatre Command, which could be based in Jaipur, to deal with risks from Pakistan.
- The Northern Theatre Command is based in Lucknow and is in charge of the border with China.
- A suggested Maritime Theatre Command in Coimbatore would be in charge of the Indian Ocean Region.

More ideas are being thought about for an Air Defence Command and other ideas, but final choices and agreement are still needed.

Leadership and Command Management

Each of the planned theatre commands would be led by a commander with the rank of General or a higher rank. Most likely, these leaders would answer to the Defence Minister, who is in charge of the National Defence Committee. This structure is meant to help the military work together as a single unit, making it easier to handle operations and distribute resources across all of the forces. The Indian military is being reorganized into integrated theatre commands. This is a big step toward a more unified and streamlined defence stance that fits current threat landscapes and operational needs, but it hasn't been approved by the government yet.

More About Integrated Theatre Commands

Integrated Theatre Commands bring together resources from all of India's military forces to make operations run more smoothly. Taking ideas from the U.S. and China, India started these to make things run more smoothly after the 1999 Kargil war, which showed how inefficient things were. The real work on the plan began when General Bipin Rawat was Chief of Defence Staff (2020). Some of the features are unified command and control, better logistics, and divided theatres like Northern, Western, Eastern, Southern, and Air Defence Command, each meant to meet specific strategic needs. This system encourages working together, makes sure that the right amount of force is used, cuts down on unnecessary tasks, and makes defence spending more cost-effective. With the planned Maritime Theatre Command, India's maritime interests will be safe.

Government sets up Committee to tackle Southeast Asian Cybercrimes

On May 16, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) set up an inter-ministerial committee in reaction to a big rise in transnational organized cybercrime coming from Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos Philippines. There have been a lot of victims and financial loses in India because of the rise in cybercrime.

Committee Composition and Purpose

The special secretary (internal security) of the MHA leads the powerful committee, which has people from the Reserve Bank of India, the Department of Financial Services, banks, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Department of Telecommunication, and financial technology companies as members. The committee's job is to come up with long-term plans to fight these cybercrimes and limit their impact.

Cybercrime Trends and Impact

About 45 percent of cyber-financial frauds in India come from places in Southeast Asia. These crimes have become more complicated and bigger, which costs the victims a lot of money. New numbers show that these cybercrimes have cost the economy more than Rs 7,061.51 crore. The government has been able to recover about 12 percent of the money that was lost.

Preventive Measures and Progress

Because of these changes, the I4C has taken many steps to damage the infrastructure that hackers use. Actions include keeping an eye on and stopping things like Skype accounts, Google and Meta ads, SMS headers, and bank accounts used to launder money that are called "mule" accounts. In the past few months, a lot of progress has been made. For example, thousands of URLs, mobile apps, SIM cards, and IMEI numbers have been blocked. Together with other government agencies, the I4C is always working to improve its skills so it can deal with these advanced cyber dangers.

Emerging Patterns and Government Warnings

The investigation showed that cybercriminals trick people into giving them money by offering investment chances, games, dating apps, and fake trading platforms. Notably, Indian teens and young adults have been tricked into going to Cambodia to find work, only to be forced to commit cybercrimes there. Indian citizens who were protesting in a Cambodian city were arrested, and steps were taken to send them back home and keep them safe.

Government Advisory

Through different spokespersons, including the CEO of I4C, the government has warned the public to be wary of misleading job ads and not to fall for schemes that promise big returns in a short amount of time. More is being done to teach people about the dangers of misusing technology and the bad things that can happen if they fall for one of these schemes. To sum up, the Indian government is working hard to protect its people from the growing threats made by cybercriminal groups based in South East Asia by implementing strong measures and working with other countries.

Cybercrime prevention measures

- Multi-factor authentication makes security much better by needing more than one way to prove your identity.
- Keeping software up to date fixes security holes.
- Strong passwords that are different for each account keep a single hack from letting a lot of people in.
- Malware dangers can be found and stopped by antivirus software.
- Strong security, like WPA3, keeps people who aren't supposed to be there from getting into your Wi-Fi.
- Learning about phishing helps people spot and avoid fake emails.
- Using VPNs protects private data by encrypting data transfers.
- Firewalls keep an eye on and manage all network data, both coming in and going out.
- Backing up your info makes sure that you can get it back after you lose it.
- Attacks can't get into as many places when services that aren't being used are turned off.

CERT-In Warns of Critical Flaws in Google Chrome

The Centre's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) just sent out a warning about major security holes found in Google Chrome. CERT-In's warning note, CIVN-2024-0170, talks about this worry and stresses how important it is for users to update their browsers right away. The flaws that were found are considered very serious, and hackers can access user systems and data from afar.

Understanding the Security Flaws

According to CERT-In's statement, Google Chrome had three major security problems before versions 125.0.6422.76/.77 for Windows and Mac, and before 125.0.6422.76 for Linux:

- **Heap Buffer Overflow in ANGLE and Dawn:** It happens when too much data is written to a memory buffer, which can cause crashes or let bad code in.
- **Use After Free in Scheduling:** This flaw shows up when the browser tries to use memory that has already been freed up, which could cause code to run without permission or the system to crash.
- **Type Confusion in V8:** This problem happens when data is handled wrong because of type confusion, which lets attackers get around security measures and maybe even add harmful code.

These holes are very bad for security because anyone can use them to run any code, steal private data, cause systems to crash, or spread more threats.

Recommended Safety Measures

Because of these risks, CERT-In strongly urges all Google Chrome users to instantly update their browsers to the most recent version. Here are some things you can do to make things safer and lower your chance of being hacked:

- **Automatic Updates:** Make sure your browser gets the latest security changes right away by turning on automatic updates in Chrome.
- **Browser addons for Security:** Add addons that make your browser safer. Look for ones that enforce safe HTTPS connections and block material that could be harmful.
- **Clear Browser Data:** Clear your browser's cookies, cache, and data every so often to make it less vulnerable

to hacked sites and stop tracking.

- **Follow safe browsing habits:** Be careful when you click on links or download files, especially from sources you don't know about, to avoid phishing and other types of threats.
- **Disable Unnecessary Plugins:** Turn off browser apps that aren't being used. Attackers can use these to get into your system, so make sure they are turned off when they're not in use.

This proactive method will not only keep your personal information safe, but it will also help protect the internet as a whole.

> "Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence." - Robert Frost

ECONOMICS

- WORLD BANK REPORT ON AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM

- PM GATI SHAKTI BOOSTS SOCIAL SECURITY, EXPANDS HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

- FIVE STATES SHOW INTEREST IN AADHAAR-BASED AUTHENTICATION FOR GST REGISTRATION

- INDIA EXPANDS UPI TO INCLUDE MORE RURAL, DBT USERS

- NEW AIS FEATURE ENHANCES INCOME TAX CONFIRMATION PROCESS

- INDIA'S APRIL RETAIL INFLATION EASES MARGINALLY TO 4.83%

- REMITTANCES TO INDIA CROSS $100 BILLION MARK IN FISCAL YEAR 2022-23

- RBI SCRUTINIZES GOLD LOAN NORMS TO TIGHTEN GRIP

- RITES SIGNS PACT TO SUPPLY COACHES TO BANGLADESH

- INDIA CLIMBS TO 39TH IN GLOBAL TOURISM INDEX 2024

- RBI APPROVES HIGHEST-EVER DIVIDEND OF RS 2.11 LAKH CRORE FOR GOVERNMENT

- MALDIVES TO LAUNCH INDIA'S RUPAY SERVICE AMID BILATERAL TENSIONS

- INDIA'S MARKET CAPITALIZATION CROSSES $5 TRILLION MILESTONE

- CENTRE SANCTIONS RS 21,253 CRORE TO TACKLE KERALA'S CRISIS

- SEBI CRACKS DOWN ON GAMING APPS INVOLVED IN VIRTUAL TRADING

- ZIG- ZIMBABWE ROLLS OUT WORLD NEWEST AND GOLD-BACKED CURRENCY

- INDIA'S $ 48 BILLION INPUT SUBSIDY FOR POWER AND AGRICULTURE RAISES CONCERNS

- FOUR EUROPEAN UNION BANKS SEEK RBI NOD FOR CLEARING MODEL

World Bank Report on Agri-food System

The World Bank's recent report, "Recipe for a Livable Planet: Achieving Net Zero Emissions in the Agrifood System", has emphasized on significant potential for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the agrifood sector, which currently accounts for about a third of all global emissions. The report outlines actions that countries can take to enhance food security, improve the food system's resilience to climate change, and protect vulnerable populations during the transition to a low-carbon economy.

India's Potential for Emission Reduction

In India, replacing a quarter of the country's 8.8 million diesel irrigation pumps with solar pumps could reduce agrifood emissions by 11.5 million tonnes per year. The report also highlights that 80% of the mitigation potential for agriculture in India could be achieved through cost-saving measures alone.

Top Agrifood System Emitters

The World Bank report identifies the top ten agrifood system emitters, which include China, Brazil, India, the United States, and Indonesia, among others. These countries are responsible for 55% of global agrifood emissions, with the top 20 emitters accounting for 67%.

Role of High-Income and Middle-Income Countries

The report suggests that high-income countries can lead the way by supporting low- and middle-income countries in adopting low-emission farming methods and technologies, while middle-income countries have the potential to curb up to three-quarters of global agrifood emissions through greener practices.

Investment Requirements and Benefits

To achieve the goal of halving agrifood emissions by 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, annual investments in the sector need to increase to $260 billion. The report emphasises that the benefits of investing in cutting agrifood emissions far outweigh the costs, with potential benefits exceeding $4 trillion, including improvements in human health, food and nutrition security, job quality, and profits for farmers, as well as increased carbon retention in forests and soils.

Solar irrigation pumps as sustainable alternatives to fuel-based pumps

Solar irrigation pumps are sustainable alternatives to conventional fuel-based pumps used in agriculture. They employ photovoltaic (PV) panels to convert sunlight into electrical energy to power water pumps. These systems are particularly beneficial in remote or rural areas lacking reliable access to electricity. Solar pumps reduce dependency on fossil fuels, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, and offer low operational costs after initial setup. They can draw water from wells, rivers, or lakes, providing a consistent water supply for irrigation, vital for crop growth in arid regions and during dry spells. Additionally, governments and NGOs often support the adoption of solar pumps through subsidies and incentives, promoting environmental sustainability and economic opportunity in agricultural communities.

Emission Effects of Enteric fermentation

Enteric fermentation is a digestive process that occurs in some animals, notably ruminants like cows, sheep, and goats. These animals have a specialized stomach compartment called the rumen, where microbes break down complex plant materials such as cellulose into simpler compounds. One by-product of this microbial fermentation is methane gas. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, contributing significantly to global warming. Consequently, enteric fermentation is a major focus in agricultural research aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from livestock through dietary adjustments, genetic selection, and management practices.

PM Gati Shakti Boosts Social Security, Expands Health Infrastructure

Recently, the Ministry of Labour and Employment joined the PM Gati Shakti site. Strengthening health infrastructure and social security measures in industrial places and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) is the main goal. According to Sumita Dawra, secretary of the ministry, this project aims to use a lot of building data from the port to improve workers' social security in these growing areas.

Initial Steps and Geotagging Initiatives

The ministry started by geotagging about 1.3 million buildings that were part of the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) and about 1.5 million buildings that were part of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). This included 104 ESIC hospitals. This geotagging is an important step in figuring out how to improve service coverage and see what areas are already covered.

Expanding Coverage in SEZs

Exploring 268 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) through the Gati Shakti platform as part of strategic growth will give many workers in these zones access to social security programs. By doing this, the safety net for workers will be strengthened, providing more coverage and benefits.

Integration with Other Schemes

The government wants to add more programs to the PM Gati Shakti portal in the future. With a focus on services for people with disabilities, this includes National Career Services centers. The growth plan for these centres helps the most vulnerable groups and is open to everyone.

Addressing Challenges for Pensioners

Fixing the problems that seniors have with sending in their digital life awards is a real benefit of this project. Using geotagging to find pensioners, the ministry hopes to make concentration maps on the site that will help medical groups like the ESIC better target and serve their patients.

About PM Gati Shakti portal

The Indian government launched the PM Gati Shakti Portal, which is a game-changing project that aims to create a comprehensive plan for building up infrastructure all over the country. This website is a complete GIS-based platform that brings together planned and current infrastructure projects from many different fields, including shipping, aviation, roads, and railways. The main goal of the Gati Shakti Portal is to make sure that projects are planned and carried out in a coordinated way, to cut down on delays in implementation, and to boost

economic growth by making it easier for people and things to move around.

About special economic zones (SEZs)

Special Economic Zones, or SEZs, are places within a country that are set apart and have different economic rules than other areas. These areas were made to bring in foreign direct investment (FDI), boost growth based on exports, and make jobs available. In SEZs, businesses can get tax breaks, lower tariffs, and easier regulatory processes, among other things. SEZs usually focus on certain types of businesses, like manufacturing, technology, or banking. They are very important to a country's economic plan because they improve trade and industrial growth around the world. But SEZs are also criticized for pushing out local people and making the economy less fair.

Five States Show Interest in Aadhaar-Based Authentication for GST Registration

According to an official statement, five Indian states, such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, have shown interest in using Aadhaar-based authentication for GST registration. Additionally, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Puducherry have started testing Aadhaar identification.

Biometric Authentication for GST Registration

At the third National Coordination Meeting of Central and State GST officers, biometric-based confirmation for GST registration was talked about. The states that are thinking about this system want to figure out how much the infrastructure and staffing needs will cost. They will be given information that will help them make a good proposal that their Cabinets will accept.

Current Authentication Method

Currently, OTP-based Aadhaar authentication is used by GST officials to verify the identities of people who want to register. However, this method has been abused, with people using other people's names to create fake businesses to claim Input Tax Credit (ITC).

Aadhaar-GST Implementation Benefits

Karnataka, along with Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra, which brought in the most GST money in April, could especially benefit from this change in the system, which would make tax collection more accurate and protect against scams. Due to strong economic growth and more imports and domestic activities, April GST revenues were higher than the Rs 2 lakh crore mark. This makes the possible benefits of tighter GST registration based on Aadhaar even stronger.

What is GST registration?

Businesses that make more than Rs 20 lakh a year have to register for GST. It is a 15-digit number that the Central Government gives you. IGST is charged on transactions between states, and CGST and SGST are charged on transactions within states. GST helps get rid of the "cascading effect" or tax on tax. Not all things and services are affected by it, but some are. No matter how much they sell, non-residents who sell in India need to register for GST. Businesses that aren't registered can't charge GST to their customers. There are times when cancellation is possible. People who don't follow the rules are punished.

About Aadhaar-based authentication

Aadhaar-based authentication is a process where Aadhaar numbers are used to confirm one's identity. Biometric and demographic information are both needed for the two-step method. Biometric data includes fingerprints, an eye scan, and a picture of your face. Demographic data includes your name, date of birth, gender, and address. The process happens in real-time on a gadget that has been registered. Authentication doesn't give away anyone's personal information or name. The process is easy and doesn't cost much. According to UIDAI, verified data can be kept for 6 months.

India Expands UPI to Include More Rural, DBT Users

Multiple banks, including the Reserve Bank of India, are actively urging people who receive government-direct benefit transfers (DBTs) to use the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for their transactions. This program is part of a larger plan to get more people to use digital payments instead of cash. A lot of people in rural areas are getting direct benefits from DBT plans because the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), which runs UPI, is adding district and rural cooperative banks to its platform so that rural customers can use digital payment services.

Current Challenges and Opportunities

Even though 300 million people use UPI, the 960 million people in India who use debit cards show that there is a much bigger, open market. This difference shows that digital payments have a lot of room to grow across the country. At the moment, UPI handles more than 13 billion transfers every month, most of which happen in cities and parts of cities. The goal is to use this approach all over rural India so that everyone has access to money.

Implementation by Local Banks and Technology Providers

Local and regional cooperative banks have only been able to give out debit cards in the past. They need extra government approval to offer mobile banking services, such as UPI. Sarvatra Technologies and other organizations like it are very important to this shift because they help banks get around regulatory hurdles and implement new technology. Around 242 local banks have started using UPI, and work is still being done to add more. With QR codes, these banks are starting to work with rural merchants, which will encourage rural customers to make digital purchases at common places of sale like grocery shops and farm supply stores.

Barriers to Rural Adoption of Digital Payments

One big problem is that users are taking out their DBT funds right away; over 40% of the funds that were transferred are being taken out right away. The main goal is to keep a digital money trail, but this behaviour gets in the way of that. Also, the fact that many older citizens in rural areas still use old-fashioned feature phones makes it harder for them to use more advanced UPI apps made for smartphones. There is UPI123 for feature phones, but it isn't used as much as UPI systems for smartphones.

More About Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which was created by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

in 2016, changed the way digital transfers are made in India. Some of the features are given below:

1. Ease of Use: UPI lets people quickly send money between different bank accounts using only their phones, and it works 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
2. Flexible Transactions: Allows "Peer to Merchant" (P2M) transfers, which make it easy to pay by reading a QR code.
3. Better security: It uses a Virtual Payment Address (VPA) to hide users' bank information during transfers, which makes it safer.
4. Widespread Use: By 2021, UPI had been connected to 224 banks and handled more than 2 billion transactions per month, showing how quickly it was accepted and liked in India.

More About Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes

When India started its Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) programs in 2013, the goal was to get benefits directly into people's bank accounts. This would make sure that the programs worked well by reducing waste and delays. By March 2020, DBT had given more than $200 billion to people who needed it through 400 different projects. Notably, the PAHAL plan under DBT changed how LPG cylinders were distributed and helped more than 263 million people. The system was also the first to integrate payments tied to Aadhaar, which helped people learn how to use technology.

New AIS Feature Enhances Income Tax Confirmation Process

The Annual Information Statement (AIS) now has a useful feature added by the Income Tax Department that lets taxpayers see the confirmation state of their financial data. The goal of this change is to make tax filing more open and accurate.

Understanding the Annual Information Statement (AIS)

The American Income Statement (AIS) is a detailed record of all of a taxpayer's financial transactions during the tax year. It includes information from many sources, such as banks and mutual funds. According to the Income Tax Department, it gives a thorough picture of a person's business activities.

New Feature Explained

1. **Confirmed:** This state means that the tax department has checked the information carefully and agreed with it. Entries that are marked as "Confirmed" are thought to be correct, and the taxpayer does not need to do anything else about them.
2. **Partially Accepted:** This state means that some parts of the information have been checked out and approved, but other parts may still need more information or clarification. Taxpayers should carefully read over these records to see what other information might be needed to fully settle any problems.
3. **Rejected:** It means that the tax office has not accepted the information. These records need to be fixed, and taxpayers are responsible for updating or changing the wrong information. People who owe money on taxes should take care of these mistakes right away to avoid problems with their tax returns.

How to Accessing AIS?

The compliance page on the e-filing website (www.incometax. gov.in) lets all registered income taxpayers get to their AIS. Taxpayers can look over and make changes to their recorded financial transactions here.

What are the Benefits for Taxpayers?
Transparency:

1. Taxpayers can now directly check that the financial information the tax office has on file about them is correct.
2. This makes it easier to check that the data used for tax estimates and assessments is correct, which lowers the chance of mistakes.

Proactive Correction:

1. With the updated AIS, taxpayers can find mistakes in their financial records and fix them before they happen.
2. Taxpayers can avoid problems during the tax scoring process by taking care of these issues before they file their tax returns.

Reduced Workload:

1. When you have better knowledge and can make changes ahead of time, it's much less likely that the tax department will ask questions or do an audit.
2. This makes it easier to file taxes and also makes things easier for both taxpayers and tax officials in terms of paperwork.

More About Annual Information Statement (AIS)

India's Income Tax Department created the Annual Information Statement (AIS), which is a better version of Form 26AS and shows a lot more about a taxpayer's financial transactions. AIS has extra data like interest, dividends, trades in securities, and purchases of mutual funds. It makes voluntary cooperation easier and makes sure that taxes are clear. You can get to the statement through the Income Tax Department's e-filing site. Taxpayers can give feedback if there are problems. AIS is updated often to include the most recent information from financial companies. It uses information from property and share deals to accurately figure out tax liabilities. This helps keep income tax returns as error-free as possible.

India's April Retail Inflation Eases Marginally to 4.83%

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) showed that retail inflation in India slowed down a bit in April. The rate went down a little from 4.85% in March to 4.83%, according to the National Statistical Office. Some of this small drop was caused by lower prices in the fuel and light sectors.

Components of Inflation and Economic Factors

However, food prices went up from 8.52% to 8.7%, while core prices stayed low. Food and core inflation are still not rising at the same rate, which makes things more difficult for the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), especially since real interest rates are seen as "excessive." Foods like cereals, meat, fish, eggs, veggies, and pulses all had persistently high inflation rates. These stresses might be balanced out by the hope of a good rainy season, which could increase crop yields and keep prices stable.

Non-Food Inflation and Monetary Responses

Consumer prices stayed the same for things other than food, like clothes, shoes, home goods, services, and fun and games. Still, the persistently high food inflation creates a lot of unpredictability, which affects the MPC's policy choices. The governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Shaktikanta Das, said that people should be careful about how food prices change, implying that these changes might not have short-term effects.

What is the Consumer Price Index?

A weighted average market basket of goods and services that families buy is used to figure out changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). It's a statistical guess based on the prices of a group of typical things whose prices are gathered regularly. For each group of goods and services, sub-indices and sub-sub-indices are calculated, and these are then added together to make the total index. CPI changes are used to figure out how much prices have changed because of the cost of living, to change salaries, wages, and benefits, to keep prices stable, and to deflate money amounts to show how much they've changed in real terms. In most countries, the CPI is used to measure inflation as well as to match pensions and pay to prices. One of the most-watched pieces of national economic data is this measure.

About Monetary Policy Committee

1. **Formation and Purpose:** To control inflation, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) sets interest rates in a country.
2. **Historical Context:** The MPC was created in 1997 in the UK and is very important in making economic decisions.
3. **Composition:** The MPC is usually made up of nine people, including the governor of the central bank, two deputy governors, the top economist, and foreign experts.
4. **Operating Frequency:** The group meets about every six weeks to look at interest rates and set them.
5. **Decision-Making Process:** The MPC makes decisions by voting on what the majority of its members think.
6. **Transparency Measures:** To keep things open, the minutes of the MPC meetings are made public, which include a record of what was talked about and why choices were made the way they were.
7. **Global Examples:** Similar to the UK, India set up its MPC in 2016 with the stated goal of keeping annual inflation at 4%, with a tolerance range of +/- 2%.
8. **Economic Impact:** The MPC's choices have a big effect on important economic factors like monetary policy, interest rates, and employment rates.
9. **Role in Economic Stability:** Monetary policy committees (MPCs) play a key role in keeping the economy stable by adapting monetary policies to the prevailing economic circumstances.

Remittances To India Cross $100 Billion Mark In Fiscal Year 2022-23

India recently passed the important milestone of $100 billion in payments. In the fiscal year 2022–23, it reached a record $112 billion. At this peak, an amazing $29 billion was sent back to India just in the December quarter. This shows that money sent back to India is strongly going up.

Historical Trend and Election Years Impact

Studies that look back over the last 25 years show that payments to India tend to be highest during election years. For example, remittances hit $83.2 billion in fiscal year 2019–20, which happened to be an election year. They slightly dropped to $80.2 billion the next year, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This trend shows that there is a regular, though not always clear-cut, link between election years and changes in remittance inflows.

Factors Influencing Remittance Flows

The flow of remittances is greatly affected by many things, such as the job market around the world and the chances for the Indian diaspora. Important events in history, like the oil boom in the 1970s and the IT boom in the 1990s, greatly improved job possibilities for Indians working abroad, which led to more money being sent back home. According to the Indian government, these "private transfers" are an important part of the country's balance of payments and a major source of foreign currency.

Stability and Economic Impact of Remittances

When compared to foreign investments or borrowing money from other countries, remittances are a more safe and long-lasting way to get foreign currency. This steadiness is especially important because it helps pay for India's current account deficit. It is an important part of the country's economic backbone in a time of open economic policies that began in the 1990s.

More About Inward Remittances

Inward remittances, or money sent back to home countries by expatriates, have a big effect on businesses around the world. India, China, and Mexico get the most money, which shows how much the population and economies depend on these funds. Remittances brought in more than $554 billion for low- and middle-income countries in 2019, more than foreign direct investment. Egypt's remittances went up by 40% after the revolution in 2011. The World Bank says that remittances help to stabilize economies by raising family incomes and making people more creditworthy. Mobile payments and other technological advances have lowered the costs of sending money abroad, making transfers faster and easier. However, fees are still around 7% on average.

What is the Balance of payments?

1. The Balance of Payments (BOP) is a comprehensive record of a country's economic transactions with the rest of the world.
2. It includes three main accounts: the current account, the capital account, and the financial account.
3. The current account balances trade in goods and services, net earnings on overseas investments, and net transfer payments.
4. The capital account reflects the net change in ownership of national assets.
5. The financial account shows changes in international ownership of financial assets.
6. Any mistakes or missing information in the account usually mean that tracking isn't going smoothly.
7. Keeping the BOP in balance means recording transactions as credits and debits. This affects exchange rates and economic strategy.
8. Large gaps can cause big changes in the economy.

RBI Scrutinizes Gold Loan Norms to Tighten Grip

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) made it harder for Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to do business by telling them in March that they had to follow the rules for gold loans carefully. As a result of breaking these rules, IIFL Finance was not allowed to give out any more gold loans.

What is the Reasons for the Reinforcement of Gold Loan Norms?

The RBI made its choice after discovering that some NBFCs had broken the rules by overvaluing collateral and not following loan-to-value ratios. These violations show that NBFCs are putting too much emphasis on growth over caution, which could lead to widespread problems as the sector grows. The RBI says: –

1. The loan amount can't be more than 75% of the gold's value. This ensures that lenders have extra money in case the borrower doesn't repay the loan.
2. No more than ₹20,000 can be given out in cash; any more money must be sent through a bank transfer.
3. Gold that has been repossessed must be auctioned off clearly so that borrowers can see the lots.

Implications of Increased RBI Scrutiny for NBFCs

By making it harder to get cash right away, the tighter control should:

1. Make NBFC gold loans less appealing.
2. Slow down the rapid growth of loan books by making sure that loan-to-value limits are strictly followed.
3. Raise the costs of doing business for NBFCs because gold bids need to be more open and clearly marked.

More About RBI's gold loan norms

Under the gold loan, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) says that commercial banks can give up to 90% of the value of gold jewellery starting in 2021. This is up from 75% before. This higher Loan to Value ratio (LTV) will last until March 31, 2022, and is meant to ease the stress on the economy caused by COVID-19. These loans have lower interest rates than personal loans because they are backed by something. In order to get a loan, the gold must be between 18 and 24 karats pure. Gold loans can be paid back over a period of a few months to a few years, based on the lender's rules. Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) also offer gold loans, but their interest rates and LTV ratios are not the same as banks'.

What is the loan-to-value ratio?

The loan-to-value ratio (LTV) compares the loan amount to the value of the item being bought. This ratio is often used in mortgage lending. Lenders like LTVs that are 80% or less to lower their risk. If the LTV ratio is high, you may need to get extra mortgage insurance. Interest rates can be changed by the LTV. Usually, smaller LTVs mean better rates. For borrowing, the LTV is a key factor in figuring out who is eligible. After 2008, mortgage rules put more emphasis on LTV analysis to stop lenders from giving out too many risky loans. By raising the property's value, home improvements can change the LTV. When figuring out the LTV, closing costs are not included in the property value.

RITES Signs Pact to Supply Coaches to Bangladesh

RITES Limited, a government-owned company and the exporting part of Indian Railways, was recently awarded a large contract to provide Bangladesh Railways with 200 broad-gauge passenger carriages. The European Investment Bank paid for the deal, which was worth USD 111.26 million (about Rs 915 crore). It was won in a global buying process.

Contract Details

RITES and Bangladesh Railways have a deal that includes more than just selling carriages. It also includes helping with design, providing spare parts, and training. The contract sets out 36 months for delivery and commissioning, followed by a 24-month warranty term.

Strategic Importance

This deal is an important part of RITES's plan to export world-class railway rolling stock that was made in India. It fits with India's "Make in India, for the World" campaign, which wants to make India a centre for production around the world. This deal also shows that RITES is still involved in improving Bangladesh's train infrastructure. They have provided different types of rolling stock and worked together on several projects in the past.

More About RITES Limited

1. RITES Limited, a Government of India Enterprise, was established in 1974 under the aegis of Indian Railways.
2. It specializes in transport consultancy and engineering sector projects.
3. Key areas include urban and regional planning, infrastructure, the design of highways, airports, seaports, and mass transit systems.
4. It is internationally recognized with projects in 55 countries, notably in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.
5. RITES is involved in leasing and exporting railway equipment.
6. It provides consultancy services for the operation and maintenance of transportation facilities.

7. RITES is listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE).
8. The company actively promotes sustainable development.

Facts about the Make in India Initiative

1. The 'Make in India' program, which began in 2014, aims to increase manufacturing by making business processes easier.
2. The lion logo symbolizes strength.
3. It targets 25 sectors including automobiles and aviation.
4. India moved up from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in the World Bank's 2020 Ease of Doing Business list thanks to the program.
5. It has gotten a lot of money from investors around the world, including Samsung and Foxconn.
6. The defence industry became much more open to private companies because of "Make in India," and the foreign direct investment limit in defence was raised to 74%.

India Climbs to 39th in Global Tourism Index 2024

India moved up to the 39th spot on the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024, as the number of tourists around the world returned to levels seen before the pandemic. First on the list was the United States. The next five countries in order were Spain, Japan, France, and Australia.

India's Ranking and Comparative Analysis

According to the current WEF report, India is now the best lower-middle-income economy in South Asia and the 54th-best economy in the world in 2021. It's important to keep in mind, though, that changes to the index's parameters have made it harder to directly compare it to past years.

Key Strengths and Resource Pillars

The index, developed in collaboration with the University of Surrey, highlights India's strengths in several key areas:

1. **Price Competitiveness:** India is ranked 18th, making it highly affordable for travellers.
2. **Air Transport Infrastructure:** Positioned at 26th, indicating robust air transportation facilities.
3. **Ground/Port Infrastructure:** Ranked 25th, showcasing strong ground and port transportation systems.
4. **Natural Resources:** India holds a strong 6th position, emphasizing its rich natural attractions.
5. **Cultural Resources:** Ranked 9th, highlighting India's vast cultural heritage.
6. **Non-Leisure Resources:** Also ranked 9th, underlining its diverse attractions.

Economic Impact and Recovery Rates

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), foreign tourist arrivals and the tourism sector's contribution to global GDP will fully return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024. This will happen because COVID-19 travel restrictions will no longer apply and there will be a lot of pent-up demand. The Middle East has had the best recovery rates, 20% higher than in 2019. Europe, Africa, and the Americas are not far behind, with recovery rates of about 90% in 2023.

More About World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index

The Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) from the World Economic Forum looks at the policies and factors that help the travel and tourism industry grow in different countries in a way that is viable. The index, which replaced the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, looks at things like the business environment, safety and security, health and hygiene, human resources, and the long-term health of the climate. Japan was ranked first in 2021, making it the best country in Asia. Because of how COVID-19 affected tourism around the world, the score stresses how important it is to be resilient and come up with new ideas. Notably, the approach includes new indicators that show how ready travel and tourism are for the future. This encourages a change to more sustainable and welcoming practices.

RBI Approves Highest-Ever Dividend of Rs 2.11 Lakh Crore for Government

A record amount of Rs 2.11 lakh crore has been approved by the Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as the surplus payment to the Central Government for the accounting year 2023–24. This large transfer goes above and beyond what was planned in the budget and what the market thought would happen. It sets a new standard for the RBI's financial payments to the national treasury.

Comparison with Previous Years and Market Expectations

Based on past data and what the market thought would happen, the surplus shift for this time period was thought to be around Rs 1 lakh crore to Rs 1.1 lakh crore. So, the allowed amount is twice what was expected and a big jump from previous years. The transfers of Rs 87,416 crore in 2022–23 and Rs 30,307 crore in 2021–22 show how different the two amounts are. This sudden rise in surplus transfers will ease fiscal pressures, which could lower the fiscal deficit for FY 2025 by around 0.2% of GDP. According to the Interim Budget, the government wants to cut the budget deficit from 5.8% of GDP in FY24 to 5.1% of GDP in FY25. This new development helps them reach their lofty goal.

Factors Contributing to Surplus Increase

Several things have led to this huge cash gain. The RBI's income from variable repo rate (VRR) sales has gone up because more people are taking part, even though banks are having trouble getting cash. The RBI's earnings have also been helped by higher interest rates on both domestic and foreign securities and gains from revaluing foreign exchange funds.

More About RBI surplus transfer

1. **RBI's Surplus Transfer to the Government:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) annually transfers its surplus, which is essentially the central bank's profits, to the government. This surplus primarily comes from the interest on loans and securities held by the RBI.
2. **Bimal Jalan Committee's Recommendations:** The distribution of the surplus follows the guidelines set by the Bimal Jalan Committee, which reviewed and revised the Economic Capital Framework in 2019. The committee's recommendations aim to balance the RBI's financial resilience with the fiscal needs of the government.

3. **Impact on Fiscal Deficit:** The RBI's decision on surplus transfer significantly affects the fiscal deficit of the Indian government. For instance, in the fiscal year 2021-22, the RBI announced a surplus transfer of Rs 30,307 crore, a notable decrease from the Rs 99,122 crore transferred the previous year. This variability is influenced by changes in the RBI's income and its monetary policy operations.

More About variable repo rate (VRR) auctions

Central banks, like the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), use variable repo rate (VRR) bids to control the amount of cash in the banking system. The repo rate, which is the rate at which private banks borrow money from the central bank, can change during these auctions, which is different from fixed-rate repos. VRRs were created as a way to adjust the amount of cash in circulation. They help absorb or inject short-term excess liquidity, keep money market rates in line with policy rates, and are an important part of how banks handle overnight rates. The times between VRR sales can also be changed, from one night to 28 days, giving you more control over your liquidity. Since 2019, these bids have been used more often to improve the efficiency of money transfers and market changes.

Maldives To Launch India's Rupay Service Amid Bilateral Tensions

The Maldives wants to make its own currency, the Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR), stronger, so it has announced plans to accept India's RuPay payment service. This is a step forward in working together financially, even though there have been political problems between India and the Maldives lately because President Mohamed Muizzu supported China.

Introduction of India's RuPay Service

India's first world card payment network is RuPay, run by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). It can be used at ATMs, Point of Sale (POS) terminals, and online stores in India. The Maldivian Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Mohamed Saeed, announced that the launch would take place in the Maldives. Even though the exact launch date hasn't been released yet, this project is meant to help the Maldivian economy by making the MVR more useful and stable.

Benefits to the Maldivian Economy

Incorporating RuPay into the Maldives will help with important economic goals, such as lowering reliance on the US dollar and strengthening the local currency. This would make local currency operations official.

Bilateral Relations and Economic Strategies

Although diplomatic ties between the two countries cooled after President Muizzu took office and sent Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives home, both countries are still ready to strengthen their economic ties. During former Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's visit to India in August 2022, both countries made a statement saying they were committed to making Rupay Cards work in the Maldives.

This move is meant to improve travel, tourism, and business ties between the two countries.

Global Expansion of RuPay and Future Prospects

NPCI foreign Payments Ltd (NIPL), a branch of NPCI that works on foreign relations, has done a lot to spread UPI and RuPay around the world. Many banks and payment networks from around the world have joined this effort, showing that it is spreading around the world. RuPay's arrival in the Maldives is another big step forward for the country's foreign journey. It promises to improve trade between the two countries and keep the economy stable through new financial tools.

More About RuPay service

1. RuPay is India's own card plan. It was created by the National Payments Corporation of India and began operating in 2012.
2. All banks and other financial companies in India accept RuPay cards as a way to make electronic payments.
3. When compared to foreign card networks, they have lower handling fees, which helps more people get access to money.
4. Accident protection on some RuPay cards is something that no other company offers. They use India's own network, which means they don't have to rely on systems in other countries and data stays in India.
5. RuPay cards made up 60% of all cards issued in India by 2021. It works with Discover and JCB to support foreign transactions, which shows how far it is reaching around the world.

India's Market Capitalization Crosses $5 Trillion Milestone

The market value of all companies traded on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in India recently passed the $5 trillion mark, which is a big deal for the market. India is now the fifth country in the world, after the U.S., China, Japan, and Hong Kong, to hit this level of market value. The value of the market was $5.05 trillion. The sharp rise in value is mostly due to the great performance of bank and car stocks, which pushed the benchmark indices to all-time highs.

Market-Cap to GDP Ratio

The Market Cap to GDP number, which is a key measure, went up to 1.42 times (or 142% of India's GDP). This important economic sign, which is sometimes called the "Warren Buffet indicator," helps figure out whether the stock market is overvalued or undervalued compared to the general output of the economy. According to the current percentage, the market may be stretched, but it also shows that the economy is doing well.

Historical Growth of Market Capitalisation

India's market capitalization has grown in a very interesting way:

1. In May 2007, it hit $1 trillion for the first time.
2. In July 2017, it topped $2 trillion.
3. In May 2021, the $3 trillion mark was broken.
4. On November 29, 2018, it went over $4 trillion.
5. It is now over $5 trillion.

Economic Indicators and Forecast

Analysts say that the high Market-Cap to GDP ratio is due to strong macroeconomic fundamentals and a setting that is good for economic growth. Based on predictions for the next few years, the ratio may return to normal at 126% (1.26 times), which means that the market may continue to trade at higher valuations because the economy as a whole is doing well.

Market Valuation Parameters

The Market-Cap to GDP ratio has shown that a market is undervalued when it is between 50% and 75%, and it is at good value when it is between 75% and 100%. If the percentage goes above 100%, the market may be overvalued, but this depends on other factors. The fact that this ratio is currently above 100% shows how excited the market is and how private capital spending cycles might push it even higher shortly.

More About BSE-listed stocks

History and Location:
◊ Established at 1875, making it Asia's oldest stock exchange.
◊ Located at Dalal Street, Mumbai.

Market and Listings:
◊ Over 5000 companies listed, one of the world's largest in terms of listed entities.
◊ Surpassed $3 trillion as of 2023.

Key Features and Innovations:
◊ Benchmark index introduced in 1986, comprising 30 stocks from various sectors.
◊ Introduced BOLT (BSE On-Line Trading) in 1995.
◊ Launched India's first ETF (Exchange Traded Funds) and stock futures.
◊ Most trading is conducted in large cap stocks, which are generally more liquid.
◊ Includes BSE SmallCap, BSE MidCap, and BSE 100.

Centre Sanctions Rs 21,253 Crore to Tackle Kerala's Crisis

The Indian Central Government gave the state of Kerala a lot of money at the end of May 2024 to help it deal with its economic problems. The Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology told everyone about this change in a public post on platform X. Up until December 2024, the Centre has let Kerala borrow up to Rs 21,253 crores.

Details of the Economic Crisis in Kerala

Kerala has been having a lot of problems with its economy, like not paying its workers on time and stopping progress on many state projects. Employees of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) were hit hard by the economic downturn, which messed up their pay streams.

Objectives of the Financial Assistance

The approved borrowings are meant to boost Kerala's economy by making sure that salaries and pensions are paid on time, that important infrastructure projects like the Coastal Protection and the Mini Harbour Project are completed, and that marine activities are supported. Also, the process of hiring Coastal Police Officers (CPO) will be sped up, which will make the coast safer.

Expected Impacts and Government Accountability

The money that was sent and the permission to borrow more is supposed to help Kerala's economy get better. People are hopeful that Kerala's economic stability and growth will get a lot better in the future now that the state government is focusing on dealing with these important problems and getting help from the national government.

More About Economic Crisis in Kerala

Kerala had problems with its economy, especially from 2017 to 2018, when the state's GDP growth was only 7.18 percent. Because about 36.3% of the state's income comes from remittances, it is vulnerable to changes in the world economy. More than $4.4 billion was lost in damage from the 2018 floods, which mostly affected crops and tourism. Even though Kerala had a lot of good social measures, its unemployment rate of 9.4% in 2017-18 was much higher than the national average. It hit 31.4% of GSDP in 2020, which shows that the state's finances are still under a lot of stress due to high welfare spending and slow industrial growth.

SEBI Cracks Down on Gaming Apps Involved in Virtual Trading

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is keeping a closer eye on fantasy games and virtual trading platforms that use real share prices to mimic stock trading. This action comes after a lot of like-minded apps became famous because more and more regular people are interested in trading stocks.

Regulatory Crackdown

SEBI has told stock exchanges and depositories to stop giving third-party apps that help with virtual trading access to real-time price data. The goal of this directive is to stop people from using data for financial gain on sites that aren't regulated. SEBI says that it is okay to use this data for educational and fun purposes, but it is illegal to link cash rewards to the outcomes of virtual portfolios, which is similar to "dabba trading."

Legal and Financial Implications

The exchanges make money by processing trades and selling data feeds. Stock traders get these feeds for free so they can help their clients trade. SEBI's rules now say that sharing market data for things like schooling has to be put off for at least one day to stop it from being misused. Stock exchanges have also been told to change their legal deals to stop anyone from using live data feeds without permission.

Facts about the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

Formation and Regulatory Authority

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) was established on April 12, 1988, and gained statutory powers on January 30, 1992, through the SEBI Act of 1992.
- SEBI is headquartered in Mumbai and is responsible for regulating the securities market in India.
- It responds to the needs of three primary groups: issuers of securities, investors, and market intermediaries.

Innovations and Market Improvements

- In 2000, SEBI made Internet dealing possible, which made the securities market easier to get to and more efficient.
- Paper shares were thrown out when demat (dematerialized) trading started. This cut down on fraud by a large amount and made dealing easier.
- SEBI set up the National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM) in Mumbai so that people who work in the market could get training and licensing.

Investor Protection and Enforcement

- SEBI improved safety for investors by creating the SCORES platform, which lets investors file complaints and keep track of them online.
- The group has the power to do raids and investigations to make sure people follow the rules and protect the purity of the market.
- These steps help make the stock market safer and more open, which boosts investor trust.

More About virtual stock trading games

People can practice investing in fake money in real-time markets with virtual stock trading games, which are also sometimes called "paper trading apps." This way, they can improve their skills and strategy without risking real money. Investopedia Simulator and other platforms are like real trade platforms. There is also a virtual stock market on MarketWatch. Some models, like Wall Street Survivor, let you learn while competing. Virtual trading lets you try out different ways to spend, like day trading or long-term strategies. A lot of companies, offer simulators to help clients learn how to use trading tools. The game-like features in these apps make it easier to understand complicated financial ideas in a fun way.

Zig- Zimbabwe Rolls Out World Newest and Gold-Backed Currency

Zimbabwe recently tried to get their economy back on track, which is why they made a new currency in April called the Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG). As a result of major economic problems and the failure of earlier currencies, this is the sixth attempt in 15 years to create a national currency.

Background and Deployment

When the Zimbabwe dollar fell apart in 2009, during a time of hyperinflation that was believed to be 5 billion percent, a 100-trillion Zimbabwe dollar bill was printed. Extreme steps like these showed how bad Zimbabwe's economy was, which led to a system of multiple currencies with the U.S. dollar as the main currency. The government tried to fix these problems and make the local currency more stable by introducing the gold-backed ZiG. They hoped it would boost trust more than the ones that came before it.

Public Promotion and Response

When it came out, the ZiG was promoted in a number of ways, such as through music and direct talks with government leaders and the party in power, ZANU-PF. Even with all of this advertising, the new currency had a hard time getting accepted, just like other currencies before it. People were still skeptical because of ongoing economic problems and a desire for the more stable U.S. dollar, which is still used across the country for big purchases like rent and school fees.

Measures to Enforce Usage

In a controversial move, the government has made people use ZiG by making it harder to trade currencies on the black market. Currency dealers who were dealing at rates higher than the official exchange were arrested by the authorities. This caused a lot of trouble and criticism from the economic community about how harsh these measures were. Even though people who trade in illegal currencies are jailed or fined a lot, most economists agree that these actions alone are not enough to restore trust in the new currency.

Continuing Challenges

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India's $ 48 Billion Input Subsidy for Power and Agriculture Raises Concerns

At a meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2022–2023, the US, EU, UK, Australia, Canada, Brazil, New Zealand, and Japan all voiced worries about India's subsidies for farmer inputs. Approximately $48 billion in handouts were given to India to help pay for things like power, irrigation, and fertilizer.

Background of the Dispute

The US drew attention to how big these handouts were by saying they were more than twice as much as all the trade-distorting aid India had reported in the previous fiscal year. The 2015-16 Agriculture Census found that 99.43% of farm holdings in India were owned by people with low incomes or few resources. These benefits are important because they help these farmers in important ways.

WTO Rules and Flexibilities for Developing Countries

Under Article 6.2 of the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture, emerging countries like India are given more freedom to help their own people by giving subsidies for things like fertilizers, irrigation, and power. There are limits on other types of farm support, like price and income support, which is part of the Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS). But these benefits don't have those limits. For developed countries, the AMS limits are set at 5% of all agricultural products, and for developing countries, they are 10%.

India's Justifications and International Request for Transparency

India said that inflation and growing fertilizer costs were the main reasons for its higher subsidy spending. India also claimed that it had given the WTO all the information it needed about subsidies, in response to calls for more openness from other countries.

What is Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)?

The Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) is a key part of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture and is used in international trade in agriculture. AMS figures out how much help a country gives its agricultural goods, including subsidies. Its goal is to limit the amounts of home support that hurt trade by making countries gradually lower their AMS. Some countries, like emerging ones, are exempt and can have higher AMS limits. When the AMS does its estimates, it leaves out supports that don't change trade or only slightly change it, like money for research or environmental projects. Instead, it focuses on measures that change market prices or quantities.

Four European Union Banks Seek RBI Nod for Clearing Model

Four big European banks – Credit Agricole, Societe Generale, Deutsche Bank, and BNP Paribas – are asking the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to let them use a third-party clearing model to keep buying and selling Indian government bonds and derivatives. As a result of problems with audit and inspection rights, the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) took away the Clearing Corporation of India's (CCIL) recognition.

Impasse Over Audit Oversight Rights

The conflict started when the RBI wouldn't let the ESMA audit and check the CCIL, which is a key part of India's financial system for government bonds and derivatives. Because of this refusal, the ESMA stopped recognizing the CCIL in October 2022. After October 2024, European banks will not be able to do business with it.

The Proposed Third-Party Transaction Model

To get around the impasse, the European banks involved suggested a third-party plan in which transactions could be settled through Indian banks such as the State Bank of India and ICICI Bank. This agreement would help keep foreign capital coming in and make sure that European rules are followed.

Challenges and Client Confidentiality Concerns

One of the biggest problems with using the third-party approach is keeping client information personal. Safekeeping private data and securities for clients is what European banks do. Transferring clearing to a third-party bank could mean sharing client information, which raises worries about privacy and data security.

Facts about the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA):

◊ ESMA was established in 2011.
◊ ESMA plays a crucial role in the architecture of financial regulation within the EU, working alongside other European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs) like the European Banking Authority (EBA) and the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA), as well as the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB).
◊ Its main goals are to safeguard the stability of the European Union's financial system, ensure the integrity, transparency, efficiency, and orderly functioning of securities markets, and improve investor protection.
◊ ESMA develops a single rulebook for EU financial markets, ensuring consistent regulation and supervision.
◊ It monitors and assesses risks to investors, markets, and financial stability.
◊ It contributes to the development of common market standards and practices, enhancing cross-border cooperation and coordination.

You have to dream before your dreams can come true..

- A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM

ECOLOGY

GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE 2024

CONTEXT: Alok Shukla, a 43-year-old environmental activist from Chhattisgarh, India, has won the prestigious 2024 Goldman Environmental Prize.

BACKGROUND: In the heart of an Indian forest, activist Alok Shukla leads a grassroots movement against plans to convert the wilderness into coal mines, challenging conglomerates like Adani Group. The movement achieved a significant victory in 2021 when the government created an elephant reserve in the threatened Hasdeo Aranya forest, over 445,000 acres in size.

Hasdeo Aranya Forest

- Hasdeo Arand: A 170,000-hectare forest in Chhattisgarh, India, home to diverse ecology and adivasi communities like the Gonds.
- Biodiversity: Houses 82 bird species, 167 vegetation types with 18 threatened, and endangered butterflies.
- Wildlife: Major migratory corridor for elephants, and confirmed tiger sightings.
- Ecological Importance: Largest un-fragmented forest in Central India with pristine Sal and teak forests.
- Mining Proposal: Chhattisgarh government proposed mining 1,898.393 hectares for coalfields, opposed due to ecological concerns.
- Legal Battles: National Green Tribunal suspended mining in 2014, but Supreme Court later stayed the order.

Goldman Environmental Prize

- Goldman Environmental Prize: Honors grassroots environmental activists worldwide for leadership and achievements in protecting the planet.
- Continental Regions: Recognizes heroes from Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands & Island Nations, North America, and South & Central America.
- Founders: Founded in 1989 by Richard and Rhoda Goldman, reflecting their commitment to philanthropy and environmental issues.
- Purpose: Aims to demonstrate international environmental challenges and inspire global action through public recognition.
- Inaugural Ceremony: First held on April 16, 1990, coinciding with Earth Day and Richard Goldman's 70th birthday.

BHADRA TIGER RESERVE

CONTEXT: After schools closed for holidays following annual exams, the tiger reserve has seen increased safari visitors, who must take care to avoid disturbing the eco-sensitive zone.

BACKGROUND: The Bhadra Tiger Reserve, with a centuries-old undisturbed history, evolved through several stages. Initially declared as the Jagara Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in 1951 by the Government of Mysore, it expanded to become the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary in 1974. Covering a total area of 492.30 sq km, it was designated as a Project Tiger area in 1999.

About tiger Reserve – Bhadra

- Location: Located in the Western Ghats region of Karnataka, surrounded by hill ranges like Mullaianagiri, Hebbegiri, Gangegiri, and Babaudangiri.
- Conservation Success: First tiger reserve to successfully relocate villages, a landmark in wildlife conservation efforts.
- Designation: Declared India's 25th Project Tiger reserve in 1998, also listed as a national bird sanctuary of Karnataka.
- Rivers and Dam: Situated near the Bhadra river and its tributaries - Somavahini, Thadabehalla, and Odirayanahalla. A dam is built across the Bhadra river near Lakkavalli.
- Vegetation: Major forest types include Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous, Northern Tropical Dry Deciduous Mixed Forest, Dry Deciduous Scrub Forest, Boswellia Forest, Dry Bamboo Brakes, and Anogeissus pendula Forest.
- Flora and Fauna: Rich in flora like Teak, Rosewood, Mathi, Honne, Nandi, and medicinal plants. Diverse fauna includes Tiger, Leopard, Dholes, Indian Civet, Gaur, Sambar, and Barking Deer.

INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE IAS COACHING ACADEMY

CARBON FARMING

CONTEXT: Carbon farming has gained significance globally, particularly in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, as a crucial practice within the agriculture sector in recent years.

BACKGROUND: Carbon farming, exemplified by the case study of a farm in California, involves practices like no-till farming and planting cover crops to sequester carbon in soil. This approach not only mitigates climate change but also improves soil fertility and water retention, offering a sustainable model for agriculture globally.

Carbon Farming

Carbon farming refers to agricultural practices aimed at sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into soil and vegetation. By utilizing techniques like agroforestry, cover cropping, and rotational grazing, carbon farming enhances soil health, biodiversity, and resilience to climate change while mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

Carbon Farming Techniques

- Rotational Grazing: Reduces methane emissions and enhances carbon storage in pasture lands through strategic grazing management.
- Agroforestry: Includes silvopasture and alley cropping to sequester carbon in trees and shrubs, diversifying farm income.
- Conservation Agriculture: Techniques like zero tillage, crop rotation, and cover cropping minimize soil disturbance and enhance organic content.
- Integrated Nutrient Management: Promotes soil fertility using organic fertilizers and compost, reducing emissions and enhancing carbon sequestration.
- Agro-ecology: Crop diversification and intercropping improve ecosystem resilience and contribute to carbon sequestration.

Carbon Trading in Agriculture

- Carbon Trading Initiatives: Implemented in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, focusing on voluntary carbon markets and efforts like the Chicago Climate Exchange and Carbon Farming Initiative.
- Carbon Mitigation Activities: Include practices such as no-till farming, reforestation, and pollution reduction to incentivize carbon mitigation in agriculture.
- Kenya's Agricultural Carbon Project: Supported by the World Bank, it addresses climate mitigation, adaptation, and food security in economically developing countries.
- '4 per 1000' Initiative: Launched during COP21 in Paris, emphasizes the role of carbon sinks in mitigating greenhouse-gas emissions.
- Carbon Budget Management: With the world nearing carbon saturation points, wise management of the remaining carbon budget of approximately 390 billion tonnes is crucial.

CARBON FARMING

Select Suitable Land: Identify areas for carbon farming practices.

Plant Carbon-Rich Crops: Cultivate plants with high carbon sequestration potential.

Implement Conservation Tillage Minimize soil disturbance to retain carbon.

Manage Livestock: Integrate grazing practices to enhance soil carbon.
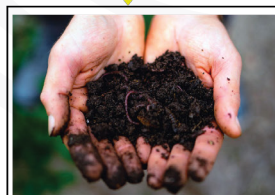
Integrate grazing practices to enhance soil carbon. Enhance soil fertility and carbon storage.

Manage Livestock: Regularly assess carbon levels and adapt strategies accordingly.

As climate change escalates, promoting climate-resilient and emission-reducing agricultural practices, such as carbon farming, is crucial. India's potential in organic farming and agro-ecological practices could yield significant economic and environmental benefits, mitigating climate change while enhancing soil health and biodiversity.

INDIA TO HOST KENYAN DELEGATION FOR CHEETAH SOURCING

CONTEXT: India is expected to welcome a delegation of Kenyan officials this month to discuss sourcing cheetahs for the next phase of Project Cheetah, according to informed sources.

BACKGROUND: Gandhi Sagar wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was selected last year as the second site for reintroducing cheetahs in India. Authorities are preparing to host a Kenyan delegation to negotiate terms for translocating cheetahs to India under Project Cheetah, which plans to introduce 8 to 14 cheetahs annually over five years.

Project Cheetah – Status

- Successful Outcomes: Project Cheetah achieved 50% survival of introduced cheetahs from South Africa and Namibia in the wild.
- Establishment of Home Ranges: The reintroduced cheetahs successfully established their home ranges in Kuno National Park.
- Birth of Cubs: Cheetahs gave birth to cubs, indicating successful breeding and adaptation in the new environment.
- Revenue Generation: The project contributed to revenue generation for local communities through tourism and conservation activities.
- Survival Challenges: The project faced setbacks, including a 40% loss in the functional adult population due to the death of six out of 20 cheetahs.

AFRICAN CHEETAH

SPEED: Known as the fastest land animal, capable of reaching speeds up to 60-70 mph in short bursts.

HABITAT: Found primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, preferring open savannahs and grasslands for hunting.

PREY: Hunts medium-sized ungulates like gazelles and impalas, using its speed and agility to capture them.

CHARACTERISTICS: Recognizable by its slender body, spotted coat, distinctive "tear marks" on its face, and non-retractable claws for traction.

Conservation Status

- RED LIST — Vulnerable
- THE WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) ACT, 1972 — Schedule I
- CITES — Appendix I

MARINE HEATWAVES CAUSE CORAL BLEACHING IN LAKSHADWEEP

CONTEXT: Researchers at CMFRI have documented extensive coral reef bleaching in the Lakshadweep Sea due to marine heatwaves.

BACKGROUND: Survey findings across Lakshadweep islands revealed significant bleaching among hard coral species, attributed to prolonged marine heatwaves since late October 2023. The CMFRI highlighted marine heatwaves as rare extreme events with abnormally high ocean temperatures, posing a substantial risk of coral bleaching per NOAA.

Coral Bleaching

Coral bleaching occurs when corals expel symbiotic algae, losing their colour and primary food source due to stress from factors like increased sea temperatures. This phenomenon threatens coral reefs worldwide, impacting marine biodiversity and coastal communities dependent on reefs for livelihoods and coastal protection.

CORAL BLEACHING

Cause of Bleaching

- **Temperature Stress:** High sea temperatures, often exacerbated by climate change, cause corals to expel symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae) that provide them with food and colour.
- **Light Intensity:** Excessive light can stress corals, especially when coupled with high temperatures, leading to the expulsion of zooxanthellae.
- **Nutrient Pollution:** Runoff containing pollutants like nitrogen and phosphorus can cause algae to overgrow, shading corals and limiting their access to light.
- **Ocean Acidification:** Increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere dissolve into the oceans, causing the water to become more acidic, which can weaken corals.

Biorock Technology to Rebuilt Corals

Working of Biorock Technology

1. **Installation:** Metal structures submerged, acting as substrate.
2. **Electrolysis:** Low-voltage current passed through to form mineral accretion.
3. **Mineral Deposition:** Calcium carbonate forms, replicating natural coral growth.
4. **Coral Attachment:** Corals transplanted onto structures, aided by growth.
5. **Reef Formation:** Gradual buildup of coral structures, mimicking natural reefs.
6. **Biodiversity Boost:** Attracts marine life, enhancing ecosystem resilience.
7. **Sustainability:** Low impact, fostering long-term reef health and restoration.

19TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS

CONTEXT: India participated in the 19th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) at the UN Headquarters in New York.

BACKGROUND: UNFF19 marks a significant session as it conducts the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests. This review aims to assess progress, identify gaps, and set a course towards 2030 to achieve the Global Forest Goals and advance the SDGs. Key outcomes include a High-Level Segment declaration and an omnibus resolution incorporating the midterm review and the Forum's new Quadrennial Programme of Work for 2025-2028.

India's Commitment to Biodiversity and Forest Conservation

- Expansion of Protected Areas: India has expanded its network to over a thousand wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, and biosphere reserves.
- Milestones Celebrated: Celebrations marked 50 years of Project Tiger and 30 years of Project Elephant, emphasizing India's commitment to species conservation.
- International Big Cat Alliance: India initiated the International Big Cat Alliance to protect and conserve the world's seven big cat species.
- Green Credit Program: India introduced the 'Green Credit Program' to incentivize tree plantation and restoration of degraded forest lands, supporting climate action initiatives.
- Country Led Initiative: India hosted the UNFF Country Led Initiative on forest fire management and forest certification, attended by 40 countries and 20 international organizations.
- UNFF 19 Declaration: The UNFF 19 concluded with a declaration to accelerate actions to halt deforestation, forest degradation, and land degradation, aligned with the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests.

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

- Establishment and Purpose: Established in 2000 by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to promote forest management, conservation, and sustainable development.
- Annual Meetings: The Forum meets annually at the UN Headquarters in New York, focusing on technical matters in odd years and policy matters in even years.
- Membership: UNFF has universal membership, including all Member States of the United Nations and specialized agencies.
- Founding Member: India is a founding member of UNFF, actively participating in its initiatives and decisions.
- High-Level Political Commitment: The declaration of the 19th session aims to achieve a high-level political commitment to forest protection.
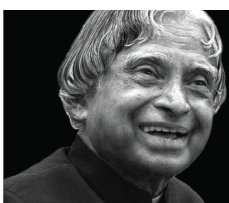
You have to dream before your dreams can come true..

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WORLD'S LARGEST' VACUUM OPENS TO REMOVE CLIMATE POLLUTION

CONTEXT: In Iceland, the world's largest direct air capture plant, "Mammoth," has begun operations, designed to remove planet-heating pollution from the atmosphere like a giant vacuum.

BACKGROUND: Swiss company Climeworks has launched its second commercial direct air capture (DAC) plant, named "Mammoth," in the country. Ten times larger than its predecessor, Orca, Mammoth employs DAC technology to extract carbon from the air using chemicals. The captured carbon will be sequestered underground in collaboration with Icelandic company Carbfix, where it will naturally transform into stone, permanently locking up the carbon.

About Carbon Capture Plant

- Clean Energy Source: The entire Mammoth operation in Iceland will be powered by the country's abundant geothermal energy.
- Climate Solutions: Next-generation climate solutions like DAC are gaining attention amid rising global CO_2 levels and continued fossil fuel use.
- Carbon Removal Need: With record-high CO_2 levels in 2023, there is increasing urgency to remove carbon from the atmosphere.
- Modular Design: Mammoth features a modular design with space for 72 "collector containers" that capture carbon from the air.
- Capture Capacity: Mammoth will capture 36,000 tons of carbon annually, equivalent to removing 7,800 gas-powered cars from the road each year.
- Environmental Impact: Mammoth's operation aims to mitigate global warming by reducing atmospheric CO_2 levels through innovative carbon capture technology.

VENEZUELA LOSES ALL GLACIERS IN HISTORIC EVENT

CONTEXT: Venezuela has likely become the first country to lose all its glaciers in modern history. The Humboldt glacier melted faster than anticipated, surprising scientists.

BACKGROUND: Venezuela has likely become the first country in modern history to lose all its glaciers, with the reclassification of the Humboldt glacier as an ice field. Previously home to six glaciers, Venezuela's high-altitude Andes mountains now only host an ice field less than 2 hectares in size, after the Humboldt glacier melted faster than expected.

Causes of Glacier Disappearance

- Global Warming Cause: The main reason for glacier melting is global warming, driven by greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted from human activities.
- Greenhouse Gases: Since the Industrial Revolution, burning fossil fuels has released GHGs like carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere.
- Temperature Rise: This has led to a significant rise in global temperatures, with an increase of at least 1.1 degrees Celsius since 1880.
- Impact of Temperature Rise: Increased temperatures have caused more frequent and intense heatwaves, floods, droughts, and a rise in sea levels.
- Andes Temperature Increase: The Andes mountain range has seen a temperature rise of 0.10 degrees Celsius in the past seven decades.
- El Niño Influence: The melting of the Humboldt glacier was accelerated by El Niño, which causes abnormal warming of surface waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Impacts of Glacier Loss

- Freshwater Source: Glaciers are crucial sources of freshwater during hot, dry periods for local communities, plants, and animals.
- Downstream Water Temperature: Cold water from glaciers keeps downstream temperatures cooler, crucial for aquatic species that require cold water to survive.
- Impact on Aquatic Species: Glacier loss directly impacts aquatic species, which are essential parts of the food web.
- Contribution to Sea Level Rise: Melting glaciers, including the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, are significant contributors to global sea level rise.
- Humboldt Glacier: The Humboldt glacier in Venezuela did not contribute substantially to sea level rise due to insufficient ice volume.
- Environmental Consequences: Melting glaciers lead to more frequent and intense heatwaves, floods, and droughts, in addition to rising sea levels

SUPREME COURT HALTS ILLEGAL MINING IN SARISKA

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court has directed the Rajasthan government to close 68 mines located within a 1-kilometre radius of the critical tiger habitat (CTH) of the Sariska reserve.

BACKGROUND: The Supreme Court of India, in its latest action on May, has issued an order to halt marble, dolomite, and limestone mining in Sariska Tiger Reserve, citing violations of wildlife and environmental protection laws dating back to the 1990s. This follows multiple previous attempts to address illegal mining and enforce safety zones around India's national parks and sanctuaries.

Overview of Sariska Tiger Reserve

- Location: Sariska Tiger Reserve is located in the Alwar district of Rajasthan, nestled in the Aravali Hills, covering an area of 800 sq km.
- History: Once a hunting ground of the Maharaja of Alwar, it was declared a natural reserve in 1955 and a national park in 1979.
- Wildlife Conservation: It is the first reserve in the world to successfully relocate tigers, marking a milestone in wildlife conservation.
- Tourist Attractions: Sariska is renowned for its old temples, palaces, and lakes, including Pandu Pol, Bhangarh Fort, and Siliserh Lake.
- Topography and Vegetation: The reserve features a rocky landscape, scrub thorn arid forests, hilly cliffs, and semi-deciduous wood. The vegetation corresponds to Northern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests and Thorn Forest.
- Flora: Dhok trees cover nearly 90% of the area, along with species like salar, kadaya, ber, Banyan, gugal, bamboo, kair, and adusta.

SEMAL TREES

CONTEXT: The disappearance of Semal trees in south Rajasthan is triggering a cascade of negative impacts on local forests and communities.

BACKGROUND: In Udaipur, the annual Holi bonfire celebration uses silk cotton trees (semal), leading to illegal tree cutting. This practice violates environmental protection laws, including the Rajasthan Forest Act 1953 and the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, threatening the forest ecosystem.

Semal Tree
- Characteristics: The semal tree is a lofty deciduous tree with a buttressed base and a trunk covered in large conical prickles.
- Habitat: Found in moist deciduous and semi-evergreen forests, plains, and hills up to 1400 m, including regions like Andaman & Nicobar, Assam, and Rajasthan.
- Cultural Significance: The Garasia tribe of Rajasthan believes they are descended from semal trees, highlighting its cultural importance.
- Ecological Benefits: Semal is fire-resistant, aids in carbon sequestration, generates rich biomass, and is used to reclaim wastelands.
- Bioindicator: Researchers consider the semal a bioindicator, where late flowering may signal a hot summer or delayed monsoon.
- Uses: Provides food, fodder, fuel wood, and materials for musical instruments and utensils, benefiting tribal communities like the Kathodi and Bhil.

GREEN CREDITS PROGRAM

CONTEXT: The Centre approved 12 greening projects under last year's Green Credit Program (GCP), a market-based initiative to incentivize voluntary environmental actions across various sectors.

BACKGROUND: The government is considering 24 plans from state forest departments under the Green Credit Programme (GCP), which encourages voluntary environmental actions like afforestation and water conservation. Launched on October 13, 2023, the GCP involves PSUs, private industries, non-profits, and individuals, with oversight by an inter-ministerial Steering Committee and administration by the ICFRE, Dehradun.

GREEN CREDIT PROGRAM

Program Initiation → Project Proposal Submission → Approval and Funding → Implementation of Green Projects → Monitoring and Evaluation → Issuing Green Credits
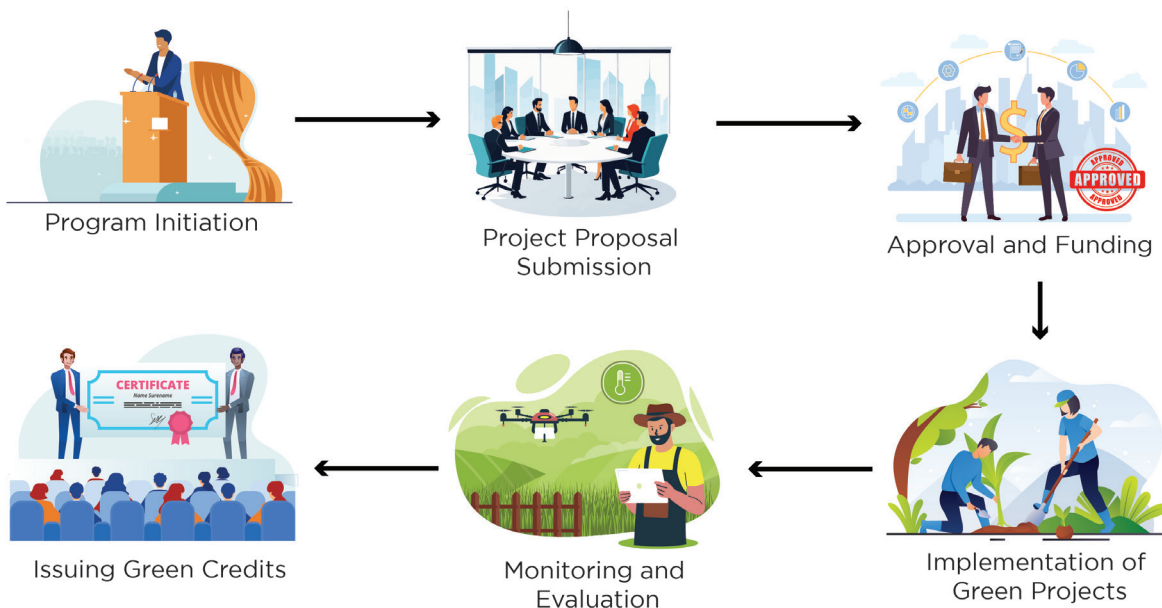
Overview of the Green Credit Program (GCP)

• Incentivization: The Green Credit Program (GCP) incentivizes voluntary environmental actions across sectors by various stakeholders, including individuals and companies.

• Governance: Supported by an inter-ministerial Steering Committee, the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) administers the GCP.

• Initial Focus: Initially, the GCP focuses on water conservation and afforestation, with methodologies developed for stakeholder consultation.

• Digital Platform: A user-friendly digital platform will facilitate project registration, verification, and issuance of Green Credits.

• Green Credit Trading: The Green Credit Registry and trading platform, developed by ICFRE, will enable the buying and selling of Green Credits.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY 2024

CONTEXT: The International Day of Biodiversity on May 22, 2024, themed "Be Part of the Plan," highlights collective efforts to reverse biodiversity loss and implement the Kunming-Montreal Framework.

BACKGROUND: The International Day for Biological Diversity, established by the UN General Assembly in 2000, was moved to May 22nd to coincide with the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. It emphasizes the need for sustainable utilization and preservation of global biodiversity, aiming to raise awareness and inspire collective action for conservation.

International Day for Biological Diversity 2024

• Theme: "Be part of the Plan": The theme of IDB 2024 calls for action to halt biodiversity loss by supporting the Biodiversity Plan.

• Biodiversity Plan: The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework provides cooperation and partnership opportunities among diverse actors.

• Stakeholders: Governments, indigenous peoples, NGOs, businesses, and individuals are encouraged to showcase their support for the Biodiversity Plan.

• Role of Everyone: Everyone has a role to play in supporting biodiversity conservation and can actively participate in the Biodiversity Plan.

• Visibility and Momentum: IDB 2024 aims to increase visibility and momentum leading up to COP 16 in Colombia.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

STUDIES FIND MORE ACCESSIBLE ICE ON MOON

CONTEXT: A recent study by SAC/ISRO, in collaboration with IIT Kanpur, USC, JPL, and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, suggests increased likelihood of water ice in the Moon's polar craters.

BACKGROUND: A study by SAC/ISRO scientists, with collaborators from IIT Kanpur, University of Southern California, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, reveals that subsurface ice on the Moon's poles is 5 to 8 times more abundant than surface ice, with the northern polar region holding twice as much water ice as the southern. This finding is crucial for future lunar missions and sustained human presence.
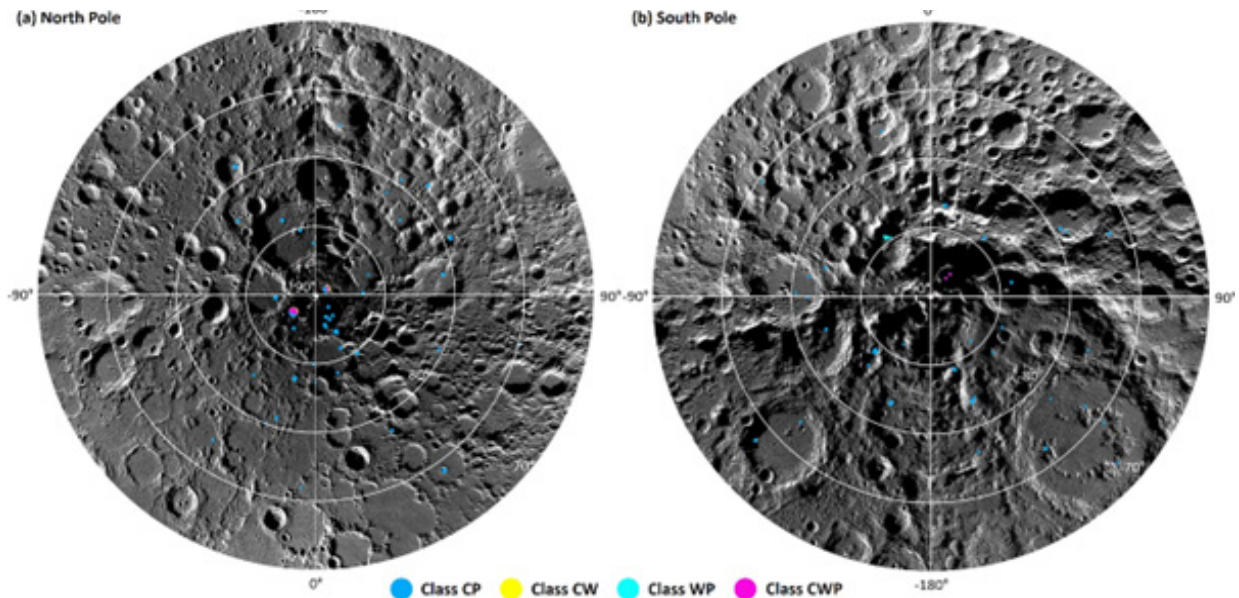
HIGHLIGHTS

- Primary Source: The study confirms subsurface water ice at lunar poles primarily originates from outgassing during Imbrian period volcanism.
- Distribution Factors: Water ice distribution on the Moon is influenced by Mare volcanism and preferential impact cratering.
- Research Methodology: The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter's seven instruments helped understand the origin and distribution of lunar water ice.
- Importance of Data: Accurate knowledge of water ice distribution and depth is crucial for selecting future lunar landing and sampling sites.
- Supporting Evidence: The study supports previous ISRO research indicating water ice presence in polar craters using Chandrayaan-2 radar data.

GOLDENE: SINGLE-ATOM GOLD SHEET

CONTEXT: Researchers at Sweden's Linköping University have created the first-ever free-standing one-atom thick sheet of gold, making it the first metal in a 2-D sheet form.

BACKGROUND: Researchers created Goldene sheets by first layering an atomic monolayer of silicon between titanium carbide layers. They then introduced gold atoms, which replaced the silicon. After etching away the titanium carbide with Murakami's reagent, they added surfactant molecules to prevent the Goldene sheets from sticking together.
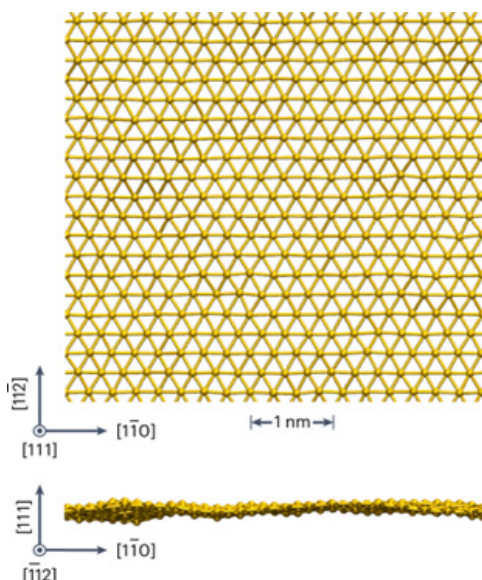
About Goldene
- Revolutionize Electronics: Goldene's super thin and light properties have the potential to revolutionize the electronics industry.
- Economic Viability: Goldene is a cost-effective catalyst, using fewer gold atoms for the same function in electronics.
- Broader Applications: The technique for creating goldene can be applied to other metals, like iridium and platinum.
- Special Properties: Goldene's unique atomic structure may give it special properties, like other 2D materials.
- Future Uses: Potential applications include CO_2 conversion, hydrogen catalysis, chemical production, hydrogen generation, and water purification.

OXYTOCIN

CONTEXT: Dairy colonies in Delhi are likely using Oxytocin, according to a recent Delhi High Court submission flagging its "rampant use" in these areas.

BACKGROUND: The Central government banned Oxytocin in April 2018 due to its misuse on milch cattle to increase milk yield, which harmed both cattle and humans consuming the milk. Addressing a plea about its widespread use in Delhi's dairy colonies, the Delhi High Court has called for action, deeming its use as "animal cruelty."

BAN ON OXYTOCIN VETERINARY USE IN INDIA

REASONS
- Misuse in the dairy industry.
- Adverse effects on animals.

IMPACT
- Reduce dairy industry abuse.
- Promote animal welfare.

ALTERNATIVES
- Safer veterinary medicines.
- Ethical animal husbandry practices.

CHALLENGES
- Enforcement of ban.
- Smuggling of oxytocin.

FUTURE
- Improved animal health.
- Strengthened regulation and compliance.

About Oxytocin

- Hormone Function: Oxytocin is a hormone produced by the hypothalamus and released by the pituitary gland. It plays a crucial role in childbirth, lactation, and social bonding.
- Childbirth: During childbirth, oxytocin stimulates uterine contractions, aiding in labour and delivery. It also promotes the bonding between mother and child.
- Lactation: Oxytocin stimulates the contraction of cells around the milk-producing glands, facilitating the release of milk during breastfeeding.
- Social Bonding: Known as the "love hormone," oxytocin is involved in forming social bonds and trust between individuals, influencing emotional and behavioural responses.
- Medical Uses: Oxytocin is used medically to induce labour, control bleeding after childbirth, and facilitate milk ejection during breastfeeding. It is also being studied for its potential role in treating social disorders like autism.

OXYTOCIN NEW VACCINE EFFECTIVE AGAINST ALL CORONAVIRUSES

CONTEXT: A team of scientists from top universities has created a new universal vaccine aimed at protecting against a wide array of coronaviruses, including future strains.

BACKGROUND: Research published in 'Nature Nanotechnology' introduces "proactive vaccinology," an innovative approach where vaccines are developed preemptively against emerging pathogens. The study by Oxford, Cambridge, and Caltech demonstrates success in mice by training the immune system to target regions of various coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2 and those found in bats with pandemic potential.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Proactive Vaccinology: Introduces a pre-emptive approach to develop vaccines against emerging pathogens.
- Successful Study: Demonstrates success in mice by targeting regions of various coronaviruses.
- Pathogens Targeted: Includes SARS-CoV-2 and coronaviruses found in bats with pandemic potential.
- Collaboration: Conducted by Oxford, Cambridge, and Caltech researchers.

MISSION COVID SURAKSHA

MISSION COVID SURAKSHA: Department of Biotechnology's initiative to deliver vaccines.

OBJECTIVES: Accelerate pre-clinical and clinical development.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Develop immunoassay laboratories and production facilities.

TARGET PRODUCT PROFILE: Develop characteristics for vaccines suitable for introduction and use in India.

Vaccines Developed

ZyCoV-D- World's 1st and India's indigenously developed DNA Vaccine

CORBEVAX-India's first protein subunit vaccine

GEMCOVAC-19 - World's 1st and India's indigenously developed mRNA vaccine

iNCOVACC-World's 1st and India's indigenously developed intranasal COVID-19 Vaccine

DEADBOTS

CONTEXT: A recent study advises caution in creating AI chatbots, known as 'deadbots', that mimic deceased loved ones, warning of potential psychological distress if safety measures are not prioritized.

BACKGROUND: The study emphasized the allure of digital conversations with deceased loved ones for individuals dealing with grief. However, it underscored the importance of companies providing such services adopting safety standards to prevent manipulation or psychological harm to users, as noted in the journal Philosophy & Technology.

Deadbots: AI-Enabled Digital Representations of Departed Loved Ones

- Definition and Functionality: Deadbots, also known as griefbots, are AI-enabled digital representations of departed loved ones.
- Working Mechanism: These chatbots simulate language patterns and personality traits using the deceased's digital footprint, such as emails, social media posts, and voice recordings.
- Potential Issues: Researchers warn that while comforting, these chatbots could cause psychological distress if not designed with safety in mind.
- Cultural Variations: Solutions embraced in one cultural context may be rejected in another, impacting the adoption of Deadbots.
- Considerations: Designers must prioritize safety and ethical considerations to mitigate potential psychological impacts on users.

INDIAN SPACE SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (ISSAR) – 2023

CONTEXT: The Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR) for 2023 shows an increase in space objects launched compared to 2022, released by the ISRO Chairman.

BACKGROUND: The report, released in April by ISRO Chairman S. Somanath, was compiled by ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM). It highlighted a continued increase in the space object population, reflecting greater access to space and the expanding applications of space technology in daily life, with more objects launched into orbit in 2023 compared to the previous year.

Space Situational Awareness (SSA) and Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR)

- Importance of SSA: Space assets are vulnerable to natural and artificial hazards, necessitating continual Space Situational Awareness (SSA) for safe operations.

- ISRO's SSA Activities: ISRO conducts close approach assessments, predicts atmospheric re-entry, and studies space object evolution to safeguard national space assets.

- ISSAR Compilation: ISRO compiles the Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR) annually to assess the space environment and disseminate findings to stakeholders.

- Global Space Object Trends: In 2023, there was an increase in space object population due to 212 launches and on-orbit break-up events.

- Space Debris Impact: Five major on-orbit break-up events added 69 fragmented objects to space debris population by the end of 2023.

INDIAN SATELLITE LAUNCH AND SPACE ACTIVITY SUMMARY (2023)

INDIAN SATELLITES LAUNCHED: India has launched 127 satellites, including those from private operators/academic institutions, by December 31, 2023.

OPERATIONAL SATELLITES: As of December 31, 2023, India has 22 satellites in LEO and 29 in GEO.

ACTIVE DEEP SPACE MISSIONS: Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter, Aditya-L1, and Chandrayaan-3's Propulsion Module were active in deep space by end of 2023.

SATELLITE RE-ENTRIES: A total of 21 Indian satellites have re-entered the atmosphere, with 8 in 2023 alone.

LAUNCH SUCCESS IN 2023: ISRO conducted seven successful launches in 2023, placing 5 Indian satellites, 46 foreign satellites, and 8 rocket bodies in orbit.

CHINA'S ADVANCED HIGH ENERGY PHOTON SOURCE

CONTEXT: China is nearing a significant scientific milestone with the development of the High Energy Photon Source (HEPS), a cutting-edge fourth-generation synchrotron light source.

BACKGROUND: China is poised to achieve a significant milestone in Asia with the completion of the High Energy Photon Source (HEPS), a fourth-generation synchrotron light source. This advanced facility will generate exceptionally bright X-rays, enhancing research capabilities in diverse scientific fields by enabling high-resolution imaging and rapid experiments with accelerated electrons up to 6 gigaelectron volts.

Features of HEPS Synchrotron Light Source

- High-Energy Synchrotron: HEPS accelerates electrons to 6 GeV within a 1.36 km circumference storage ring.
- Enhanced X-ray Generation: Produces X-rays ten times brighter than existing synchrotrons for clearer imaging.
- Precise Imaging Capability: Enables atomic and molecular level observation and manipulation of materials.
- Improved Experiment Efficiency: Reduces experiment time from milliseconds to hundreds of nanoseconds.
- Scientific Applications: Utilizes synchrotron radiation, including X-rays, for various advanced scientific research and applications.

Applications of HEPS Synchrotron in Scientific Research

Material Science: HEPS enables advanced studies of material properties at atomic and molecular levels.

Environmental Science: HEPS contributes to environmental studies by analyzing pollutants and studying climate change.

Energy Research: Supports research in energy storage materials and catalysis for renewable energy.

Drug Development: It facilitates research in pharmaceuticals by providing high-resolution imaging and structural analysis.

Biotechnology: Enhances biotechnological research by providing insights into protein structures and interactions.

ROSETTAFOLD

CONTEXT: RoseTTAFold, a new software tool employing deep learning to rapidly and precisely predict protein structures from sparse data.

BACKGROUND: RoseTTAFold accelerates protein structure determination significantly, reducing the time from years of lab work to just ten minutes on a single gaming computer. Developed by Minkyung Baek, Ph.D., in the Baker lab, this software marks a major advancement in computational protein folding capabilities.

RoseTTAFold: Advancing Protein Structure Prediction

- Neural Network Architecture: RoseTTAFold is a three-track neural network that integrates protein sequence patterns, amino acid interactions, and three-dimensional structure prediction.
- Computational Achievements: The network computed hundreds of new protein structures, focusing on poorly understood proteins from the human genome.
- Relevance to Human Health: Structures generated included proteins linked to lipid metabolism issues, inflammation disorders, and cancer cell growth.
- Efficiency Gains: RoseTTAFold significantly reduces the time needed to model complex biological assemblies compared to previous methods.
- Scientific Impact: Results were published in science, demonstrating the network's effectiveness in protein structure prediction and its potential for biomedical research.

VISHING

CONTEXT: The government issued a circular cautioning its employees about a sophisticated cybercrime known as vishing.

BACKGROUND: Voice phishing (vishing) is a technique where a threat actor calls victims, attempting to deceive them into clicking on malicious links or sharing personal information. The attacker might impersonate someone familiar to the victim, like a manager or colleague, often using urgency as a tactic. Artificial intelligence can enhance this deception by mimicking voices and mannerisms.

Understanding Voice Phishing (Vishing)

3 Pretexting: Attackers create fabricated scenarios to trick victims into taking actions like transferring money or installing malware.

2 Information Gathering: Victims are manipulated into revealing sensitive information such as passwords or credit card numbers.

1 Impersonation: Attackers impersonate legitimate entities like banks or government agencies to gain victims' trust.

4 Urgency and Fear Tactics: They use urgency, fear, or authority to pressure victims to act quickly.

5 Social Engineering Attack: Vishing exploits human psychology to deceive victims through voice communication over the phone.

FIRST INDIAN SPACE TOURIST COMPLETES MISSION

CONTEXT: India-born aviator and commercial pilot Gopi Thotakura, based in the United States, joined five other space tourists on a recreational space trip.

BACKGROUND: Thotakura boarded a Blue Origin spacecraft, part of several private space companies providing space tourism experiences. The journey, lasting about ten minutes from take-off to landing, reached a peak altitude of approximately 105 km. This was one of the fastest and briefest trips to space.

Sub-Orbital Trips

Sub-orbital trips refer to spaceflights that do not complete a full orbit around the Earth. Here are five correct points about sub-orbital trips:

- Altitude: Typically reaching altitudes between 80 to 100 kilometres (50 to 62 miles) above Earth's surface, known as the Kármán line.
- Duration: Short duration, generally lasting from a few minutes to about an hour, with most of the time spent in microgravity.
- Purpose: Primarily used for scientific research, testing technologies, and experiencing microgravity.
- Examples: Notable vehicles include Blue Origin's New Shepard and Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo, designed for space tourism and research missions.
- Trajectory: Flies on a parabolic trajectory, where the spacecraft arcs up and then descends back to Earth, experiencing several minutes of weightlessness.

ASTROSAT MAKES UNUSUAL BLACK HOLE DISCOVERY

CONTEXT: AstroSat, India's first multi-wavelength space observatory, has achieved a significant discovery concerning the black hole binary source Swift J1727.8-1613.

BACKGROUND: A team of astrophysicists from U R Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), in collaboration with researchers from IIT Guwahati, University of Mumbai, and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), published their discovery in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (MNRAS). Study of Swift J1727.8-1613: Unusual X-ray Behaviour and

Quasi-Periodic Oscillations

- Black Hole X-ray Binary (BH-XRB): A system where a black hole and a companion star are bound by gravity.
- X-ray Emission Mechanism: The black hole accretes matter from its companion, forming a bright accretion disk that emits high-energy X-rays.
- Discovery of Swift J1727.8-1613: Discovered on August 24, 2023, by Swift/BAT, it became one of the brightest sources with an X-ray peak of 7 Crab units.
- Unusual X-ray Behaviour and QPOs: AstroSat observed 'aperiodic modulation' causing Quasi-periodic Oscillations (QPOs) at frequencies changing from 1.4 to 2.6 times per second.
- Significance of QPOs: QPOs help understand black holes by studying variations in X-ray light, revealing insights into gravitational forces and matter behaviour.

ASTROSAT MISSION

Mission Objective: India's first dedicated astronomy mission, studying celestial sources in X-ray, UV, and optical bands simultaneously.

Payloads and Coverage: Covers Ultraviolet (Near and Far), limited optical, and X-ray regimes (0.3 keV to 100 keV).

Launch Details: Launched on September 28, 2015, by PSLV-C30 into a 650 km orbit inclined at 6 degrees.

Operational Management: Managed by ISRO's Mission Operations Complex (MOX) at ISTRAC, Bengaluru.

Data Handling: Science data from five payloads is telemetered to the ground station at MOX and processed at ISSDC, Bylalu.

EVTOL

CONTEXT: The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras-incubated ePlane Company plans to launch its e-flying taxis in Bengaluru this year, pending clear government policies on eVTOL flying taxis.

BACKGROUND: The IIT Madras-incubated ePlane Company plans to launch its e-flying taxis in Bengaluru this year, pending DGCA approval. Meanwhile, Airbus's CityAirbus eVTOL project is set for its maiden flight in 2024. The UK anticipates its first eVTOL flying taxi flight by 2026, while India lacks clear policies on this technology.

eVTOL Aircraft

An electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft uses electric power for vertical take-off, hovering, and landing.

- Industry Position: It represents a cutting-edge technology in the aerospace industry, focusing on low-altitude urban air mobility.
- Technology: eVTOLs employ distributed electric propulsion technology, integrating multiple motors for efficiency and safety within the airframe.
- Technological Development: Progress in motor, battery, fuel cell, and electronic controller technologies has driven the growth of eVTOLs.
- Applications: eVTOL aircraft are used for air taxi services, delivery, emergency medical services (EMS), cargo transport, and recreational purposes.

GLOBAL REPORT ON NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES 2024

CONTEXT: Prior to the 77th session of the World Health Assembly, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued its 2024 Global report on neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

BACKGROUND: Three years since the launch of the road map for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) 2021–2030, progress data show insights into achieving the 2030 targets. Challenges persist as 1.62 billion people needed interventions in 2022, highlighting slow progress and complexities. However, 50 countries have eliminated at least one NTD, marking halfway progress towards the 2030 target of 100 countries.

Progress and Challenges in Combatting Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

- Global Reporting and Data Challenges: WHO introduced the Global NTD Annual Reporting Form (GNARF) in 2023 to address data gaps and challenges in NTD program implementation.
- Programmatic Achievements and Challenges: In 2022, there was an increase in reported deaths from vector-borne NTDs. The COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions, reducing preventive chemotherapy coverage and impacting health services.
- Medicine and Capacity Strengthening: WHO and partners delivered significant quantities of medicines and expanded capacity-building efforts through online courses and tools. Global advocacy events raised the profile of NTDs.
- Integration and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: Progress was made in integrating NTDs into national health plans and mainstreaming NTD data. Cross-sectoral approaches and collaborations were intensified, particularly in vector management and health emergencies.
- Country Ownership and Sustainability: Efforts in 2023 focused on supporting countries to develop sustainability plans and master plans for NTD control. Challenges include limited resources and competition with other health priorities.

Reduction in People Requiring Interventions Against NTDs

- Indicator and Metadata: SDG indicator 3.3.5 tracks the percentage reduction in people needing interventions against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Metadata are available in the SDG Indicators metadata repository.
- Main Drivers: Reduction is driven by achieving programmatic targets like interrupting transmission and eliminating public health problems. It also includes achieving post-intervention surveillance and reclassifying endemic areas due to improved epidemiological conditions.
- Global Burden in 2022: In 2022, 1.62 billion people required interventions against NTDs, with the highest proportions in South-East Asia (51.4%) and Africa (35.8%).
- Reduction Trends: The number of people requiring interventions decreased by 26% from 2010 to 2022. However, the reduction slowed with only 33 million fewer people in 2022 compared to 2021.
- Challenges and Impact: Current reduction trends are insufficient to meet the 2030 target. The burden is concentrated in a few high-burden countries, where successful interventions can have a significant global impact.

Countries that have eliminated at least one NTD as of December 2023

WHO BACTERIAL PRIORITY PATHOGENS LIST, 2024

CONTEXT: The 2024 WHO Bacterial Priority Pathogens List (BPPL) is a crucial tool in combating antimicrobial resistance, updating and refining the prioritization of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

BACKGROUND: The 2024 WHO BPPL updates the prioritization of antibiotic-resistant bacterial pathogens, building on the 2017 edition. It categorizes 24 pathogens into critical, high, and medium priority groups to guide research and public health interventions. Key pathogens include Gram-negative bacteria resistant to last-resort antibiotics and drug-resistant mycobacterium tuberculosis.

Global Priorities in Antibiotic-Resistant Pathogens (2024 BPPL)

- Critical Priority Pathogens: Include Gram-negative bacteria resistant to last-resort antibiotics, rifampicin-resistant Mycobacterium tuberculosis, and others causing severe infections and with significant global burden.
- High Priority Pathogens: Salmonella, Shigella, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, and Staphylococcus aureus, due to global threat and resistance to existing treatments, especially in healthcare settings.
- Distinct Public Health Challenges: Neisseria gonorrhoeae and antibiotic-resistant Enterococcus faecium, limiting treatment options and transmitting resistance elements across One Health spectrum.
- Medium Priority Pathogens: Group A and B Streptococci, Streptococcus pneumoniae, and Haemophilus influenzae, necessitating urgent public health action in vulnerable populations in resource-limited settings.
- Global Tool for AMR R&D: The BPPL guides global AMR R&D priorities and public health actions, with regional adaptations required for effective control in diverse settings.
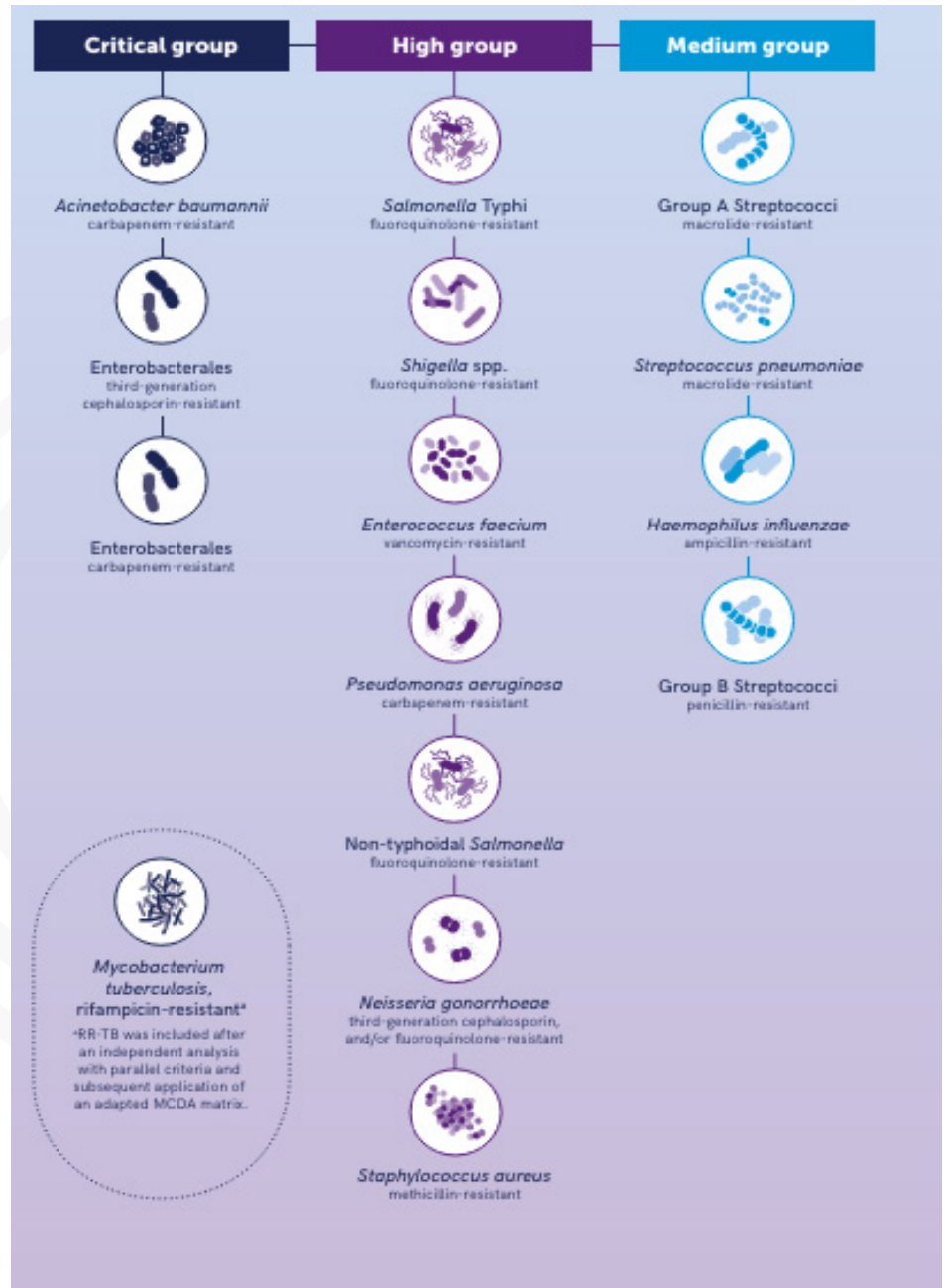
Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a severe threat to public health and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite WHO's efforts to guide research and investment through the BPPL, the development of new antibiotics remains underfunded and access to novel and existing antibiotics is limited.

"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence." - Robert Frost

FISH OIL MAY INCREASE HEART DISEASE, STROKE RISK

CONTEXT: A study found fish oil supplements increase first-time CVD risk but benefit those with existing CVD, suggesting the risks outweigh the benefits for healthy individuals.

BACKGROUND: Experts advise against fish oil supplements for healthy individuals due to potential risks outweighing benefits. However, those with cardiovascular disease may benefit. For overall health, consuming a heart-healthy diet rich in omega-3 sources, such as fatty fish, is recommended.

Fish Oil Supplements: Benefits and Risks Based on Recent Study

- Omega-3 Sources: Fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and trout provide essential omega-3 fatty acids, DHA, and EPA, which the body needs but cannot produce.
- Study Findings: A long-term study in BMJ Medicine found fish oil supplements may increase the risk of first-time heart disease and stroke in healthy people.
- Benefits for CVD Patients: Regular fish oil use helped slow the progression of existing cardiovascular disease and reduced the risk of death among these patients.
- Increased Risks for Healthy Users: Regular fish oil users without known CVD had a 13% increased risk of atrial fibrillation and a 5% higher stroke risk.
- CVD Patient Outcomes: Fish oil users with existing CVD had a 15% lower risk of heart attack from atrial fibrillation and a 9% lower risk of death from heart failure.

Omega-3 fatty acids

- Types: Omega-3 fatty acids include alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), essential for various bodily functions.
- Sources: Rich dietary sources include fatty fish (salmon, mackerel), flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, and plant oils like flaxseed oil and canola oil.
- Health Benefits: They support heart health by reducing triglycerides, lowering blood pressure, and preventing plaque formation in arteries, reducing cardiovascular disease risk.
- Brain Function: DHA is crucial for brain development and function, improving cognitive health and reducing the risk of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's.
- Inflammation: Omega-3 fatty acids possess anti-inflammatory properties, helping manage chronic inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease.

CSAT

PERMUTATIONS AND COMBINATIONS

PERMUTATIONS AND COMBINATIONS

Permutation is the distinct interpretations of a provided number of components carried one by one, or some, or all at a time. For example, if we have two components A and B, then there are two likely performances, AB and BA.

A numeral of permutations when 'r' components are positioned out of a total of 'n' components is **nPr.**

For example, let n = 3 (A, B, and C) and r = 2 (All permutations of size 2). Then there are **3P2** such permutations, which is equal to 6.

These six permutations are AB, AC, BA, BC, CA, and CB.

Hence, **nPr** = n!/((n-r)!)

Combination is the distinct sections of a shared number of components carried one by one, or some, or all at a time. For example, if there are two components A and B, then there is only one way to select two things, select both of them.

For example, let n = 3 (A, B, and C) and r = 2 (All combinations of size 2). Then there are **3C2** such combinations, which is equal to 3. These three combinations are AB, AC, and BC.

Combination Formula is used to choose 'r' components out of a total number of 'n' components denoted by **nCr** and is given by **nCr** = n!/(r! (n-r)!)

1. The number of ways in which 8 different books can be arranged on a shelf so that 3 particular books shall not be together:
A. 11! – 3!   B. 361000   C. 8! × 3! – 5!   **D. 36000**

2. In a room everybody shakes hands with everybody else. The total number of hand-shakes is 66. The total number of persons in the room is:
A. 11   B. 14   C. 10   **D. 12**

3. How many numbers are there in between 100 and 1000 such that exactly one of their digits is 3 if repetition is not allowed?
A. 100   **B. 200**   C. 300   D. 525

4. In how many ways a word NEWSPAPER can be arranged so that N, S and W always come together?
A. 1530   B. 1450   C. 1130   **D. 1260**

5. In how many ways a group of 3 students can be selected from 7 men and 5 women consisting of 1 man and 2 women?
A. 7   B. 110   C. 60   **D. 70**

6. In an auditorium the chairs were arranged such that the number of rows were 3 more than the number of columns. The chairs are rearranged by removing 3 columns and adding 6 rows without adding or removing any chair. How many people can sit in that auditorium at a time?
A. 124   B. 96   **C. 108**   D. 98

Solutions

1. Number of ways in which 8 books can be arranged = 8!
Number of ways when three particular books are together = 6! X 3! Therefore Number of ways when three particular books are not together = 8! – 6! X 3! = 6!(7 x 8 – 3 x 2) = 6! X 50 = 720 × 50 = 36000
Hence, option D is correct.

2. Let the total number of persons be N.
Given, total number of hand-shakes is 66
For a hand shake we require two people, total number of handshakes is NC2
∴ NC2 = 66 ∴ N(N - 1)/2 = 66 ⇒ N2 – N – 132 =0 ⇒ (N–12)(N+11) = 0 ⇒ N = 12 persons
Hence option D is correct.

3. Surely 3 can occur at either hundreds place or tens place or units place. So three cases arise.

a) If 3 occurs at hundredths place then the digit at tens place can be chosen in only nine ways (all ten digits leaving only 3 so we are left with 9 digits) and digit at units place can be chosen in only 8 ways (as 3 and digit at tens place cannot be used again) So total such numbers = 1×9×8 = 72

b) If 3 occurs at tens place then its hundreds place can be only chosen in only 8 ways (because use of 3 is not allowed and if we use 0 out of the remaining 9 digits it will be a 2-digit number which is not allowed) and unit place can be chosen only in 8 ways (since digit at hundredths place and 3 is not allowed) So total such numbers = 8 × 1 × 8 = 64

c) If 3 occurs at units place then its hundreds place can be chosen in only 8 ways (because use of 3 is not allowed and if we use 0 out of the remaining 9 digits it will be a 2-digit number which is not allowed) and tens place can be chosen only in 8 ways (since digit at hundredths place and 3 is not allowed) So total such numbers = 8 × 8 × 1 = 64

Hence total such numbers = 72 + 64 + 64 = 200
Hence, option B is correct.

4. Total Words = NSW, E, P, A, P, E, R = 7
Total ways = 7! ÷ (2! × 2!) = 7 × 6 × 5 × 4 × 3 × 2 ×1 ÷ 2 ÷ 2 = 1260
Hence, option D is correct.

5. No. of ways of selecting one man out of 7 women = 7C1 = 7
No of ways of selecting 2 women out of 5 women = 5C2 = 10
Required ways = 7C1× 5C2 = 7 × 10 = 70
Hence, option D is correct.

6. Since no chair was added or removed, the capacity of the auditorium remains constant.
The capacity of the auditorium is the product of the number of rows and number of columns.
Let there be x columns and (x + 3) rows, then x (x + 3) = (x – 3) (x + 9)
∴ x2 + 3x = x2 + 6x – 27 ∴ x = 9
Thus there were 9 columns and 12 rows, i.e., 9 × 12 = 108 people can sit in the auditorium at a time.
Hence, option C is correct.

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1 STOP
SOLUTION

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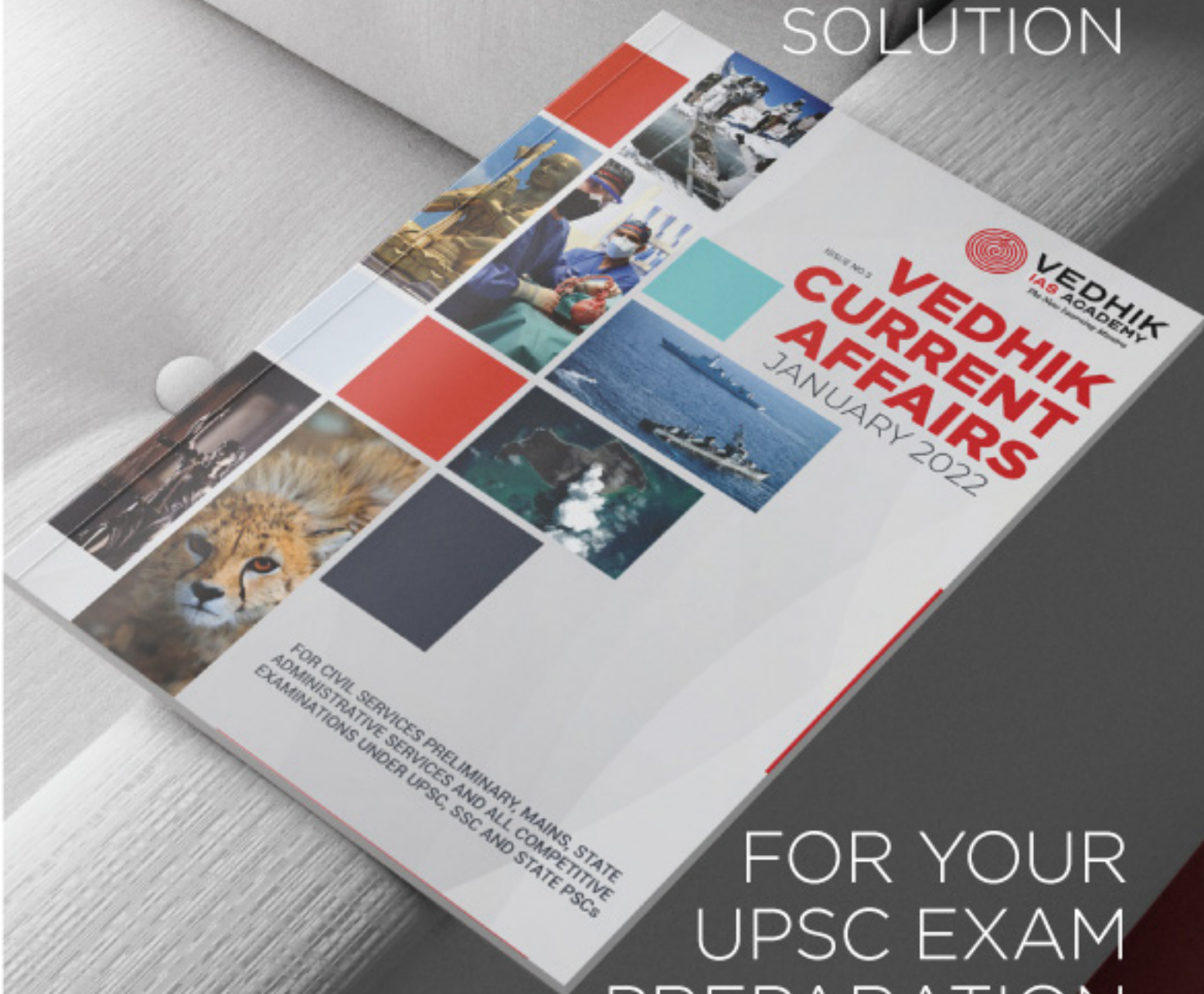
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ETHICS

PROFESSIONAL CODES
OF CONDUCT

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In a bustling city, where skyscrapers glistened under the morning sun, Olivia found herself standing at the threshold of a career-defining decision. Fresh out of university, she had just landed a coveted position in a prestigious law firm. The elation of her achievement, however, was quickly tempered by a sense of unease as she pondered the firm's code of conduct.

As a young lawyer, Olivia had grown up with the stories of her grandfather, a judge known for his unwavering integrity. His tales of courtroom battles were always woven with lessons on ethics – lessons that now seemed more relevant than ever. She recalled one story in particular, about a case that had challenged his principles, where he had chosen to stand by the truth, despite the personal cost.

Deep in thought, Olivia realized that her grandfather's legacy wasn't just about legal victories, but about the principles that guided his actions. His commitment to fairness and honesty had left an indelible mark on her conscience.

Now, standing amidst the glass and steel, Olivia understood the weight of her decision. She knew that the professional codes of conduct weren't just rules; they were a moral compass, guiding lawyers like her through the complexities of the legal world. They were a commitment to uphold justice, even when it seemed easier to compromise.

As Olivia stepped into her new role, she carried with her the lessons of her grandfather – a reminder that in the pursuit of justice, one's principles must never waver.

Purpose and Scope of Codes

In the dynamic realm of professional practice, codes of conduct serve as foundational pillars that uphold ethical standards and guide decision-making. The purpose and scope of these codes extend far beyond mere rules; they embody the principles and values that define professional integrity.

At their core, professional codes of conduct aim to promote trust, fairness, and respect among all stakeholders. They establish clear expectations for behaviour, ensuring that professionals maintain the highest standards of honesty and transparency in their interactions. By adhering to these codes, individuals not only protect the interests of their clients and employers but also uphold the public's trust in their profession.

The scope of professional codes of conduct is broad, encompassing a wide range of ethical considerations. They dictate how professionals should handle conflicts of interest, maintain confidentiality, and respect the rights of others. Moreover, these codes extend beyond legal requirements, emphasizing moral obligations and responsibilities that are essential to the profession's reputation and credibility.

Historically, the development and evolution of these codes have been shaped by societal norms, legal frameworks, and professional practices. Understanding their historical context provides insights into how these standards have adapted to changing times and emerging challenges, ensuring their relevance and applicability in contemporary contexts.

As we delve into the historical development and evolution of professional codes of conduct, we uncover the forces that have shaped their current form and explore how they continue to evolve to meet the ethical challenges of tomorrow.

Historical Development and Evolution

The historical development and evolution of professional codes of conduct provide a fascinating insight into the changing ethical landscapes of various professions over time. Dating back to ancient civilizations, where codes of conduct governed the behaviour of craftsmen, priests, and healers, to the modern-day comprehensive frameworks for lawyers, doctors, engineers, and beyond, these codes have continuously evolved to meet the demands of their respective professions and societies.

In ancient times, ethical guidelines were often intertwined with religious and cultural norms. For instance, the Hippocratic Oath, originating in ancient Greece, set ethical standards for physicians, emphasizing the importance of patient welfare and confidentiality. Similarly, the Code of Hammurabi in Babylon codified standards for trade and commerce, setting precedents for fair business practices that resonate to this day.

During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, guilds and professional associations began to formalize codes of conduct to regulate their members' behaviour and maintain professional standards. These early efforts laid the groundwork for the more structured and legally enforceable codes that emerged during the Industrial Revolution and beyond.

The 20th and 21st centuries saw significant advancements in the development of professional codes of conduct, influenced by globalization, technological advancements, and increased societal expectations for transparency and accountability. Today, these codes are not only tools for self-regulation within professions but also instruments that promote public trust and confidence in professional services.

Understanding the historical development and evolution of professional codes of conduct helps us appreciate the enduring principles and values that underpin these frameworks. It provides context for how these codes have adapted to changing societal needs and challenges, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective in guiding ethical behaviour in modern professional practice.

Key Principles and Values

Key principles and values are the cornerstone of professional codes of conduct, embodying the ethical perspectives that guide practitioners in their respective fields. These principles serve as a moral compass, ensuring that professionals uphold integrity, respect, and accountability in their interactions with clients, colleagues, and the public.

One of the fundamental principles is integrity, which requires professionals to be honest and trustworthy in all aspects of their work. This includes maintaining confidentiality, avoiding conflicts of interest, and providing accurate and truthful information to stakeholders. Integrity forms the basis of trust between professionals and those they serve, essential for maintaining the credibility of the profession.

Respect is another crucial value enshrined in professional codes of conduct. It mandates that professionals treat all individuals with dignity and fairness, regardless of differences in background, beliefs, or status. Respect extends to colleagues, clients, and the broader community, fostering a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusivity.

Accountability is a key principle that holds professionals responsible for their actions and decisions. It requires transparency in practices, adherence to legal and regulatory requirements, and a commitment to ethical

behaviour even in challenging circumstances. Accountability ensures that professionals take ownership of their mistakes and strive to rectify them to uphold the profession's standards.

Professional codes of conduct also emphasize the importance of competence and continuous learning. Professionals are expected to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills to provide high-quality services to clients and contribute positively to their professions.

In essence, these key principles and values shape the ethical framework within which professionals operate, defining their roles and responsibilities in society. They are not only guidelines for behaviour but also pillars that support the development of a strong professional identity, ensuring that individuals in various fields uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Role in Professional Identity

Professional codes of conduct play a pivotal role in shaping and defining the professional identity of individuals across various fields. These codes serve as ethical guidelines that professionals adhere to in their daily practices, influencing their interactions, decisions, and contributions to society.

First and foremost, professional codes of conduct contribute to establishing trust and credibility within the profession. By upholding ethical principles such as integrity, respect, and accountability, professionals demonstrate their commitment to ethical behaviour, which in turn enhances their reputation and fosters trust among clients, colleagues, and the public.

Furthermore, these codes help to delineate the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and ethical standards within a profession. They provide clarity on what is expected of professionals in terms of their responsibilities towards clients, employers, and the broader community. This clarity helps professionals navigate complex ethical dilemmas and ensures consistency in decision-making.

Professional codes of conduct also contribute to the development of a cohesive professional identity. They define the values and principles that unite individuals within a profession, regardless of their specific roles or specialties. This shared ethical framework fosters a sense of community and belonging among professionals, reinforcing their commitment to upholding the highest standards of conduct.

Moreover, adherence to professional codes of conduct can enhance career satisfaction and personal fulfilment. Professionals who align their actions with ethical principles often derive a sense of pride and purpose from their work, knowing that they are contributing positively to their profession and society.

Challenges in Implementation

Implementing professional codes of conduct presents numerous challenges, reflecting the complexities of translating ethical principles into daily practice across diverse professions.

One significant challenge is the interpretation and application of ethical guidelines. Codes of conduct often contain general principles that may be open to interpretation in specific situations. Professionals must navigate these Gray areas while making decisions that align with ethical standards and the expectations of their profession.

Another challenge is the conflict between personal values and professional obligations. Professionals may face ethical dilemmas where their personal beliefs clash with the requirements of their profession's code of conduct. Resolving these conflicts requires careful consideration of ethical principles and an understanding of how to prioritize professional responsibilities.

Moreover, the enforcement and accountability of codes of conduct can be challenging. Ensuring compliance with ethical standards and addressing breaches of conduct require effective mechanisms for monitoring and reporting violations. Without robust accountability measures, the effectiveness of codes of conduct in guiding ethical behaviour may be compromised.

Furthermore, the evolving nature of professions and the impact of technological advancements present ongoing challenges. New technologies and practices may outpace existing codes of conduct, necessitating updates and adaptations to address emerging ethical issues effectively.

Addressing these challenges requires the development and application of ethical decision-making frameworks. These frameworks provide professionals with structured approaches to analyse ethical dilemmas, weigh conflicting values, and make decisions that uphold ethical standards. By integrating these frameworks into professional practice, individuals can navigate challenges in implementation while maintaining their commitment to ethical behaviour.

Impact on Stakeholders and Society

Professional codes of conduct have a profound impact on stakeholders and society, influencing trust, accountability, and the overall ethical climate within professions.

One of the primary impacts of professional codes of conduct is on stakeholders, including clients, employers, and the public. These codes establish clear expectations for professional behaviour, ensuring that stakeholders can trust professionals to act with integrity, competence, and fairness. By adhering to these standards, professionals enhance their credibility and reputation, thereby fostering stronger relationships with stakeholders.

Moreover, professional codes of conduct contribute to the broader societal impact by promoting ethical behaviour and accountability. Professionals play a critical role in various aspects of society, from healthcare and education to business and law. Upholding ethical standards not only ensures the well-being and rights of individuals but also contributes to the overall public good.

In addition, these codes serve as a safeguard against misconduct and unethical practices that can harm stakeholders and undermine public trust. They provide a framework for addressing conflicts of interest, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring transparency in professional activities.

Furthermore, professional codes of conduct can influence societal norms and expectations regarding ethical behaviour. By setting high standards and holding professionals accountable for their actions, these codes contribute to a culture of integrity and responsibility in the professions.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Legal and regulatory compliance is a critical component of professional codes of conduct, ensuring that

professionals adhere to laws and standards that govern their practice. This adherence is essential for maintaining ethical integrity and upholding public trust.

Professional codes of conduct often incorporate legal and regulatory requirements as fundamental principles. These requirements set minimum standards for behaviour and performance within a profession, ensuring that professionals operate within the bounds of the law. By integrating legal compliance into their codes of conduct, professions can mitigate legal risks and promote ethical behaviour simultaneously.

Moreover, legal and regulatory compliance helps to protect the rights and interests of stakeholders, including clients, employers, and the public. Professionals are obligated to safeguard confidential information, respect intellectual property rights, and maintain a safe and inclusive workplace environment. These legal requirements not only protect individuals but also promote fairness and justice in professional interactions.

Additionally, compliance with laws and regulations enhances the credibility and reputation of professionals and their organizations. By demonstrating a commitment to legal standards, professionals can build trust with stakeholders and foster a positive reputation in their communities.

However, challenges may arise when navigating the complexities of globalized markets and diverse cultural contexts. Professionals must be sensitive to cultural differences and local regulations when operating in international settings. This requires a nuanced understanding of cultural norms and legal frameworks across different regions.

Globalization and Cultural Sensitivity

Globalization has transformed the landscape of professional practice, necessitating a heightened awareness of cultural sensitivity within professional codes of conduct. As professionals engage with diverse stakeholders across the globe, understanding and respecting cultural differences become essential components of ethical behaviour.

Cultural sensitivity in professional codes of conduct requires a recognition and appreciation of cultural norms, values, and traditions. Professionals must adapt their practices to align with local customs while upholding universal ethical principles. This includes respecting cultural nuances in communication styles, decision-making processes, and business practices.

Moreover, cultural sensitivity fosters inclusivity and diversity within professions. It promotes a workplace environment where individuals from different cultural backgrounds feel valued and respected, contributing to a more harmonious and productive professional community.

Globalization also presents challenges in navigating legal and regulatory frameworks across international borders. Professionals must be aware of and comply with local laws and regulations while maintaining ethical standards that transcend geographical boundaries. This requires a balance between respecting cultural diversity and adhering to universal principles of integrity and accountability.

Furthermore, technological advancements have accelerated globalization, enabling professionals to connect and collaborate across continents. However, these advancements also bring ethical considerations regarding data privacy, cybersecurity, and digital equity. Professional codes of conduct must adapt to address these emerging challenges while promoting responsible and ethical use of technology.

cultural sensitivity is integral to professional codes of conduct in a globalized world. It requires professionals to navigate cultural diversity with respect and understanding while upholding ethical standards and legal compliance. Embracing cultural sensitivity enhances professional relationships, fosters inclusivity, and promotes ethical behaviour across international borders. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for adapting to technological advancements while maintaining ethical integrity in professional practice.

Adaptation to Technological Advancements

Adapting to technological advancements is a critical aspect of maintaining ethical integrity within professional codes of conduct. As technology continues to evolve rapidly, professionals across various fields must navigate new ethical challenges and opportunities to ensure they uphold the highest standards of ethical behaviour.

One of the primary ethical considerations in the adaptation to technological advancements is data privacy and security. Professionals are entrusted with sensitive information from clients, patients, or stakeholders, and must ensure that this data is protected from unauthorized access or breaches. Adherence to legal requirements such as GDPR in Europe or HIPAA in the United States is essential to maintain trust and compliance.

Moreover, the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms poses challenges in fairness and transparency. Professionals must ensure that automated decisions are made ethically and do not perpetuate biases or discrimination. Ethical guidelines within professional codes of conduct should address these concerns to ensure responsible AI implementation.

Additionally, technological advancements present opportunities for remote work and telemedicine, which require professionals to maintain standards of care and professionalism outside of traditional office settings. This adaptation must balance flexibility with maintaining ethical standards and patient confidentiality.

In the tapestry of professional life, ethical conduct woven through professional codes is the fabric that binds trust, integrity, and excellence. These codes are not just guidelines but a testament to our commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards. They ensure fairness, respect, and accountability in our interactions, safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders. Let us embrace these principles with conviction and integrity, knowing that our adherence to ethical conduct not only defines our professional identity but also shapes a more ethical and equitable world. Together, let us continue to uphold these values, for they are the essence of our professions and our legacy.
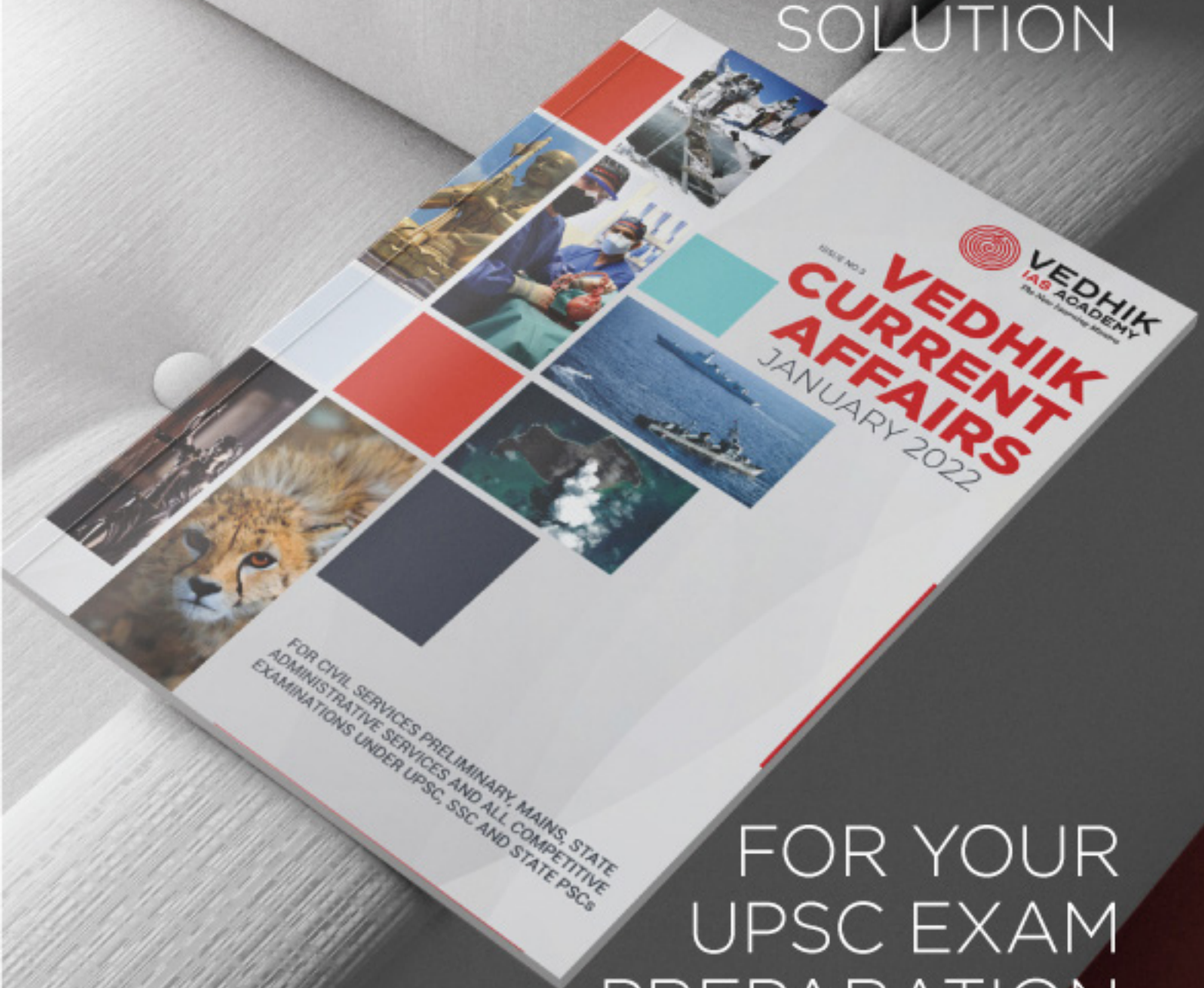
TOPICS OF THE MONTH

REALITY DOES NOT CONFORM TO THE IDEAL, BUT CONFIRMS IT

- DR. Alexander Jacob IPS

BIASED MEDIA IS A REAL THREAT TO INDIAN DEMOCRACY

-DR. Babu Sebastian

ONE HAS TO WIN THEIR INTERNAL BATTLE TO AWAKEN THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS

-DR. G. Prasanna Kumar IAS

THE PATHS TO GLORY LEAD BUT TO THE GRAVE

- DR. Muhammed Basheer

REALITY DOES NOT CONFORM TO THE IDEAL, BUT CONFIRMS IT

Failure Comes Only When We Forget Our Ideals and Objectives and Principles
– Jawaharlal Nehru

The relationship between reality and the ideal has been a perennial question in **philosophy, art, and science.** While reality often appears to deviate from our idealized visions, it simultaneously serves to validate the existence and necessity of these ideals. Reality, in its complexity and imperfections, does not conform to our ideals but confirms their **relevance** and **importance.**

Philosophy has long grappled with the **tension between the real and the ideal. Plato's theory of forms** presents one of the earliest and most influential articulations of this relationship. According to Plato, the **material world is a shadow of a higher reality** composed of perfect, immutable forms or ideals. The objects we encounter in daily life are imperfect copies of these forms. For example, a specific tree is an imperfect representation of the ideal form of "Tree."

While the physical tree does not conform to the ideal form, its existence confirms the necessity of the Form to understand and categorize it. The imperfections and variations we observe in individual trees highlight the **conceptual perfection** and **universality** of the Form. Thus, **reality confirms the ideal** by necessitating its conceptual framework to make **sense of the imperfections observed** in the real world.

Immanuel Kant further developed this idea by arguing that human cognition relies on prior concepts and ideals to structure experience. According to Kant, while we can never fully grasp the **"thing-in-itself"** (the true essence of reality), our understanding of the world is mediated by ideals like causality and time. These ideals do not conform to the empirical world directly; instead, they shape our perception and confirmation of it. Reality, in its stubborn resistance to idealization, thereby confirms the need for these cognitive ideals to make sense of experience.

Literature and art also explore the dynamic between reality and the ideal. In these domains, the ideal often represents a **moral, aesthetic, or social aspiration** against which reality is measured. The tension between the real and the ideal becomes a powerful narrative and thematic device.

In Indian literature, **Munshi Premchand** is a notable author who depicted the harsh realities of early **20th-century rural India.** Premchand's works showcase the stark contrasts between societal ideals and the grim realities of his time. The novel **"Godaan"** portrays the struggles of Hori, a poor farmer, who dreams of owning a cow to improve his family's life. The harsh realities of exploitation by landlords, moneylenders, and societal pressures are depicted in a poignant manner. Despite the grim reality, the novel underscores the **ideals of simplicity, perseverance, and moral integrity.** Hori's persistent hope and dignity, even in the face of insurmountable challenges, highlight the disparity between the idealized rural life and the brutal reality of exploitation and poverty. Premchand uses this contrast to critique social injustices and advocate for compassion and reform.

In Indian visual art, the tension between reality and the ideal is vividly illustrated through various movements and individual artists who have captured the essence of Indian life and its social dynamics. Two notable examples are the Bengal School of Art and the works of the Progressive Artists' Group. The Bengal School of Art emerged in the early 20th century as a reaction against Western academic art styles. It aimed to revive Indian traditions and aesthetics, often idealizing India's past, spirituality, and nature.

Artists like Abanindranath Tagore depicted scenes from Indian mythology, historical events, and rural life, often romanticizing and idealizing these subjects. For example, his painting **"Bharat Mata" (Mother India)** presents a personified, idealized vision of India as a nurturing mother figure, symbolizing **purity and sacrifice.** While the Bengal School focused on these ideals, it did not entirely shy away from the realities of colonial oppression and social issues. The idealized visions served as a call to **cultural and national rejuvenation,** highlighting the gap between the nation's glorious past and its current state under colonial rule. This romanticized portrayal was a form of resistance, affirming the value of cultural identity and independence.

In the realm of politics, the interaction between reality and ideals is both profound and contentious. Political ideologies are often built on ideals of justice, equality, and liberty. However, the implementation of these ideals is invariably challenged by the complexities and imperfections of real-world governance.

The history of democratic movements illustrates this dynamic. The ideal of democracy envisions a political system where power is derived from the consent of the governed, and where all individuals enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Yet, the reality of democratic societies often falls short of this ideal, marred by issues such as corruption, inequality, and political polarization.

Mahatma Gandhi, one of the key leaders of the Indian independence movement, championed the ideals of **non-violence (Ahimsa)** and **truth (Satya).** His vision for India was rooted in the principles of self-rule (Swaraj), equality, and social harmony.

The reality of British colonial rule was marked by exploitation, racial discrimination, and economic deprivation. Gandhi's various campaigns, such as the **Dandi March** and the **Quit India Movement,** highlighted these injustices and mobilized the masses to fight against colonial oppression. Gandhi's ideals were a stark contrast to the oppressive reality of colonialism. For example, **Dandi March** was not just a protest against the salt tax but a symbolic act challenging the entire structure of British authority. By embodying the ideals of non-violence and civil disobedience, Gandhi exposed the moral and ethical bankruptcy of colonial rule. This tension between the ideal and the real galvanized millions of Indians to strive for independence and social reform, ultimately leading to India's freedom in 1947.

Similarly, in the context of global politics, the ideal of universal human rights often confronts the harsh realities of **war, oppression, and poverty.** International bodies like the United Nations strive to uphold these ideals, even as real-world events repeatedly expose their limitations. The

persistence of human rights violations does not render the ideal meaningless; rather, it confirms the urgent need for these ideals as benchmarks for progress and as tools for advocacy and change.

Science, too, exemplifies the interplay between the real and the ideal. The scientific method is grounded in the pursuit of objective truth and the formulation of theories that aim to describe and predict natural phenomena accurately. However, the empirical nature of science means that theories must constantly be tested against the messy and often recalcitrant reality of the natural world.

For example, consider the development of **Newtonian mechanics.** Isaac Newton formulated the laws of motion and universal gravitation in the **17th century**, providing a framework that could predict the movement of objects with remarkable accuracy. These laws represented an idealized view of the world, where forces and motions could be described with precise mathematical relationships. However, as scientists conducted more experiments and made more precise observations, particularly on the scale of very large objects (like planets) or very small ones (like subatomic particles), they discovered phenomena that **Newtonian mechanics** couldn't explain. This discrepancy between the **ideal (Newton's laws)** and the **real (empirical observations)** led to the development of newer theories.

In the field of biology, the ideal of a perfectly adapted organism is often undermined by the reality of genetic mutations and environmental changes. The theory of evolution by natural selection, proposed by **Charles Darwin,** acknowledges this imperfection by explaining how adaptation is an ongoing, imperfect process driven by the realities of survival and reproduction. The imperfections observed in nature confirm the dynamic and provisional nature of biological ideals, underscoring the continual interplay between theory and empirical reality.

Ethics, perhaps more than any other field, illustrates the complex relationship between reality and the ideal. Ethical ideals such as **honesty, compassion, and justice** provide a moral framework against which human behaviour is judged. However, the reality of human behaviour often falls short of these ideals, characterized by **selfishness, cruelty, and injustice.**

This discrepancy is central to moral philosophy and ethical practice. Philosophers like **Aristotle and Kant** have argued that ethical ideals serve as aspirational goals that guide human conduct. Aristotle's concept of virtue ethics emphasizes the development of moral character through the pursuit of virtues, even as individuals struggle with their own moral failings. Kant's deontological ethics, on the other hand, posits that moral principles are binding regardless of the consequences, insisting on the importance of acting according to duty and rationality.

The real-world application of ethical ideals can be seen in various social movements and legal frameworks. For instance, the **abolition of slavery** was driven by the **ethical ideal of human equality,** despite the entrenched reality of racial exploitation. Similarly, contemporary movements for **gender equality, environmental justice, and animal rights** draw on ethical ideals to challenge and transform existing social practices.

The relationship between reality and the ideal is marked by a profound and enduring tension. Reality, with its inherent imperfections and complexities, often fails to conform to our ideals. Yet, this very failure confirms the relevance and necessity of these ideals. Whether in philosophy, literature, politics, science, or ethics, the ideal serves as a benchmark against which reality is measured, critiqued, and ultimately transformed.

In acknowledging that reality does not conform to the ideal but confirms it, we recognize the role of ideals as guiding stars in the human quest for understanding, justice, and progress. This dynamic interplay between the real and the ideal challenges us to continually strive for a better world, even as we grapple with the imperfections and limitations of the one we inhabit. It is through this striving that human potential is realized, and the promise of the ideal is brought closer to fruition.

Reality is Merely an Illusion, Albeit a Very Persistent One
— Albert Einstein

BIASED MEDIA IS A REAL THREAT TO INDIAN DEMOCRACY

Whoever controls the media, controls the mind
— Jim Morrison

Media plays a crucial role in any democratic society by providing information, shaping public opinion, and holding those in power accountable. However, the rise of biased media poses a significant threat to the democratic fabric of India. In recent years, Indian media has come under scrutiny for its biased reporting, sensationalism, and lack of objectivity.

Media serves as the fourth pillar of democracy, alongside the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. Its primary function is to inform citizens, facilitate debate, and act as a watchdog over the government and other powerful institutions. In India, a diverse and vibrant media landscape has emerged since independence, comprising print, broadcast, and digital platforms. However, the proliferation of biased media outlets has blurred the lines between news and propaganda, posing a grave danger to democracy.

Biased media outlets in India often prioritize sensationalism over substance, resorting to inflammatory rhetoric and divisive narratives to attract viewership or readership. This sensationalism contributes to the spread of misinformation and the polarization of society along religious, ethnic, and political lines. Moreover, biased reporting can sway public opinion, influence electoral outcomes, and undermine the credibility of democratic institutions.

The phenomenon of biased media in India is exacerbated by various challenges to press freedom, including political pressure, corporate influence, and legal threats. The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few conglomerates limits the diversity of viewpoints and fosters self-censorship among journalists. These challenges impede the media's ability to fulfil its democratic mandate and hold

power to account.

Political pressure on media outlets is a common phenomenon in India, where governments often seek to control the narrative and suppress dissenting voices. Media outlets are made manipulated by giving them ads by the political parties for suppressing the truth and spreading rumours and fake news.

Corporate interests often wield significant influence over media organizations through ownership or advertising revenue. A prime example is the Reliance Group, one of India's largest conglomerates with interests in various sectors, including media. Reliance's ownership of a certain media platform, which controls several news channels and digital media platforms, has raised concerns about editorial independence and bias. Critics argue that Reliance's business interests may influence media coverage to favor its corporate agenda, thereby compromising journalistic integrity.

The consequences of biased media on Indian democracy are far-reaching and multifaceted. It erodes public trust in the media as an impartial source of information, leading to widespread cynicism and apathy towards democratic institutions. It undermines the pluralistic fabric of Indian society by fostering intolerance and bigotry towards marginalized communities. It compromises the integrity of electoral processes by manipulating public opinion and influencing voter behaviour. Overall, biased media contributes to the erosion of democratic norms and values, posing a serious threat to the future of Indian democracy.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, misleading stories about the death toll and government responses deepened the crisis. Twitter censorship of critical tweets and pro-government channels blaming farmers' protests for oxygen shortages distorted the truth and undermined trust in the media. This jeopardizes their ability to report objectively and hold those in power accountable. Attacks on journalists who expose corruption or criticize political leaders endanger press freedom and democratic functioning.

Sonam Wangchuk, the renowned climate activist and educationalist, recently concluded his 21-day climate fast in Leh, Ladakh. During this period, he sustained himself solely on water and salt, drawing attention to critical issues affecting the region.

Wangchuk's fast was a powerful statement, emphasizing the need to protect Ladakh's fragile ecology and indigenous culture. He emphasized the importance of character and foresight in addressing Ladakh's concerns. Wangchuk's fast garnered support from various socio-political bodies in Ladakh, including the Kargil Democratic Alliance. Members of the KDA also joined him in hunger strikes, amplifying their collective voice but big news channels and media houses ignored incident and did not provided proper coverage.

Moreover, the Sushant Singh Rajput case became a media frenzy, with sensationalism overshadowing more critical matters. The media's obsession with Sushant Singh Rajput's death transformed a tragic suicide into a relentless investigation, streamed live day after day.

Instead of focusing on the actual tragedy, the spotlight shifted to an actress portrayed as the evil intriguer and the perfect cinematic vamp.

The arrest of actress, after relentless pursuit, was celebrated by those addicted to this media spectacle. The media's gossipy edge often carries deep shades of misogyny. The private-public separation blurred. While the media chased actresses and sensationalized the Rajput case, other crucial issues in the country were side-lined. The Bombay High Court recognized the harm caused by trial by media, obstructing fair criminal case investigations. The media's role should be to inform, not to manipulate public sentiment.

The practice of accepting money from political parties to publish favourable stories or suppress negative ones, often referred to as "paid news," undermines the integrity of journalism and erodes public trust in the media. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent during election campaigns when political parties seek to manipulate public opinion and gain an unfair advantage. One notable example of paid news occurred during the run-up to the 2014 general elections in India.

Media showed one sided news about CAA-NRC and misled minorities that led to widespread protest in country. The media played a significant role in shaping public perception of the CAA. Some channels sensationalized the issue, focusing on specific narratives while ignoring broader implications. The trial by media approach led to polarization and misinformation. Social media also played a role, with fact-checkers attempting to correct misinformation.

Addressing the issue of biased media requires concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders, including policymakers, media professionals, civil society organizations, and the general public. There is a need for stringent regulations and mechanisms to hold media outlets accountable for ethical breaches and misinformation. Media literacy programs should be implemented to educate citizens about the importance of critical thinking and discerning reliable sources of information. Independent media watchdogs and ombudsmen should be empowered to monitor media content and address complaints from the public. Additionally, promoting diversity and plurality in the media industry through initiatives such as community media and public broadcasting can help counteract the influence of biased media conglomerates.

Biased media poses a grave threat to Indian democracy by undermining the principles of transparency, accountability, and pluralism. Its sensationalism, misinformation, and propaganda have the potential to subvert democratic processes and foster social division. Therefore, it is imperative to address the root causes of biased media and implement reforms to safeguard press freedom and media integrity. Only by upholding the highest standards of journalistic ethics and promoting media pluralism can India realize its democratic aspirations and uphold the rights of its citizens.

Even if you are a minority of one, the truth is the truth.
– Mahatma Gandhi

ONE HAS TO WIN THEIR INTERNAL BATTLE TO AWAKEN THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS

*"Who has Conquered the Mind, The Mind is the Best of Friends; But for One Who Has
Failed to Do So, His Mind Will Remain the Greatest Enemy."*

- Bhagavad Gita (6.6)

Internal battle is the state of mind in which the individual is not able to decide what should be their next decision as per their future plan of action. Life has several occasions in which the mind suffers from a dilemma. Shrimad Bhagwat Geeta ascribes to Arjun's state of mind. In the battle of Kurukshetra when Arjuna was surrounded by the Kaurava's army he then became trapped in his emotions looking after Bhishma Pitamah and Guru Dronacharya. Arjuna faced two kinds of battle at that point. One is inner battle and the other is external battle. External battle is basically the battle of Kurukshetra in which Arjuna was supposed to fight against the Kauravas. Internal battle is basically the battle with his emotions which Arjuna fought with himself.

Internal battle is the battle in which the individual has to fight with his weakness such as anger, ego, delusion, desires and worldly attachment. The Arjuna chariot which was driven by Sri Krishna had five horses which symbolizes five basic human senses: touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. These senses are the source of human desires. Individuals have to fight against the allurement of these worldly desires which emerge from these senses. Shri Krishna Symbolizes consciousness. If the command of the senses comes in the hand of the consciousness, then it leads to the awakening of the individual and the individual will achieve the permanent state consciousness. Awakening of consciousness will only be achieved through inner battle. The majority of the individual is slave of his mind, what the mind wants, they lure in it and live life just to fulfill it.

Consciousness is simply self-awareness. The more mindful you are of your thoughts and ideas, the more conscious you will become. The more you learn about yourself and the world, the more enlightened you will become. This awareness is personal and unique to you. If you can put your feelings into words, they are a part of your consciousness.

Consciousness is a form of action or process. It is controlled by the brain, just like any other behavior. When an individual asserts to concentrate in its objective to attain it by abandonment of sensual pleasure and comfort, he is truly battling in a battlefield where he is fighting with his uncontrolled mind every second. When the individual's mind is brought under control, awakening and enlightenment begin to occur gradually. The awakening of consciousness leads to the individual's detachment from superficial outer luxury and a desire to achieve something truly meaningful instigated.

You may battle someone and take his possessions, but if you win your mind, you can rule the entire universe. The question now is how triumph over the mind aids in the conquest of the entire cosmos. To understand this, we must examine our cognitive processes and inner understanding.

When we move on the path that controls our mind then in this process, we are actually exploring our mind. The human mind is as complex as the universe and exploring the human mind is like exploring the universe. If an individual succeeds in knowing his mind, he will be well aware of the universe. When your mind wakes up to a new reality, a new lesson or a new realization, it is an awakening.

It is true that a person who has control over his mind and thoughts may achieve anything in life. However, our mind is frequently unstable, disobedient, and dissatisfied. You spend your entire life thinking and working about your career, family, relationships, triumphs and failures, difficulties and struggles. Then, all of a sudden, you understand that there is more to life than the chase of momentary pleasures. It is an awakening.

There is a Mahabharata that each person must confront. Only those whose consciousness controls their mind would be able to win this war of Mahabharat. He advises Arjuna that he may achieve total perfection in life by mastering his mind. He makes it very evident that nobody can achieve serenity and happiness in life without control over their mind. Shri Krishna advises Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita to surrender to him before carrying out his responsibility. If we consider Shri Krishna to be conscious and Arjuna to be the body, then consciousness is telling the body to act exclusively under its supervision so that the body (Arjuna) might win the internal battle of daily life i.e., Mahabharat.

When a person tries to concentrate in one spot, his mind tends to wander and travel here and there. Knowing well that no important message will arrive, you start checking your social media platforms every few minutes. But you check since it is difficult for you to focus on your task. You begin working once again, but after a short while, you turn to exploring the internet. You search for recent news. You often check Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. You take breaks that are unnecessary. You discuss stuff with coworkers to pass the time.

The mind begins to think in an uncontrolled manner, draining all of the body's conserved energy. When you realize that your energy and time are exhausting by thinking about irrelevant subjects, then you'll try to manage his attention by focusing it in one spot. Therefore, you spend several hours or even days doing a task that you might have finished in a few hours of focused effort. This is a continuous effort that an individual must undertake. Essentially, this method serves as a learning and self-exploration tool. He makes a lot of mistakes while learning. But he gains the expertise by attempting several times. This ongoing endeavor is basically a mental struggle, which we might call Mahabharat.

Meditation was used by the ancient Vedic sages to calm their minds and raise their consciousness. They concentrated on the sanctifying characteristics and transcendental shapes. They would compel them to refocus on their meditational subject. You must not, however, give up. You will ultimately master your mind by constant practice, as practice leads to perfection. As a result of practice, consciousness grew and spread. The mind wakes as a result of consistent effort, which leads to perfection.

"According to the letter of the Gita, it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with the renunciation of fruit."

- Mahatma Gandhi

THE PATHS TO GLORY LEAD BUT TO THE GRAVE

There is an astonishing disposition in human mind to seek pleasure from varied sources, even from pain and melancholy. If it weren't so, the gothic genres of literature, horror and bloody movies, lamenting lyrics and grievous ballads would not have been so popular. We receive comfort in gloomy tale, acceptance in sad sonnets and calm pleasure from the elegies which raise our melancholy, for no matter how pompous our life might be, there is always some room for bitter truth of pain and sorrow. Eighteenth century English poet, classical scholar and professor at Cambridge University - Thomas Gray - wrote this mournful poem titled 'Elegy written in a country graveyard' in a country church burial ground:

"The boast of heraldry,
the pomp of power,
And all that beauty,
all that wealth e'er gave.
Awaits alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

Such quatrains are a continuous reminder of mortality of human life and inevitability of death irrespective of social position, beauty, wealth or any glory. It was the same burial site where Gray was later buried.

Of all the truth, death is the most universal, whose realisation is assured beyond any doubt and without any exception. One thing that man has consistently failed at is in achieving physical immortality. No alchemy, sacrifice, yoga and no enlightenment or Nirvana could materialise into an everlasting enduring life. One who has been born, shall die, so shall one who will be born. Entire life, people torment themselves for money, material, love, family, health, glory etc. But all the varieties of trouble a life might encounter, with all its preoccupations, find their submergence in death. Death is an inevitable phenomena associated with life, since the moment worldly existence of life form is realised.

Greek hero of Trojan War, the central character and greatest warrior of Homer's Iliad - Achilles- was tried to be made immortal by his mother Thetis, herself a sea-nymph. He was dipped into the holy water by her mother to attain immortality. However he was killed at the end of the Trojan War within the city of Troy by an arrow which struck him in the heel. It was discovered that he was left vulnerable at the part of the body by which she held him while dipping into the water, which remained dry. After his death, all his bravery, all the swiftness of his sword and all his insurmountable strength reduced to a phrase of grammar called 'Achilles heel' which means a weakness or vulnerable point. Indeed death is the ultimate truth. There is nothing that can stop one from realization of this truth.

Nevertheless, fear associated with death might be optional. The fact is, death seems scary, not because death is scary but because life, many a times, gets scary. The fear of death follows from that of life. One who is prepared to die anytime, is the one who lives the life fully. It is in such achievement of fearlessness for life that glory sprouts and nurtures itself. The durability of life is often associated with the intensity of glory achieved. Maria Corazon Aquino was a self proclaimed plain housewife till she decided to run for president in

Philippines after her husband was assassinated. She was the most prominent figure of the 1986 People Power Revolution and was named Time magazine's "Woman of the Year" the same year. She toppled the 20-year authoritarian rule of President Ferdinand E. Marcos, restored democracy to the Philippines and served as the 11th President. Prior to this, she had not held any other elective office. She would say: "I would rather die a meaningful death than to live a meaningless life." Sacrosanct and inviolable as she might appear, but she died of colon cancer in the year of 2009. Death doesn't demand a submission of being, but it ensures the same.

Before being social, man was only an animal. Concept of society, tamed him for the sustainable needs of inter-dependence. Path to glory resonates with such balance of needs and sustenance. Still, a beast always resides within. This beast stares and sharpens its claws, and attacks vigorously when drunk with power and pride followed by imbalance of conscience. Glory is not an unproblematic select to deal with ease. Oriana Fallaci - an Italian author, journalist and an ardent interviewer - having keenly observed her political interviewees, said: "Glory is a heavy burden, a murdering poison. To bear it is an art, and to have that art is rare."

One can plan for a safer life by keeping away from any glory, for more glorious the path, closer it is to dying. Nevertheless, there is no safe box which couldn't be torn apart by the claws of death. Death is like the deep dense woods whose immensity cannot be fathomed from ground because the vision is blocked by the first few rows of trees itself.

It is life that categorises; death on the other hand declassifies them all. Death is the union of all life forms. Paupers struggle on daily basis throughout their life to make it to the end of the day. Their life might not mean much to the society as much as they are said to have died like flies. On the other hand, upper class has their burial site booked, crypt engraved or funeral sumptuously occasioned. Eventually, rich men don't live enough to witness them all. No matter what we do, achieve or feel and how differently we do them, death unifies all classes of people. In fact, poor people might have lived like flies, but they all died as good as any riches. A couch of thorns or an embroidered bed, are matters of indifference to the dead. Death is like that volume of calm water where all the deeds die out like a ripple. German author and playwright - Wolfgang Borchert, whose work was affected by the environment of Second World War, writes in his play 'The Outsider': "A man dies. Only a few circles in the water prove that he was ever there. And even they quickly disappear. And when they're gone, he's forgotten, without a trace, as if he'd never even existed. And that's all."

We all need some or the other motivation to sail through the struggles of life. Search for food is motivated by the inherent characteristics of hunger of human body. It is the acceptance in society, showering of praise, recognition or being envied by fellow being, that drives one to the paths of glory. Marcus Tullius Cicero - a Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar, and writer who vainly tried to uphold republican principles in the final civil wars that destroyed the Roman Republic- puts up his thoughts which came to be known as Ciceronian rhetoric: "We are motivated by a keen desire for praise, and the better a man is the more he is inspired by glory. The very philosophers

themselves, even in those books which they write in contempt of glory, inscribe their names." When it comes to survival, death is the ultimate motivation. It helps men discover unknown boundaries, untraversed locations and unfathomable will. The philosophy of vicious cycle of rebirth, karma and nirvana basically stream-lines human being for peaceful coexistence, to abjure violence, to be accommodative and to comfort, sympathize and distract mind from the lamenting nature of death. Even though Buddhist teachings professes the cycles of rebirth, according to a Jataka parable, when a grieving lady visited Buddha with the corpse of his son to request bring back the life, Buddha asked her to bring a handful of cereal from a family in which nobody had died before. Tired of her efforts, when lady returned to Buddha bewailing, he summed up the lesson that death is certain, its time is not.

Ailing Steve Jobs, having known of his march being closer to death, tried to describe honestly his perception of death as: "No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new." Dying is a continuous process which starts as soon as one is born. In softer terms we call it ageing. Death is the ultimate result of this ongoing process. In fact, the vanity of life is in death. Health remains prized possession because of the cruelty of sickness and life remains so because of unwarranted death.

A thought that makes life the liveliest is the idea of 'memento mori' which means 'Remember that you must die.'

MODEL QUESTION PAPER-MCQ

Q1. Alok Shukla, who recently won the prestigious 2024 Goldman Environmental Prize, is an environmental activist from which Indian state? [SSC CGL Model MCQ]
A. Maharashtra
B. Chhattisgarh
C. Odisha
D. Madhya Pradesh

Q2. Bhadra Tiger Reserve, recently seen in the news, is located in which Indian state? [SSC CGL/ UPSC CSE Model MCQ]
A. Maharashtra
B. Karnataka
C. Madhya Pradesh
D. Tamil Nadu

Q3. With reference to 'carbon farming' often seen in news, consider the following statements. [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]
1. It involves practices that increase the amount of carbon stored in soil and vegetation.
2. They are uniform and can be applied identically across all types of agricultural land regardless of local conditions.
3. It promotes biodiversity by improving soil health and creating habitats for various organisms.
How many of the above statement/s is/ are correct?
A. Only One
B. Only Two
C. All the Three
D. None of the above

Q4. Which of the following statements best describes carbon trading in agriculture sometimes seen in news? [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]
A. It refers to the practice of selling carbon credits obtained by reducing methane emissions in livestock farming.
B. It involves farmers earning carbon credits by adopting sustainable practices that sequester carbon, which can be sold in carbon markets.
C. It is the process of exchanging carbon credits between agricultural and industrial sectors to balance carbon emissions.
D. It refers to the regulation of agricultural emissions through government-imposed limits, allowing farmers to trade emission allowances.

Q5. Consider the following statements: [UPSC CSE/ CAPF Model MCQ]
Statement-I: Marine heatwaves cause coral bleaching.
Statement-II: Elevated Sea temperatures during marine heatwaves stress coral, leading to the expulsion of symbiotic algae.
A. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
B. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
C. Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
D. Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

Q6. The world's largest direct air capture plant, "Mammoth," recently began operations in which country? [SSC CGL/ State PSC Model MCQ]

A. United States
B. Germany
C. Canada
D. Iceland

Q7. Consider the following. [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]
1. Contribute to sea level rise
2. Affecting weather systems.
3. Formation and growth of glacial lakes
4. Endangering species adapted to cold environments.
How many of the above can be consider as the impact of glacier melting?
A. Only One
B. Only Two
C. Only Three
D. All the four

Q8. The International Day of Biodiversity, observed on May 22, 2024, with the theme "Be Part of the Plan," emphasizes collective efforts to address biodiversity loss and implement which framework? [SSC CGL/ State PSC/ UPSC Model MCQ]
A. Paris Agreement
B. Kyoto Protocol
C. Kunming-Montreal Framework
D. Rio Declaration

Q9. Which statement accurately describes the creation of Goldene? [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]
A. They are formed by directly layering gold atoms onto titanium carbide layers without the use of surfactant molecules.
B. They are produced by replacing silicon atoms with gold atoms in the atomic monolayer of titanium carbide, preventing sticking with surfactant molecules.
C. They are synthesized by incorporating gold atoms between layers of silicon and titanium carbide, followed by etching away the titanium carbide using Murakami's reagent.
D. They are made by mixing gold atoms with surfactant molecules to create a stable solution before layering them onto titanium carbide layers.

Q10. Consider the following statements regarding 'Oxytocin' sometimes seen in news. [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]
1. It is used to induce labour and manage postpartum bleeding.
2. It is regulated by the hypothalamus and released by the pituitary gland.
Identify the correct statement/s.
A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q11. Consider the following statements related with 'Mission COVID Suraksha'. [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]
1. ZyCoV-D: India's first protein subunit vaccine
2. CORBEVAX: World's 1st and India's indigenously developed DNA Vaccine
3. GEMCOVAC-19: World's 1st and India's indigenously developed mRNA vaccine

4. iNCOVACC: World's 1st and India's indigenously developed intranasal COVID-19 Vaccine

How many of the above pair/s is/ are correctly matched?

A. One pair only
B. Two pairs only
C. Three pairs only
D. All the four pairs

Q12. Which statement accurately describes "Deadbots" often seen in news? [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]

A. They are AI chatbots designed to replicate deceased individuals, offering comfort and companionship to grieving individuals, potentially alleviating psychological distress.
B. They are AI chatbots programmed to simulate the behaviour of deceased loved ones, with a focus on prioritizing safety measures to prevent psychological distress.
C. They are AI chatbots created to mimic the voices and personalities of living individuals, serving as virtual assistants to provide psychological support to users.
D. They are AI chatbots developed to imitate the voices and mannerisms of historical figures, aiming to educate users about the past and promote historical awareness.

Q13. Consider the following statements regarding 'High Energy Photon Source (HEPS)' often mentioned in news. [UPSC CSE Model MCQ]

1. It is a synchrotron radiation facility for generating high-energy photons for various scientific research applications.
2. It operates in the gamma-ray spectrum with photon energies exceeding several megaelectronvolts (MeV).

Identify the correct statement/s.

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q14. RoseTTAFold, recently seen in the news, is related to: [SSC CGL/ State PSC/ UPSC Model MCQ]

A. Weather forecasting
B. COVID-19 treatment
C. Protein folding
D. Space exploration

Q15. The 'Global Report on Neglected Tropical Diseases' 2024 was released by:

A. World Health Organization (WHO)
B. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
C. World Bank
D. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Q16. With reference to the Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrB), consider the following statements:

1. Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrB) are financial instrument that is issued by a sovereign entity, inter-governmental group, alliance, or corporation.
2. The proceeds from the sale of these bonds are earmarked exclusively for projects classified as environmentally sustainable.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q17. Consider the following statements about Private Members Bill

1. It refers to bill of any member of parliament who is not a minister
2. It can only be introduced and discussed on Fridays

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q18. Which of the following methods can be used for Soil Conservation

1. Contour Bunding
2. Mixed Farming
3. Slash & Burn Agriculture
4. Contour Terracing
5. Cover Cropping

Select the correct code:

A. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
B. 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
C. 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
D. All of the Above

Q19. "This Biome is characterised by thin podzols. The litter derived from local vegetation is decomposed very slowly. The soil is characterised by very low level of moisture and nutrients". Which of the following Biome is referred in above paragraph

A. Tundra
B. Temperate Rain Forest
C. Savanna
D. Taiga

Q20. Which of the following Pair(s) is/are correctly matched

	Plant Disease	Micro Organism
1.	Citrus Canker	Bacteria
2.	Rust of Wheat	Virus
3.	Yellow Vein Mosaic	Fungi

Select the correct code:

A. 1 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 3 only
D. All of the Above

Q21. According to Article 1 of Indian Constitution, which of the following can be included in "Territory of India"

1. Territories of the states
2. Union Territories
3. Territories that may be acquired by the government of India at any time

Select the correct code:

A. Only
B. and 2 only

C. only
D. All of the Above

Q22. Consider the following statements about the writ " Certiorari"
1. It is both preventive as well as curative
2. It is available against Legislative bodies
3. It can be issued against administrative authorities
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
A. 1 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 2 and 3 only

Q23. In context of Indian History, the term " Nai Talim " is related to which of the following
A. Education
B. Land Revenue System
C. Irrigation
D. Cotton Textile

Q24. Consider the following statements about Earthquake
1. The point where energy is released is called Epicentre
2. The Magnitude of earthquake is measured in Richter scale
3. The Intensity of earthquake is measured in Mercalli scale
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
A. 1 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. All of the Above

Q25. Consider the following statements
1. If money multiplier is lower, banks need to keep less reserve
2. If money multiplier is high, it allows more lending opportunity to the public
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q26. Consider the following statements about Hemis National Park
1. It is the largest National Park in India
2. It is situated in Mizoram
3. Its flora mainly consists of dry deciduous forests
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
A. only
B. 1 and 3 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. All of the Above

Q27. Consider the following statements about Pitt's India Act 1784
1. It allowed the Court of Directors to manage the commercial affairs, but created a new body called Board of Control to manage the political affairs.
2. It empowered the Board of Control to supervise and direct all operations of the civil and military government

or revenues of the British possessions in India.
3. It provided for the spread of western education among the inhabitants of the British territories in India
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
A. 1 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. All of the Above

Q28. Consider the following statements
1. A Veblen good is a low income, non-luxury product that defies standard economic and consumer demand theory. Demand for Veblen goods rises when the price rises and falls when the price falls
2. A Giffen good is a good for which demand increases as the price increases, because of its exclusive nature and appeal as a status symbol. A Giffen good has an upward-sloping demand curve, which runs counter to the typical downward-sloping curve. However, a Giffen good is generally a high-quality, coveted product
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q29. Which of the following are Right Bank Tributaries of Narmada
1. Hiran
2. Uri
3. Tawa
4. Orsang
5. Shakkar
Select the correct code:
A. 1, 2, and 3 only
B. 1, 2 and 4 only
C. 2, 4 and 5 only
D. All of the Above

Q30. Which of the following is/are correctly matched

Revenue Settlement	Introduced by
1. Zamindari	Cornwallis
2. Ryotwari	William Bentick
3. Mahalwari	Thomas Munro

Select the correct code:
A. 1 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 2 and 3 only

Q31. Which of the following factors influence soil formation
1. Topography
2. Parent Material
3. Time
4. Climate
5. Biological Activity
Select the correct code:
A. 1, 2 and 5 only
B. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
C. 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
D. All of the Above

Q32. Consider the following statements regarding the financial stability Board (FSB)?

1. It is an international body created in 2009 by G77 which monitors international financial system and makes recommendations regarding it.
2. The financial stability and development council (FSDC) in India's department of economic council represent India at FSB.

Which of the following is / are true regarding the above statements?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q33. Consider the following statements regarding the SCO?

1. SCO has 9 members including India and Pakistan.
2. India has been the President of SCO for the the year 2023.
3. SCO has a permanent anti terrorist structure named RATs, which was created as an initiative of India.

How many of the above statements is / are true

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Only 1 and 2
D. All three are correct

Q34. Which of the following agencies release the Logistics Performance Index?

A. World trade organisation
B. World economic form
C. Asian economic forum
D. World Bank

Q35. Which of the following is true regarding the Pradhan Mantri Janaushadhi Pariyojana(PMBJP)?

1. It was launched by Ministry of Chemicals and Fertlizers.
2. Under the scheme, janaushadhi Kendras are opened to provide generic medicines at affordable prices.
3. A medicine is priced at a maximum of 50 % of the market prices.

Options

A. Only 1
B. Both 1 and 2
C. I , 2 and 3 are true
D. None of the above

Q36. Consider the following statements regarding Institutes of Eminence in India.

1. It is a scheme started by the UGC to develop world class higher education Institute in India.
2. Institutes in both public sector and Private Sector can be graded as institutes of eminence.
3. To be graded as institute of eminence, it has to be functional for past 25 years.

How many of the above statements are true?

A. Only 1
B. Both 1 and 2
C. Only 1 and 3
D. All three statements are correct

Q37. Identify the correct statements regarding the Quad grouping

1. It was established in 2017
2. It is a grouping of four countries consisting of India, Australia, The USA and Japan.
3. Australia hosts the 2023 Quad summit.

options

A. Only 1
B. Only 1 and 2
C. All three statements are true
D. None of the above

Q38. Consider the following statements regarding breach of Privilege?

1. The powers, privileges and immunities of either House of the Indian Parliament and of its Members and committees are laid down in Article 105 of the Constitution.
2. A member of the House can raise a question involving a breach of privilege with the consent of the whip of the Political Party.
3. A person found guilty of breach of privileges or contempt can be reprimanded, warned or sent to prison.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. Only 1
B. Both 1 and 2
C. Only 1 and 3
D. None of the above

Q39. Rapid Security Forces', recently seen in news, is related to which amongst the following countries?

A. UAE
B. Iran
C. Isreal
D. Sudan

Q40. Recently, Bru community participated in Lok Sabha elections for the first time as voters from which state?

A. Mizoram
B. Nagaland
C. Tripura
D. Assam

Q41. which institute recently published the Aging well in Asia : Asian development policy report?

A. Asian development bank
B. World bank
C. Asian Pacific economic cooperation
D. UNDP

Q42. Baatan Port was recently in news. Which country it is located?

A. Malasiya
B. Indonesia
C. Phillippines
D. Singapore

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WRONG METHODS   CORRECT METHOD

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