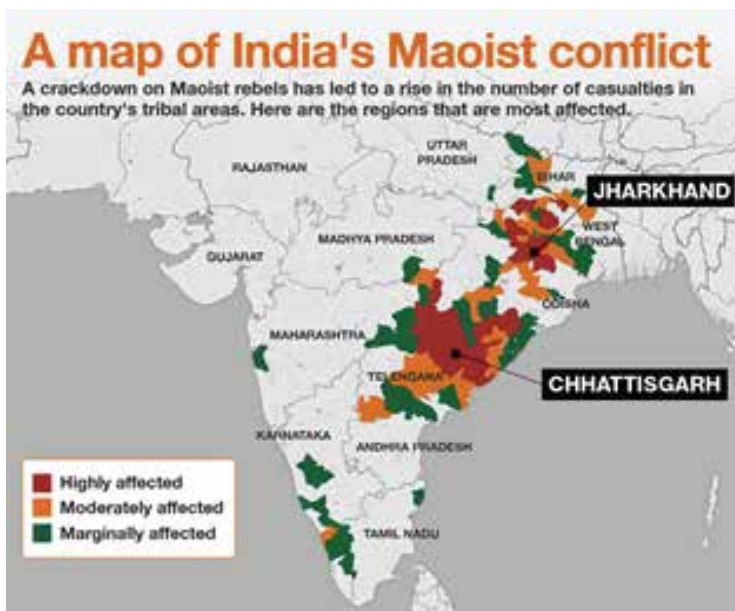




IED blast by suspected Maoists kills 9 in Bijapur

INTERNAL SECURITY

Eight security personnel and a civilian were killed in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on Monday as an improvised explosive device planted by suspected Maoists blew up their vehicle. The police said the explosive went off at 2.15 p.m. when a joint-operation party was returning from an anti-Maoist operation in the Abujhmad forests, where five Naxals were gunned down and a DRG jawan lost his life on Saturday, the police said.



What is Maoist insurgency in India? Where is it prevalent in India?

Maoist insurgency- Maoist insurgency, which is also known as Left-wing Extremism (LWE)/Naxalism, is an armed movement rooted in political ideologies that seek to bring about socio-political and economic changes through violent means.

What are the reasons that led to the growth of Left-Wing Extremism in India?

The 2006 D Bandopadhyay Committee identified governance gaps and extensive discrimination against tribals in economic, socio-political, and cultural spheres as the primary causes of Naxalism's proliferation. Some of the reasons are enumerated below-

1. Inequitable Socio-economic development- Increasing Socio-economic inequities and unemployment in hinterland region

nudge the youth to take up arms. There has been disruption of traditional occupations and lack of alternative work opportunities.

2. Governance failure- Governance deficit in the remote parts of Red Corridor regions led to the growth of Left Wing Extremism. There was development apathy and huge corruption in the red corridor area. For ex- Lack of food security due to corruption in the PDS scheme.

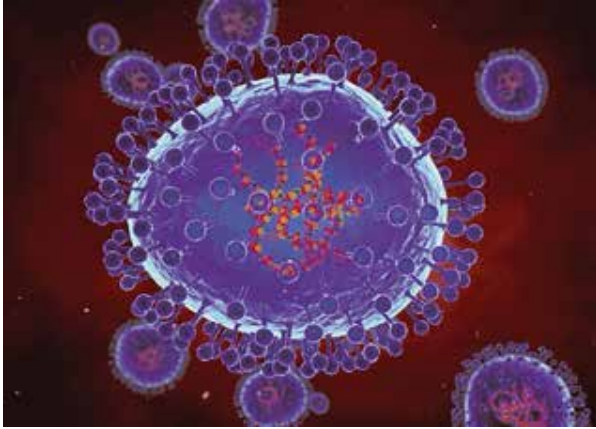
3. Political Marginalization- The tribal groups were politically marginalized by the self-serving dominant groups. This led to political deprivation among the marginalized groups leading to hopelessness and a sense of powerlessness.

4. Land Alienation and Displacement- There was failure of land reforms especially in land redistribution after independence. The development projects and acquisition of land for industrial purposes have sometimes led to the displacement of local communities without adequate compensation or rehabilitation. This has been a focal point of Naxalite agitation.

HMPV occurrence not new to India, no cause for alarm: Health Ministry

SCIENCE AND TECH

The Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) has been in circulation globally, even in India, the Health Ministry said on Monday, while stating that none of those infected in India have any travel history and all are recovering well. "The virus occurrence in India is not new," it said. The clarification came after the infection was confirmed in two infants in Karnataka and one in Gujarat.



What is human metapneumovirus?

Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a respiratory virus that causes mild infections similar to that caused by a common cold. First identified by scientists in 2001, the virus belongs to the Pneumoviridae family, of which respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), measles and mumps are also members. HMPV can cause both upper and lower respiratory tract infections and is generally seen in winter and early spring.

How does HMPV spread?

HMPV spreads through contact with an infected person or touching objects that have the virus on them. This can be through secretions from coughs and sneezes; close contact with someone who has the infection by

shaking hands, hugging; touching a doorknob or a phone or a keyboard that may be contaminated with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

What has the Indian govt. said?

In light of the reports from China, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) under the Union Health Ministry is closely monitoring respiratory and seasonal influenza cases in the country, and is in touch with international agencies. "We will continue to monitor the situation closely, validate information and update accordingly," sources said. HMPV cases have been confirmed in two infants from Karnataka and one in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. In Chennai too, two children tested positive for the virus.

The Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda in a video statement said, "Health experts have clarified that the HMPV is not a new virus. It was first identified in 2001 and it has been circulating in the entire world for many years. HMPV spreads through air, by way of respiration... The health systems and surveillance networks of the country are vigilant and there is no reason to worry."

NHRC expresses concern over continuous deaths of sanitation workers

POLITY

Expressing concern over continuous deaths of sanitation workers despite legal provisions to eradicate manual cleaning of sewage and hazardous waste, National Human Rights Commission Chairperson Justice V. Ramasubramanian (retired) on Monday said it was necessary to study and understand the causes to suggest remedial measures.



About NHRC - National Human Rights Commission

The National Human Rights Commission is an independent statutory body, established on October 12, 1993, under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The commission serves as a guardian of human rights in India, overseeing the rights associated with life, liberty, equality, and the dignity of individuals. These rights are guaranteed by the Constitution of India and are also reflected in international covenants, like the Paris Principles on Human Rights.

- **Human Rights:** Section 2(1)(d) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 defines human rights as the rights concerning an individual's life, liberty, equality, and dignity, which are protected by the Constitution or outlined in international treaties and can be enforced in Indian courts.

NHRC Objectives

The National Human Rights Commission was established with several specific objectives aimed at enhancing the framework for addressing human rights issues in India. The key objectives are as follows:

- To strengthen institutional arrangements that allow for a comprehensive and focused approach to addressing human rights issues.
- To investigate allegations of excesses by authorities independently, demonstrating the government's commitment to safeguarding human rights.
- To complement and bolster existing efforts aimed at promoting and protecting human rights

What is the NAMASTE Scheme?

About:

It was launched in 2022 as a Central Sector Scheme.

The scheme is being undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE) and aims to eradicate unsafe sewer and septic tank cleaning practices.

Objectives:

- Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India.
- All sanitation work is performed by skilled workers.
- No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter.
- Sanitation workers are collectivised into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises.
- Strengthened supervisory and monitoring systems at National, State and Urban Local Body (ULB) levels to ensure enforcement and monitoring of safe sanitation work.

SC moots Benches of Armed Forces Tribunal to address backlog

POLITY

The Supreme Court on Monday suggested constituting Benches of the Armed Forces Tribunal in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh to deal with the growing pendency in defence-related cases from these two areas. A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and N. Kotiswar Singh said that at present AFT Chandigarh was handling the burden of cases from there while setting up circuit Benches at Jammu and Kashmir, Shimla and Dharamshala would considerably relieve the backlog.



Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT):

- AFT is a military tribunal in India established in 2009 under the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007.

• Functions:

To provide for the adjudication or trial of disputes and complaints with respect to commission, appointments, enrolment and conditions of service in respect of persons subject to the Army Act, 1950, the Navy Act, 1957 and the Air Force Act, 1950.

To provide for appeals arising out of orders,

findings or sentences of courts-martial held under the said Acts and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- The Tribunal can also dismiss the appeal if the court martial findings are found to be justified.
- Any appeal by a person against a decision given by the tribunal can only be taken up in the Supreme Court.
- Benches: It has its Principal Bench at New Delhi and eight Regional Benches at Jaipur, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Guwahati, Kolkata, Chennai, Kochi and Mumbai.

• Composition:

Each Bench comprises of a Judicial Member and an Administrative Member.

The Judicial Members are retired High Court Judges, and Administrative Members are retired Members of the Armed Forces who have held the rank of Major General/ equivalent or above for a period of three years or more.

Judge Advocate General (JAG), who has held the appointment for at least one year, are also entitled to be appointed as the Administrative Member.

- **Functioning:**

The Tribunal shall transact their proceedings as per the Armed Forces Tribunal (Procedure) rules, 2008.

All proceedings in the Tribunal will be in English.

The Tribunal will normally follow the procedure as is practiced in the High Courts of India.

Leaves flutter in space: ISRO's experiment reaches milestone

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

A batch of cowpea seeds which were taken into orbit by an Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) mission and which recently sprouted has unveiled their first leaves. "Leaves have emerged! VSSC's CROPS (Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies) aboard PSLV-C60 POEM-4 achieves a milestone as cowpea sprouts unveil their first leaves in space," the ISRO said in a post on Monday. It can be recalled that the cowpea seeds had a couple of days ago successfully sprouted in space.

About Cowpea:

- Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*) is an annual plant within the pea family (Fabaceae).
- It is a leguminous crop having long trailing vines producing seeds of black, white, or red colour used widely in various food preparations.
- It originated and was domesticated in Southern Africa and was later moved to East and West Africa and Asia.
- It is also known as a black-eyed pea, southern pea, etc.
- Cowpeas are typically climbing or trailing vines that bear compound leaves with three leaflets.
- The grains contain 25% protein and several vitamins and minerals.
- The plant tolerates drought, performs well in a wide variety of soils, and, being a legume replenishes low-fertility soils when the roots are left to decay.
- Well-drained loam or slightly heavy soil is best suited.
- In colder climates somewhat sandy soil is preferred as crops mature earlier in them.
- It is grown mainly by small-scale farmers in developing regions where it is often cultivated with other crops as it tolerates shade.
- It also grows and covers the ground quickly, preventing erosion.
- The world's largest production and consumption of cowpea is in West Africa, which accounts for more than 87% of world production and use.
- Nigeria, the largest producer and consumer, accounts for 46% of production worldwide.
- In the Indian context, it is a minor pulse cultivated mainly in arid and semi-arid tracts of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and West UP, along with considerable areas in Rajasthan, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, and Gujarat.

Govt. to soon take decision on raising sugar MSP: Minister

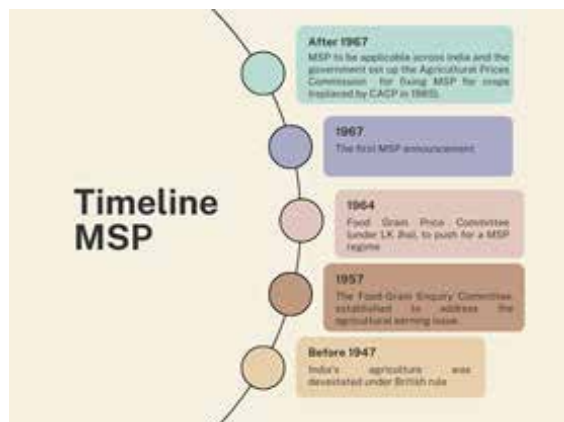
ECONOMY

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the government will soon take a decision on increasing the minimum support price (MSP) of sugar. The MSP stays unchanged at ₹31 per kg, a rate set in February 2019. However, industry bodies demanded an increase due to rising production costs and economic pressures faced by sugar mills. "We will take a decision whether to increase [MSP] or not shortly," Mr. Joshi told reporters during an event.

Minimum Support Price (MSP) Regime in India:

- **About MSP:** MSP is a form of market intervention (a policy decision not enforceable by law) by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices during bumper production years.
- **Announced by:** These are announced by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (Chaired by the PM of India) on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) at the beginning of the sowing season for certain crops.
- **Objectives:**

MSPs are a guarantee price for farmer's produce from the Government to prevent the farmers from distress sales and to procure food grains for public



distribution.

For example, if the market price for a commodity falls below the specified minimum price due to market surplus, government agencies will buy the entire quantity supplied by farmers at the announced minimum price.

The MSP hikes are essential not only for farmers' welfare but also for stabilising agricultural markets, especially as India aims to enhance domestic pulse production amid rising imports.

Background:

- India's agriculture was devastated under British rule and the farmers were impoverished.
- The Food-Grain Enquiry Committee, established by the Jawaharlal Nehru administration in 1957, was the first attempt to address the agricultural earning issue.
- In 1964, Lal Bahadur Shastri formed the Food Grain Price Committee (under LK Jha), to push for a MSP regime.
- The first MSP announcement was made in 1967 by the then Agriculture Minister Jagjivan Ram.
- Thus, the MSP regime came into existence as a policy decision (to be applicable uniformly across India) and the government set up the Agricultural Prices Commission (renamed as the CACP in 1985) for fixing MSP for crops.



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