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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

NOVEMBER 2024

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ICCR Organises Conference on Pali as a Classical Language

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) recently organized a conference in Colombo, Sri Lanka, bringing together Buddhist monks and scholars to discuss granting Pali the status of a classical language in India.

About-

Recent Development:

On October 3, the Indian government declared five languages—Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit—as classical languages. With this update, India now officially recognizes 11 classical languages.

About the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR):

- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of External Affairs
- Established: 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
- Objective: To promote Indian culture and values worldwide while fostering cultural exchanges with other countries.
- Key Initiatives: Facilitates International Day of Yoga celebrations through Indian Missions/Posts abroad since 2015.
- Awards: Recognizes individuals with honors like the Indologist Award, World Sanskrit Award, and Gisela Bonn Award.

This recognition of Pali as a classical language highlights its historical and cultural significance, especially in Buddhist traditions.

Classical Languages of India (11):

Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Telugu (2008), Kannada (2008), Malayalam (2013), Odia (2014), Marathi (2024), Pali(2024), Prakrit (2024), Assamese(2024), Bengali(2024).

The Bahmani Architectures of Bidar

The Karnataka Waqfs Board recently claimed ownership of 17 monuments located inside the historic Bidar Fort, sparking discussions about the fort's rich history and architectural significance.

About-

About Bidar Fort

- Location: Bidar City, Karnataka

- Historical Origins:
    - Built By: Kakatiya ruler Madhav Varma II in the 10th century.
    - Dynasties:
        - Hosted multiple rulers, including:
            - Bahmani Sultanate (1347–1518)
            - Barid Shahi Dynasty (1527–1619)
            - Mughal Empire (1619–1724)
            - Nizam of Hyderabad (1724–1948)
    - Renovation: Sultan Ahmed Shah Wali of the Bahmani dynasty made Bidar his capital in 1430, transforming it into a grand citadel.

- Architectural Features:
    - Area and Layout:
        - Covers 67 acres with a perimeter of 5.5 km.
        - Rhombus-shaped design featuring palaces, mosques, and courtyards.
    - Construction Material: Trap rock, stone, and mortar.
    - Key Features:
        - Gateways: Seven arched gates, including Gumbad Darwaza and Sharaza Darwaza.
        - Bastions: 37 octagonal bastions equipped with metal-shielded cannons.
        - Structures: Houses over 30 Islamic monuments.

- Cultural Significance:
    - Architectural Style: Combines Islamic and Persian influences.
    - Legacy: Represents over 500 years of Indian history.

About the Bahmani Dynasty

- **Overview:**
  - The Bahmani Sultanate was the first independent Muslim kingdom in the Deccan, ruling for nearly 200 years (1347–1527).
  - Founder: Alauddin Hasan Gangu Bahman Shah, an Afghan adventurer.
  - Capitals: Initially Gulbarga (75 years), later Bidar (over a century).
- **Language and Culture:**
  - Official Language: Persian.
  - Common Languages: Marathi, Deccani, Telugu, Kannada.
- **Notable Rulers:**
  - Muhammad Shah I: Defeated Vijayanagara and Warangal Hindu principalities.
  - Firoz Shah Bahmani: Established an observatory near Daulatabad.
  - Ahmad Shah I (Wali): Known as a saint, he fostered a scholarly environment, attracting intellectuals from across the world.

The Bidar Fort and its Bahmani legacy highlight the architectural, cultural, and historical richness of medieval India.

First Bodoland Mahotsav

The Prime Minister recently inaugurated the first-ever Bodoland Mahotsav in New Delhi. This event aims to celebrate the rich language, literature, and cultural heritage of the Bodo community.

About Bodoland Mahotsav

- **Objective:** To promote peace, unity, and the cultural vibrancy of the Bodo community while fostering a prosperous society.
- **Theme:** "Peace and Harmony for Prosperous Bharat."
- **Highlights:**
  - Display of GI-tagged products like Dokhona, Gamsa, and Karai-Dakhini.
  - Efforts to boost tourism, particularly in Manas National Park and other natural attractions, aiming to create employment opportunities.

About the Bodo Tribe

- **Origin:** Ethnolinguistic group native to Assam.
- **Geographical Spread:** Primarily in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), but also found in Bangladesh, Nepal, and other parts of Northeast India.
- **Scheduled Tribe Status:** Recognized under the ST Order, 1950, as "Boro" and "Borokachari."
- **Language:**
  - Bodo: Belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family.
  - Officially recognized in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- **Governance:**
  - Administered by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The Bodo Peace Accord (2020):

- **Parties Involved:** Central Government, Assam State Government, and Bodo groups.
- **Significance:**
  - Marked an end to decades of conflict and violence.
  - Laid the foundation for peace, development, and integration within the Bodo region.

The Bodoland Mahotsav reflects the commitment to preserving and promoting Bodo culture while strengthening peace and harmony in the region.

Thrissur Pooram Festival

The Kerala High Court's stringent guidelines on the use of elephants have raised concerns among temple authorities, potentially impacting the rituals of the iconic Thrissur Pooram Festival.

About Thrissur Pooram Festival

- What Is It? -An annual Hindu temple festival held in Thrissur, Kerala.
- When Does It Occur? - Celebrated on the day when the star sign "Pooram" aligns during the Malayalam month of "Medam" (April–May).
- Purpose: Ten temples from Thrissur and surrounding areas come together to honor Lord Shiva at the Vadakkunnathan Temple.

- Cultural Significance:
    - Dubbed as the "Mother of All Poorams", it is renowned for its unmatched grandeur and deep-rooted traditions.
    - A hallmark event showcasing Kerala's vibrant culture and religious fervor.

Historical Background
- Founder:
- Raja Rama Varma, also known as Sakthan Thampuran, the Maharaja of Cochin (1790–1805).
- Purpose of Initiation:
    - Ensured the participation of 10 temples in and around Thrissur.
    - Established as a collective celebration of unity and devotion.

Unique Features of Thrissur Pooram
- Elephants:
    - A key element, adorned in golden caparisons (nettipattam), carrying temple deities.
    - Kerala High Court's new elephant guidelines are challenging traditional practices.
- Cultural Showcases:
    - Panchavadyam: A traditional orchestra featuring percussion instruments.
    - Kudamattam: A visual spectacle where parasols are exchanged atop elephants.
    - Magnificent fireworks that light up the Thrissur sky.

Thrissur Pooram stands as a vibrant testimony to Kerala's rich heritage, though it now faces the challenge of adapting to modern guidelines while preserving its traditions.

Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das

On November 5, 2024, the Lok Sabha Speaker paid tribute to Chittaranjan Das on his birth anniversary at his portrait in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan.

About Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das
- **Birth:** Born on November 5, 1870, in Calcutta (now Kolkata), into a Bengali Baidya family.
- **Education:** Studied at the London Missionary Society's Institution in Bhawanipur and graduated from Presidency College, Calcutta, in 1890.

Role in the Independence Movement
- **Freedom Struggle Leader:**
  - Earned the title 'Deshbandhu' (Friend of the Nation) for his immense contribution to India's independence movement.
- **Mentor to Subhas Chandra Bose:**
  - Guided many young leaders, including Subhas Chandra Bose.
- **Congress Leadership:**
  - Served as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1922.
- **Founder of Swaraj Party (1923):**
  - Established the Swaraj Party alongside Motilal Nehru, advocating self-governance after differences with Congress policies.
- **Alipore Bomb Case (1909):**
  - Gained recognition as a lawyer by successfully defending Aurobindo Ghosh, showcasing his dedication to the freedom movement.

Literary Contributions
- **Renowned Poet:**
  - Known for his works like Malancha, Mala, and Sagar Sangeet, which highlight Bengali culture and his poetic talent.
- **Founder of Narayan Journal:**
  - Edited this literary journal for five years, promoting emerging writers and his own creative works.
- **Vaishnava Influence:**
  - His poetry was inspired by Vaishnava literature, reflecting spiritual and philosophical depth.
- **Social and Political Themes:**
  - Addressed contemporary issues through his poetry, expressing a commitment to social justice and national liberation.

Legacy: Chittaranjan Das remains a revered figure in India's history, celebrated for his leadership, mentorship, and literary contributions that enriched both the independence movement and Bengali literature.

135th Birth Anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund (JNMF) has announced plans to launch The Nehru Archive, a comprehensive digital platform dedicated to Nehru's life and legacy.

- The archive is set to be unveiled on November 14, 2025, coinciding with Nehru's 136th birth anniversary.
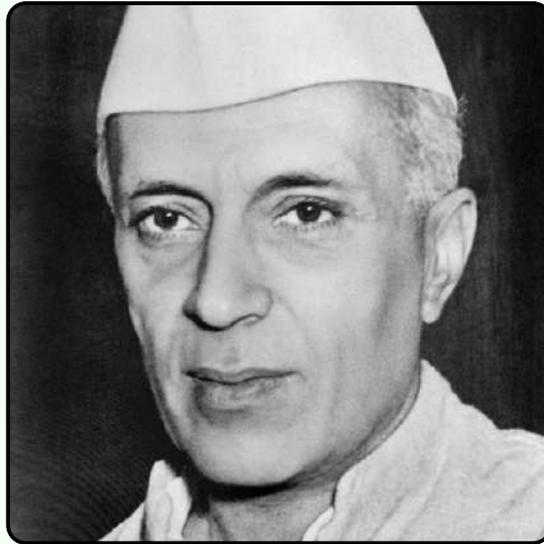
About The Nehru Archive

- Aim: To make Nehru's contributions widely accessible, emphasizing his role in shaping modern India and global geopolitics.
- Key Features:
  - Nehru's speeches (1917–1964).
  - Writings by Nehru and his contemporaries.
  - Materials from global archives.
  - Unpublished and lesser-known works by Nehru.
- Inspiration: Modeled on initiatives like the Wilson Center in the U.S., it aims to become the primary research resource on Nehru.
- Foundation: The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund (JNMF) was established in 1964 to preserve and promote Nehru's legacy.

About Jawaharlal Nehru

- Birth: Born on November 14, 1889, in Allahabad (now Prayagraj), Uttar Pradesh.
- Indian National Congress:
  - 1929 Lahore Session: Advocated for complete independence (Purna Swaraj).
  - 1931 Karachi Session: Drafted resolutions on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy, later ratified.
- India's First Prime Minister:
  - Served as PM from 1947 to 1964, leading India for over 16 years.

Contributions of Jawaharlal Nehru

Literary Contributions:
- Authored iconic works such as:
  - The Discovery of India.
  - Glimpses of World History.
  - Toward Freedom (autobiography).
  - Letters from a Father to His Daughter.

Educational Development:

- Established premier institutions:
  - Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).
  - All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).
  - Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).
- Advocated for free and compulsory primary education in India's Five-Year Plans.

Industrial Growth:

- Pioneered heavy industries like iron and steel plants in Durgapur and Rourkela, supporting India's industrial foundation.

Institutional Foundations:

- Established the National Defence Academy (NDA).
- Founded the Atomic Energy Commission, steering India's nuclear ambitions.

Foreign Policy:

- Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):
  - Championed neutrality during the Cold War.
- Panchsheel Agreement (1954):
  - Signed the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence with China.
- Known as the Architect of India's Foreign Policy, emphasizing diplomacy and peaceful coexistence.

Legacy: Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's visionary leadership, emphasis on education, industrialization, and foreign policy shaped the foundation of modern India. His dedication to secularism, democracy, and progressive values continues to inspire generations.

150th Birth Anniversary of Birsa Munda

Recently, the Prime Minister launched a commemorative stamp and coin to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, the tribal icon and freedom fighter, in Jamui district, Bihar.
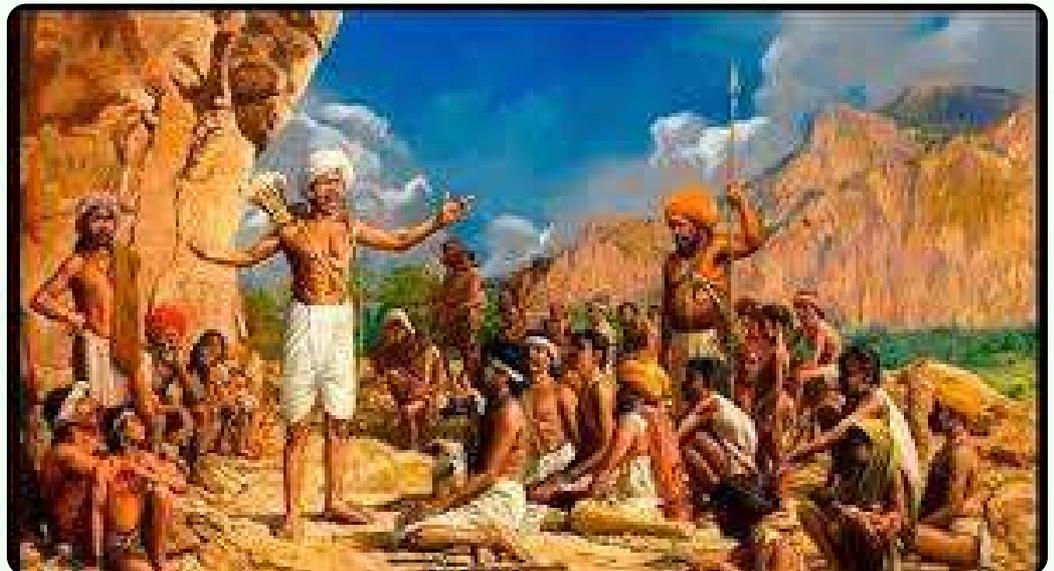
About Birsa Munda

- **Birth:**
  - Born in 1875 in the village of Ulihatu, in the Mundari princely state of Khunti, Jharkhand.
  - Birth Anniversary: Celebrated on November 15th, known as Birsa Munda Jayanti.
- **Tribal Leadership:**
  - A prominent tribal leader and religious reformer belonging to the Munda tribe of the Chotanagpur region, which is now in Jharkhand and Odisha.
  - He founded Birsait, a religious faith blending animism and indigenous beliefs, focusing on the worship of a single god. He was revered as Dharti Aba (Father of the Earth).

Legacy of Birsa Munda

- **Creation of Jharkhand:**
  - The state of Jharkhand was formed on his birth anniversary, November 15th, 2000.
- **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas:**
  - His birth anniversary was declared 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' (Tribals' Pride Day) by the Central Government in 2021.

Significant Movements

- **Mundaism (Kisangism):**
  - Birsa Munda initiated Mundaism, a religious movement to revive traditional Munda customs and beliefs, while uniting the Munda people against oppression.
- **The Great Tumult (Ulgulan) Movement:**
  - The Ulgulan (Great Tumult) was a tribal revolt that took place in the Chotanagpur region (now Jharkhand).
  - It mobilized Munda and Oraon tribals against forced labor, missionary activities, and colonial land appropriation by the British.

Death and Impact

- **Arrest and Death:**
  - Birsa Munda was arrested by the British in 1895 and tragically died in 1900 while in prison.
- **Munda Revolt's Impact:**
  - The Munda Revolt led to the establishment of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908, which aimed to protect tribal land rights and prevent exploitation.

Legacy: Birsa Munda remains a symbol of tribal pride and resistance. His efforts in leading the tribal communities against colonial rule and his contributions to cultural and religious reforms continue to inspire generations.

Accessibility for Disabled Persons is a Human and Fundamental Right: Supreme Court

In the case of Rajive Raturi vs. Union of India & Ors., the Supreme Court confirmed that access to environments, services, and opportunities is a fundamental human right for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Accessibility for disabled persons is a fundamental right, rules top court

Basis of the Judgment:

The Supreme Court's judgment is based on a report submitted by the Centre for Disability Studies (CDS), NALSAR University of Law, which highlighted several issues faced by PWDs in India.

Key Issues Faced by PWDs (as per the CDS Report):

1. **Accessibility Barriers:**
   - There are significant gaps in accessibility across various spaces such as courts, prisons, schools, public transport, and other public spaces.
2. **Compounded Discrimination:**
   - The report pointed out that inaccessibility often results in compounded discrimination, creating additional layers of disadvantage, particularly for individuals who face multiple marginalizations (e.g., caste, gender).

Key Observations of the Supreme Court:

1. **Disability as a Societal Responsibility, Not a Personal Tragedy:**
   - Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud emphasized that disability becomes a tragedy only when society fails to provide essential resources to enable differently-abled individuals to lead fulfilling lives.
2. **Accessibility as Essential to Equality, Freedom, and Dignity:**
   - The Court stressed that accessibility is a prerequisite for equality, freedom, and human dignity, enabling PWDs to meaningfully exercise other rights.
3. **Disparity in Accessibility Infrastructure Across Regions:**
   - The Court noted the regional disparities in accessibility standards, such as the difference in the number of wheelchair-accessible buses in different states (e.g., Delhi: 3,775 buses vs Tamil Nadu: 1,917 buses).
4. **Overlooked Rights to Relationships and Emotional Well-being:**
   - The Supreme Court observed that society often neglects the right to relationships for PWDs, including their emotional needs for privacy, intimacy, and self-expression.

5. **Emphasis on the Social Model of Disability:**
    - The judgment called for a shift towards removing societal barriers (physical, organizational, and attitudinal) rather than focusing on trying to "fix" individuals.
6. **Call for Universal Design in Public and Private Spaces:**
    - The Court recommended integrating universal design principles to ensure that all public and private spaces, services, and products are accessible to everyone from the outset.
7. **Need for Mandatory Accessibility Standards:**
    - The Court found that current accessibility rules were not mandatory, leading to low compliance, and directed the Union Government to frame mandatory rules under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

About Persons with Disabilities (PwDs or Divyangjan):

- **Definition (RPwD Act, 2016):**
    - Persons with Disabilities are defined as individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
    - There are 21 types of disabilities under the RPwD Act, including locomotor disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech disabilities, intellectual disabilities, etc.
- **Status of PwDs in India:**
    - As per the 2011 Census, India has 2.68 crore PwDs, accounting for 2.21% of the country's population.

Barriers to Accessibility for PwDs:

1. **Physical Barriers:**
    - Inaccessible buildings, transportation systems, and public spaces due to the lack of ramps, elevators, and wide doorways. Less than 1% of educational institutions are disabled-friendly, and less than 40% of school buildings have ramps.
2. **Technological Barriers:**
    - Lack of accessible digital platforms, websites, and assistive technologies for PwDs, especially those with visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments.
3. **Economic Barriers:**
    - PwDs face high costs for assistive devices, transportation, and specialized medical care, contributing to lower labor force participation and higher poverty levels.
4. **Attitudinal Barriers:**
    - Societal discrimination, stigma, and misconceptions hinder the inclusion of PwDs in various spheres of life.
5. **Communication Barriers:**
    - Limited access to information in accessible formats, such as Braille, sign language, or audio, preventing PwDs from engaging in education, work, and social activities.
6. **Healthcare Barriers:**
    - PwDs face challenges in accessing quality healthcare, and they have a higher risk of developing conditions like depression, asthma, diabetes, and others.

Way Forward:

1. **Early Identification of Disabilities:**
   - Early intervention is crucial for effective rehabilitation, ensuring that PwDs lead fulfilling lives. The Comprehensive Newborn Screening (CNS) Handbook can help screen birth defects.
2. **Early Interventions:**
   - Examples of interventions:
     - Occupational therapy for fine motor skills.
     - Physiotherapy for balance, sitting, and walking.
     - Speech therapy for language and eating skills.
3. **Shift in Societal Attitudes:**
   - Shifting the view of PwDs from being dependent individuals to equal participants in society is essential. Empowering terms like "Divyang" (instead of "Viklang") should be promoted.
4. **Investment in Assistive Technologies:**
   - Technologies such as speech recognition software, screen readers, hearing aids, and mobility devices help PwDs perform daily activities more independently.
5. **Increasing Opportunities and Incentives:**
   - Ensuring vocational training, skill development, and formal employment opportunities for PwDs while promoting non-discrimination and equal pay.
6. **Embracing Digitally Accessible Pedagogy (DAP):**
   - Adopting DAP to provide equal learning opportunities for students with disabilities and promoting inclusive education in India.

Conclusion:

Ensuring accessibility for PwDs is not just a fundamental right but a societal responsibility. The government must implement comprehensive legal, social, and infrastructural reforms to ensure full participation of PwDs in society, facilitating equality, dignity, and freedom for all.

Gender Equality and Empowerment: Key Highlights

The report "Charting New Paths for Gender Equality and Empowerment: Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review," launched by ESCAP and UN Women at the UN Ministerial Conference on Women's Empowerment, reviews the progress made since the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). This report looks at achievements, challenges, and future priorities for gender equality across Asia-Pacific.
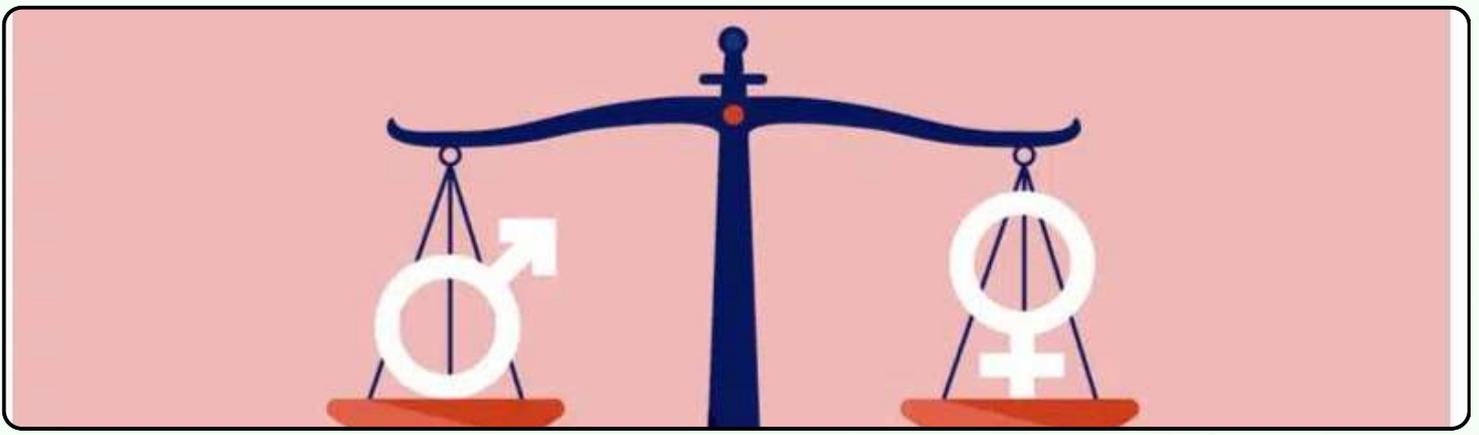
Beijing Declaration and BPfA:

- Adopted by 189 countries at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.
- Regular reviews have tracked BPfA's implementation globally and regionally every five years.
- The 30-year review will occur in March 2025 at the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Asia-Pacific Review: The Asia-Pacific report reviews the region's progress in gender equality since the adoption of BPfA, focusing on achievements, persistent challenges, and emerging issues.

Key Highlights:

1. **Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB):** Countries like India and the Philippines have committed to allocating resources for women's needs.
   - India's Achievements:
     - 218% increase in gender budgeting over a decade.
     - $37 million allocated for gender budgeting this year.
     - Women's leadership through 33% reservations in local bodies.
     - Empowerment through Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
2. **Time Poverty:** India has introduced gender-responsive solutions like clean cooking fuels and water access to reduce the burden of unpaid work on women.
3. **Challenges:**
   - Lack of sex-disaggregated data and exclusion of key women-focused programs.
   - Factors Impacting Gender Equality:
     - Patriarchal norms, child marriage, and son preference.
     - Women spend five times more on unpaid domestic work than men.
     - Gender pay gap: Only 36.7% parity in economic participation.
     - Property ownership disparity: 42.3% of women vs 62.5% of men own property.
4. **Violence Against Women:** 29.3% of married women aged 18-49 have faced domestic or sexual violence.
5. **Education and Political Representation:**
   - Literacy rate gap: 63% for women vs 80% for men.
   - India ranks 143rd in women's political representation, with only 13.63% women MPs.

Measures to Improve Gender Equality:

- Legal Reforms: Implementation of 33% reservation for women in parliament (pending) and equal inheritance rights under the Hindu Succession Act.
- Women-Centric Schemes: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana to promote education and financial empowerment for women.
- Economic Empowerment: Participation in Self-Help Groups and skill development programs.
- Gender-Based Violence Laws: Protection from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013.
- Health & Education: Programs like Janani Suraksha Yojana ensure maternal health, and Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalayas promote girls' education.
- Awareness: Mahila Shakti Kendras help spread gender equality at the grassroots level.

Way Forward:

- Policy & Legal Reforms: Strengthen gender-sensitive laws and expedite the 33% reservation for women in Parliament.
- Investment in Social Infrastructure: Increase funding in health, education, and social protection.
- Data Collection: Improve gender-disaggregated data for better monitoring.
- Social Attitudes: Encourage men to share domestic responsibilities.
- Digital Empowerment: Ensure equal access to technology and digital literacy for women.
- Gender-Sensitive Education: Promote gender equality through curriculum and teacher training.
- Conclusion: Achieving gender equality requires ongoing efforts across legal, social, and economic fronts to create an inclusive society where everyone can realize their full potential.

Gotti Koya Tribe

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has urged the Union Home Ministry and the states of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha to submit detailed reports on the condition of the Gotti Koya tribals. These tribes, displaced from Chhattisgarh due to Maoist violence, now live in neighboring states under challenging conditions, often excluded from social security benefits.

About Gotti Koya Tribes:

1. **Origins:** The Gotti Koyas, also known as Gutti Koyas or Gotte Koyas, are an indigenous Adivasi tribe from Chhattisgarh.
2. **Displacement:** In the mid-2000s, many Gotti Koyas fled to Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana) due to violent conflicts between Maoist insurgents and the government-backed Salwa Judum militia.
3. **Migration:** Around 30,000 Gotti Koya members settled in the forests of Telangana, particularly in Bhadradri Kothagudem, Mulugu, and Jayashankar Bhupalpally districts.
4. **Language:** They speak Koya, a Dravidian language.
5. **Livelihood:** Their primary livelihood activities include shifting cultivation (Podu), animal husbandry, and collecting minor forest produce.
6. **Cultural Practices:** The most significant fair for the Koyas is the Sammakka Saralamma Jatra, a major ritual celebration.

Reang Tribe

The Reang community, also known as "Bru," is one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India. They have requested official recognition for their language, Kaubru.

About the Reang Tribe:

- **Population and Location:** The Reang tribe is the second-largest tribal community in Tripura, following the Tripuri clan. They are also found in Mizoram and Assam.
- **Ethnicity and Language:**
  - The Reangs belong to the Indo-Mongoloid racial group.
  - They speak Kaubru, which is part of the Kok-Borok dialect and belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese language family.
- **Social Structure:** The Reang community is divided into two main clans: Meska and Molsoi.
- **Economic Practices:** Traditionally, they practiced Huk or Jhum cultivation, a form of shifting agriculture.
- **Religious Beliefs:**
  - Most Reangs in Tripura follow Hinduism.
  - They worship a variety of deities such as Buraha, Bonirao, Songragma, Jampira, and Lampra.
- **Cultural Contributions:** The Reangs are known for the Hojagiri folk dance, a key cultural tradition.

DANA (Depresión Aislada en Niveles Altos)

What is DANA?

- **Definition:** DANA, also known as the "cold drop" in Spanish, stands for "isolated depression at high altitudes". It is a weather phenomenon caused by a pocket of cold air descending over the warmer Mediterranean Sea.

- **How It Forms:** The cold and warm air masses collide, creating atmospheric instability, which leads to the rapid formation of dense cumulonimbus clouds, often resulting in heavy rainfall.

- **Influence of the Polar Jet Stream:** The polar jet stream, a fast-moving wind that forms a boundary between polar and tropical air masses, can break off cold air pockets that later interact with the warm air over the Mediterranean, triggering DANA.

- **Seasonal Occurrence:** DANA events are most common in autumn and spring, particularly in the western Mediterranean regions.

- **Increasing Frequency:** Due to global warming, DANA events have become more frequent and intense, now affecting inland areas like Madrid, which were not typically impacted by such heavy rainfall in the past.

Impact of DANA:

- **Intense Rainfall:** DANA brings very heavy rainfall within a short time frame. For example, some regions in Spain have experienced a month's worth of rain in just one day, causing significant flash floods.

- **Flooding and Infrastructure Damage:** The massive rainfall from DANA can lead to widespread flooding, submerging towns, damaging roads, and putting a strain on infrastructure.

Tsunami Ready Villages Recognized by IOC-UNESCO

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (IOC-UNESCO) has recognized 24 coastal villages in Odisha as "Tsunami Ready" during the 2nd Global Tsunami Symposium in Indonesia.

About the Tsunami Ready Villages:

- **Definition:** Tsunami Ready Villages are coastal communities recognized under the UNESCO-IOC Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme (TRRP) for their preparedness to respond effectively to tsunami threats.
- **Recently Recognized Villages:** The recognized villages are located across six coastal districts of Odisha: Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, and Ganjam.

ODISHA VILLAGES IN SIX COASTAL DISTRICTS RECOGNIZED AS 'TSUNAMI-READY' BY IOC-UNESCO

24 coastal villages in Odisha have been officially recognized as Tsunami Ready, with renewed certificates for two previously recognized villages.

Source : UNESCO

- **Renewal of Recognition:** The Tsunami Ready recognition certificates for two villages—Noliasahi (Jagatsinghpur) and Venkatraipur (Ganjam)—were renewed. These villages were initially recognized in 2020.

About IOC-UNESCO and the Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme (TRRP):

- **Role of IOC-UNESCO:** The IOC-UNESCO promotes international cooperation in marine sciences to enhance the management of oceans, coasts, and marine resources. It also coordinates the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030, also known as the "Ocean Decade."
- **Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme (TRRP):** The TRRP focuses on improving community preparedness for tsunamis through education, training, and response planning. Communities are evaluated by IOC-UNESCO based on 12 specific indicators related to tsunami preparedness.

Supreme Court Overrules 1967 Verdict on AMU Minority Status

The Supreme Court of India, in a landmark 4-3 majority verdict by a seven-judge bench, overruled its 1967 judgment in the S. Azeez Basha case and laid down a "holistic and realistic" test to determine the minority character of educational institutions. This ruling could significantly affect the status of institutions like the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

Details of the Case:

- **Challenge by Petitioners:** The petitioners challenged the 1967 ruling, which stated that AMU, being a central university, could not be considered a minority institution.
- **Supreme Court Ruling:** The Court overruled the Azeez Basha judgment, stating that an institution's statutory establishment does not automatically negate its minority status.
- **Final Determination on AMU:** The final determination on AMU's minority status is deferred to a separate bench, which will decide the issue based on the principles laid out in this ruling.

What is a Minority Educational Institution (MEI)?

- **Definition:** A Minority Educational Institution is an institution established and administered by a linguistic or religious minority.
- **Article 30(1):** The Constitution provides minorities with the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- **NCMEI Act:** The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) Act safeguards the educational rights of minorities.
- **Protections for MEIs:** These include exemptions from reservations for SCs and STs under Article 15(5), and autonomy in administrative functions such as student admissions and staff hiring.

Supreme Court's Test for Determining Minority Character:

- The Court established a broad test based on two key criteria: Establishment and Administration.
  - **Establishment Criteria:**
    - **Genesis of the Institution:** Courts should examine the origin and purpose behind the establishment of an institution.
    - **Founders:** Identifying the founders involves tracing the institution's conceptual origin and establishing minority involvement.
    - **Predominant Purpose:** The institution must primarily aim to benefit the minority community, though not necessarily in the minority's language or religion.
    - **Evidence of Minority Establishment:** Documents, speeches, and other evidence showing the need for the institution for the minority community can support its claim.
  - **Administration Criteria:**
    - **Administration by Minority Not Mandatory:** The Court clarified that an educational institution does not have to be run by members of the minority group. It may still retain its minority status if it fulfills the purpose of benefiting the minority community.
    - **Historical Administration:** For institutions like AMU, established before the Constitution, the Court emphasized evaluating the administration on January 26, 1950, the date the Constitution came into force.

Implications of the Ruling:

- **Strengthening Minority Rights:** The ruling reinforces the constitutional protections under Article 30 for minority educational institutions.
- **New Framework for Assessing Minority Status:** The Court's new test provides a clear framework for evaluating institutions seeking minority status.
- **Impact on AMU:** The decision makes it likely that AMU will be recognized as a minority institution, allowing it to offer up to 50% reservation for Muslim students and gain greater autonomy in administration.
- **Implications for Other Institutions:** The ruling provides a standardized approach for institutions with similar claims and may lead to scrutiny of institutions that have undergone regulatory changes post-1950.
- **Government Control and Funding:** The Court clarified that government funding or control doesn't negate an institution's minority status, provided it continues to serve the minority community's needs.

Way Forward:

- **Legislative Framework:** The government could introduce clear legislation based on the Supreme Court's criteria for recognizing minority institutions.
- **Institutional Autonomy:** Institutions like AMU should be supported in maintaining autonomy while ensuring accountability.
- **Clarifying Government Support:** Legal clarity should be provided on how government funding can be provided without compromising minority status.

Conclusion: This Supreme Court ruling marks a pivotal shift in the interpretation of Article 30 of the Indian Constitution, reinforcing the rights of minority educational institutions and shaping future legal frameworks.

Limit of Basic Structure Doctrine in Checking Validity of Ordinary Law

The Supreme Court of India recently ruled on the validity of the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Board Act, 2004, specifically determining the limits of the Basic Structure doctrine in reviewing ordinary laws. The case has important implications for how the Basic Structure doctrine applies to ordinary legislation as opposed to constitutional amendments.

U.P. Madarsa Education Board
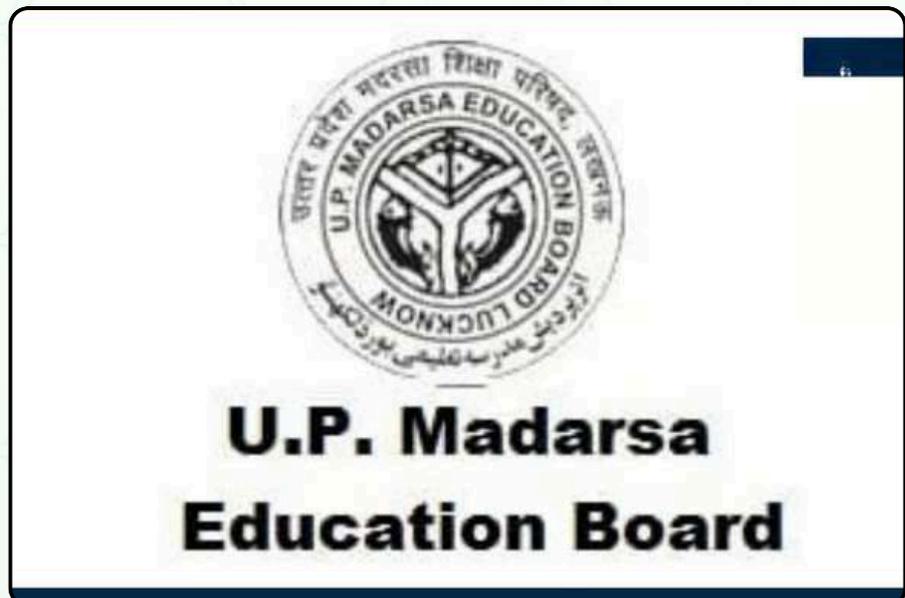
Key Highlights of the Judgment:

1. **Basic Structure Doctrine:**
   - The Supreme Court clarified that ordinary laws (such as the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Board Act) cannot be challenged solely on the grounds that they violate the Basic Structure doctrine. This doctrine, established in the landmark Kesavananda Bharati case (1973), restricts constitutional amendments from altering the "basic structure" of the Constitution but does not apply to ordinary statutes.
2. **Upheld Provisions of the Act:**
   - The Act was upheld for primary and secondary madrasa education, which remained within the constitutional framework.
3. **Unconstitutional Provisions:**
   - However, the Court struck down the provisions related to higher education, specifically the Fazil (undergraduate) and Kamil (postgraduate) levels, as they conflicted with Entry 66 of the Union List, which grants the Central Government control over higher education standards.
4. **Abstract Terms and Constitutional Claims:**
   - The Court emphasized that challenges based on abstract concepts of the Basic Structure (e.g., democracy, secularism) were insufficient for invalidating ordinary laws. Specific constitutional provisions must be cited, rather than vague principles, to challenge a law's validity.

Differences between Ordinary and Constitutional Laws:

The judgment draws a clear line between ordinary laws and constitutional amendments:

Aspect	Ordinary Law	Constitutional Law
Definition	Laws made by Parliament or state legislatures within the Constitution.	The supreme law of India, outlining government structure and powers.
Purpose	Governs specific areas like civil, criminal, and administrative matters.	Establishes fundamental governance principles and citizen rights.
Amendment Process	Can be amended by a simple majority in Parliament or state legislatures.	Requires a special process, including a two-thirds majority or state ratification.
Basic Structure	Not applicable to ordinary laws.	Can be reviewed under the Basic Structure doctrine.
Examples	Indian Penal Code, RTI Act, Consumer Protection Act.	Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles, Constitutional Amendments.

Influence of Landmark Cases:

The judgment reflects the influence of prior cases such as Kesavananda Bharati (1973) and Indira Nehru Gandhi vs. Raj Narain (1975), which introduced and applied the Basic Structure doctrine. However, the Court differentiated the application of this doctrine between constitutional amendments and ordinary laws, emphasizing that the former can be scrutinized under this framework, while the latter cannot.

Implications of the Ruling:

1. **Legislative Autonomy:**
   - This ruling strengthens legislative autonomy, ensuring that Parliament and state legislatures can pass laws without the risk of judicial invalidation based on the Basic Structure doctrine.
2. **Judicial Clarity:**
   - The Court's decision provides clearer boundaries for judicial review, reaffirming that only constitutional amendments can be examined for their adherence to the Basic Structure.
3. **Precedent:**
   - The judgment sets a precedent that ordinary laws are not subject to Basic Structure challenges, reinforcing the legal distinction between constitutional amendments and statutes.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's decision marks a crucial clarification in the scope of the Basic Structure doctrine. It reinforces that while constitutional amendments are scrutinized under this doctrine, ordinary laws, like the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Board Act, cannot be challenged based on abstract constitutional principles. This ruling supports legislative autonomy and provides clearer guidelines for judicial review in the future.

Anglo-Indian Reservations

The issue of Anglo-Indian reservations in India has recently resurfaced, with leaders of the Anglo-Indian community urging the central government to reinstate reserved seats for Anglo-Indians in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

About the Anglo-Indian Community:

- **Origins:** The Anglo-Indian community was a product of British colonial policies, particularly during the rule of the British East India Company, which encouraged intermarriage between European officers and local Indian women.

- **Definition:** The term "Anglo-Indian" was first used in the Government of India Act, 1935. According to Article 366 (2) of the Indian Constitution, an Anglo-Indian is defined as a person:
  - Whose father or male ancestors are of European descent.
  - Who is domiciled within India and born to parents habitually residing in India (i.e., not temporarily present).

Constitutional Provisions for Anglo-Indian Reservations:

1. **Article 331:** This article allowed the President to nominate two Anglo-Indians to the Lok Sabha if the community lacked adequate representation.
2. **Article 333:** This provided that the Governor of a state could nominate one Anglo-Indian to the State Legislative Assembly if the community was underrepresented.
3. **Article 334(b):** This extended the reservation provisions for Anglo-Indians in legislative bodies for 40 years, starting in 1949.
4. **Article 338:** The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SCs) examines constitutional and legal safeguards for Anglo-Indians and reports on their effectiveness.

Historical Context of Anglo-Indian Reservation:

- **Constituent Assembly Intent:** Initially, the Constituent Assembly envisioned a reservation system for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for 10 years, beginning in 1950, with the Anglo-Indian community receiving similar reservations.
- **Amendments to Article 334:** Over time, Article 334, which set the reservation timelines for SCs, STs, and Anglo-Indians, was amended multiple times to extend the reservations. These amendments included:
  - The 8th Amendment (1969) extending Anglo-Indian reservations.
  - The 104th Amendment (2019) which ended Anglo-Indian reservations and set 2030 as the final year for SC/ST reservations in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

104th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019:

- **End of Anglo-Indian Reservations:** The 104th Amendment brought an end to the reservation of seats for the Anglo-Indian community in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. The amendment also set 2030 as the final year for SC/ST reservations in legislative bodies, concluding an 80-year period since 1950.

Current Debate:

The Anglo-Indian community has called for the reinstatement of reserved seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. They argue that their community is still underrepresented in political and legislative affairs, and the 2019 amendment led to the discontinuation of these reservations, which had been a means of ensuring political participation for the community.

This call for reinstatement follows the historical context of continuous amendments that extended these reservations and highlights ongoing debates about the representation and rights of minority communities in India.

SC Questions Delay In Delimitation For Northeastern States

The Supreme Court of India recently inquired about the delay in the delimitation process for the northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland. This follows the 2020 Presidential order that rescinded a previous notification deferring the delimitation exercise for these states.

About Delimitation:

- **Definition:** Delimitation refers to the redrawing of the boundaries of Lok Sabha and state assembly constituencies to reflect changes in population.
- **Objective:** The main aim of delimitation is to ensure equal representation for equal segments of the population. It periodically adjusts constituencies to account for population growth and redistribution.

Process of Delimitation:

1. **Article 82:** After every Census, Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act. Once this Act is in force, the Union government sets up the Delimitation Commission.
2. **Article 170:** Similar to the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies, state assemblies are also divided into constituencies following the Delimitation Act after every Census.
3. **Commission's Role:** The Delimitation Commission is responsible for determining the number and boundaries of constituencies, aiming to ensure that the population of each constituency is as equal as possible. It also identifies seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Previous Delimitation Exercises:

- The Delimitation Commission has been constituted four times — in 1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002 — under respective Acts passed in 1952, 1962, 1972, and 2002.
- There was no delimitation following the 1981, 1991, and 2001 Censuses.
- The 2002 Act did not make any changes to the total number of Lok Sabha seats or their distribution among states. It also excluded certain states, including Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur, from the delimitation process due to security concerns.
- In 2020, the central government reconstituted the Delimitation Commission for these four northeastern states and the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

About the Delimitation Commission:

- **Independence:** The Delimitation Commission operates independently and collaborates with the Election Commission of India, without any executive influence.
- **Appointment:** It is appointed by the President of India under the provisions of the Delimitation Commission Act.
- **Composition:** The Commission consists of a retired Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner of India, and the respective State Election Commissioners.
- **Constitutional Authority:** The orders of the Delimitation Commission are final and cannot be challenged in any court, ensuring that the electoral process is not delayed.

Context of the Supreme Court Inquiry:

The Supreme Court's query on the delay emphasizes the importance of completing the delimitation process for these states to ensure fair and equal representation in the legislative bodies. The postponement has raised concerns, especially after the 2020 Presidential order that lifted the previous deferral notification.

19th G20 Rio Summit 2024

The 19th G20 summit recently concluded in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with several significant global commitments and initiatives aimed at addressing pressing issues like hunger, poverty, climate change, and global conflicts.

Key Highlights from the G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration:

1.Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty:
- Goal: To eradicate hunger and poverty worldwide by 2030.
- Three Pillars:
  - National Coordination: Strengthening national policies to address hunger and poverty.
  - Financial Mobilisation: Raising funds for poverty and hunger reduction initiatives.
  - Knowledge Integration: Sharing best practices and knowledge for effective interventions.

- Headquarters: FAO in Rome, Italy.
- India's Role: India is committed to supporting the Global Alliance's goals, including:
  - Expanding cash transfer programs to reach 500 million people.
  - Providing school meals to 150 million children.
  - Supporting 200 million children and pregnant women with health programs.

2. Lebanon and Gaza Ceasefire:
- G20 affirmed the Palestinian right to self-determination and reiterated its commitment to a two-state solution.
- Supported a comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2735 and in Lebanon for the safe return of citizens.

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
- Urged for faster implementation of the G20 2023 Action Plan to accelerate progress on the SDGs, with only six years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
- Current Status:
  - 17% of targets on track.
  - 50% show minimal to moderate progress.
  - Over one-third of targets are stalled or regressed.

4. Commitment to Food Security:
- Reaffirmed commitment to global food security and nutrition, and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food as outlined in the Deccan High-Level Principles, 2023.

5. Inclusion of SDG 18 on Ethnic-Racial Equality:
- A new SDG focusing on ethnic-racial equality was introduced as a key element in the G20 priorities.

6. Impact of Ukraine War:
- Acknowledged the detrimental effects of the Ukraine war on global food, energy security, and supply chains, and supported constructive peace efforts aligned with the UN Charter.

7. Efforts Against Corruption:
- Emphasized the use of the GlobE Network and other international networks to combat corruption and illicit financial flows.

8. Climate Change:
- Launched the Global Task Force for Climate Change Mobilization to strengthen climate financing, especially for developing countries.
- Reaffirmed a voluntary commitment to reduce land degradation by 50% by 2040 and addressed extreme droughts and wildfires.
- Plans to establish the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) for forest conservation.

9. Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs):
- Endorsed a roadmap to enhance MDBs' effectiveness and financial capacity in alignment with SDGs.

Challenges Faced by the G20:

1. **Diverging Economic Interests:** The G20 comprises diverse economies, making consensus difficult, especially on issues like climate change and taxation.
2. **Geopolitical Tensions:** Ongoing conflicts, like the Russia-Ukraine war, exacerbate global challenges and hinder cooperation.
3. **Lack of Binding Enforcement:** The voluntary nature of G20 agreements means they are often not implemented due to the absence of legal binding structures.
4. **Underrepresentation of the Global South:** Smaller, less-developed nations have limited influence in shaping G20 priorities, particularly regarding debt relief and equitable development.
5. **National Sovereignty vs. Global Cooperation:** Negotiating on global issues that challenge national sovereignty, such as global taxation and climate agreements, remains contentious.

About the GlobE Network:

- A G20 initiative to combat corruption and illicit financial flows.
- Comprises 121 member countries and 219 member authorities, with India's CBI and ED being members.
- Supported by the UNODC, it provides a platform for international cooperation against corruption.

Deccan High-Level Principles:

- Developed by FAO, World Bank, and WTO to guide efforts in addressing global food insecurity.
- Initiated by G20 Agriculture and Finance Ministers in 2022 to direct collective action toward reducing food insecurity.

Way Forward:

- **Address Hunger, Fuel, and Fertilizer Crisis:** Collaborate with international organizations to mitigate shortages, especially in developing regions.
- **Ensure Accountability:** Establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of G20 commitments.
- **Enhance Representation:** Advocate for better representation of developing nations in global decision-making.
- **Promote Fair Trade:** Reform global trade rules to foster inclusive economic growth.
- **Foster Diplomatic Dialogue:** Encourage peaceful resolutions to conflicts, especially in Ukraine and the Middle East, while maintaining global cooperation.

Review of India's Stand on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a trade pact involving 16 Asia-Pacific countries, including China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and ASEAN nations. India was initially a founding member but opted out in 2019. The CEO of NITI Aayog has recently suggested that India should reconsider joining the agreement. Here's a review of India's decision, the implications of rejoining, and the way forward:

Reasons for India Withdrawing from RCEP:

1. **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** Indian companies faced challenges in competing within RCEP markets due to NTBs, which limited their market access.
2. **High Tariff Reductions:** India was required to reduce tariffs on up to 70% of goods from China, Australia, and New Zealand, and 90% from Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN countries. This could lead to cheaper imports, harming local businesses, particularly in sectors like agriculture and manufacturing.
3. **Trade Deficit with RCEP Countries:** India had a growing trade deficit with RCEP members, particularly with China, ASEAN, South Korea, and Japan. Between 2007-09 and 2020-22, this deficit rose significantly, which raised concerns about further exacerbation.
4. **China Factor:** The trade-distorting practices of China, including subsidies and state control, created an unlevel playing field. Furthermore, India was concerned about inadequate market access, especially with China.
5. **Lack of Safeguard Mechanisms:** India wanted an auto-trigger mechanism to protect itself from an unexpected influx of imports, but RCEP did not include such safeguards.
6. **Ratchet Obligations:** India wanted flexibility in increasing tariffs to safeguard its national interests, but RCEP's ratchet obligations would have prevented this.
7. **Data Localisation and Digital Trade:** India advocated for stronger provisions on data protection and digital trade. The agreement's limited focus on services, IT, and skilled labor mobility was a significant concern.
8. **Existing Bilateral FTAs:** India already had free trade agreements with many RCEP members, making the regional deal redundant in some respects. These bilateral agreements better addressed India's specific trade priorities.
9. **Concerns in Domestic Sectors:** India feared that sectors like plantation, rubber, dairy, and agriculture would suffer due to cheaper imports from countries like Vietnam, New Zealand, and Australia.

Potential Costs of India Not Joining RCEP:

1. **China's Economic Leverage:** India's absence strengthens China's position in the region, increasing its influence in economic affairs and shifting regional alliances in its favor.
2. **Impact on Bilateral Trade:** RCEP members may prioritize intra-bloc trade, limiting India's access to the vast market of over 2 billion people. India's absence could hamper its trade potential.
3. **Challenges to Indo-Pacific Cooperation:** The absence of India in RCEP could weaken trilateral partnerships like the Australia-India-Japan group and initiatives like the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI), which India is part of.
4. **Manufacturing Ambitions:** India's goal to become a manufacturing hub may be hindered by its exclusion from RCEP, limiting access to a vital trade bloc.
5. **Setback to Act East Policy:** India's economic presence in the Asia-Pacific would be diminished, complicating efforts to enhance diplomatic and economic ties under the Act East policy.

The Way Forward:

1. **Tax and Industry Rationalisation:** India needs to align its tax policies with global standards to improve the competitiveness of its industries, particularly MSMEs, and make them more robust in the international market.
2. **Strengthening Domestic Industries:** A focus on domestic industry growth, especially through the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, will help make sectors like manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and digital trade more competitive.
3. **Trade Negotiations with the EU:** India should prioritize negotiations with the European Union, its second-largest export destination, to secure better trade terms on labor, environment, and investor protection standards.
4. **Leveraging the 'China Plus One' Strategy:** India can capitalize on the 'China Plus One' strategy by attracting investments and businesses looking to diversify away from China.
5. **Reconsidering RCEP Membership:** While RCEP poses challenges, it can offer access to global markets, economic growth, and integration into global supply chains. Given the long-term benefits, India should reconsider its position on RCEP membership.

Conclusion: India's decision to withdraw from RCEP was driven by genuine concerns about trade imbalances, domestic sector protection, and inadequate provisions for services and digital trade. However, its absence from the pact may lead to diminished regional influence, especially as China consolidates its economic power. India must strengthen its domestic industries and explore alternative trade strategies like bilateral agreements and regional cooperation. At the same time, reconsidering RCEP membership could open doors to global markets and economic opportunities, positioning India for long-term growth.

India-CARICOM Summit 2024

During his historic visit to Guyana for the second India-CARICOM Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed seven key pillars aimed at strengthening ties between India and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Seven Pillars of India-CARICOM Relations:
1. **Capacity Building:**
   - Proposal to establish a forensic centre for the CARICOM region.
   - Suggestion to create a training portal like India's iGOT Karmayogi for continuous development in fields like technology, law, administration, and education for civil servants.
2. **Agriculture and Food Security:**
   - Emphasis on collaboration to enhance agricultural practices and ensure food security in CARICOM nations.
3. **Renewable Energy and Climate Change:**
   - Focus on renewable energy projects and climate change mitigation, with a $150 million credit line already announced for renewable energy initiatives.
4. **Innovation, Technology, and Trade:**
   - Strengthening technological collaboration and trade relationships.
   - Proposal for an online portal to connect the private sectors of India and CARICOM nations.
   - $1 million grant announced in 2019 for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the region.
5. **Cricket and Culture:**
   - Promoting cricket as a cultural bridge.
   - Preservation and sharing of cultural heritage between India and CARICOM nations.
6. **Ocean Economy:**
   - Exploring sustainable development opportunities within the blue economy.
7. **Medicine and Healthcare:**
   - Strengthening healthcare systems and addressing public health challenges in the region.

India Joins ARIN-AP Steering Committee

India, represented by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED), has officially joined the Asset Recovery Interagency Network-Asia Pacific (ARIN-AP) Steering Committee. This marks a significant step in strengthening India's involvement in international efforts to combat criminal activity and recover illicit assets across the Asia-Pacific region.

India's Role in ARIN-AP:

- Future Presidency and Hosting:
  - India will assume the ARIN-AP presidency in 2026 and will host the Annual General Meeting (AGM), providing a platform to showcase its leadership in asset recovery efforts.
  - This leadership role underscores India's growing influence in international law enforcement and criminal justice cooperation.

About ARIN-AP:

- Purpose and Objectives:
  - ARIN-AP is focused on tracking, freezing, and confiscating assets related to criminal activities in the Asia-Pacific region.
  - It is part of the broader CARIN (Camden Asset Recovery Interagency Network), which includes over 100 jurisdictions worldwide, all dedicated to asset recovery.
  - ARIN-AP's core mission is to prioritize the recovery of assets derived from all types of crime and align its efforts with international commitments.
  - ARIN-AP aims to establish itself as a global center of expertise in asset recovery, promoting best practices and knowledge sharing.
- Collaboration and Training:
  - ARIN-AP promotes partnerships with organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to enhance its asset recovery efforts.
  - The network also fosters collaboration with the private sector, ensuring a comprehensive approach to asset tracing and confiscation.
- Membership:
  - ARIN-AP consists of 28 member jurisdictions and 9 observers, all collaborating through informal information-sharing channels to track and recover criminal assets across borders.

About CARIN (Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network):
- **Overview:** CARIN is an informal network of law enforcement and judicial practitioners who specialize in asset tracing, freezing, seizure, and confiscation.
- It supports cross-border collaboration among agencies to prevent criminals from profiting from illicit activities.

Membership: CARIN includes 61 jurisdictions, including 27 EU member states and 13 international organizations. It connects with seven regional ARIN networks around the world, facilitating global cooperation in asset recovery efforts.

- **Significance for India:** Joining ARIN-AP and assuming leadership in 2026 strengthens India's role in global efforts to combat financial crime and money laundering. It also highlights India's commitment to international law enforcement collaboration and asset recovery, positioning the country as a key player in the global fight against crime.

Bad Bank in India

The Bad Bank concept in India has been introduced to address the critical issue of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs), which have been a significant challenge for the banking sector. Recently, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized the importance of banks utilizing the Bad Bank to resolve distressed assets effectively.

Bad Bank

A bad bank is set up with the purpose of buying the other bank's bad loans at the market price with the significant unsuccessful assets.

About Bad Bank:

A Bad Bank is a specialized Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) that purchases Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) from commercial banks and restructures them to improve recovery. Unlike traditional banks, it does not engage in lending or deposit-taking but focuses solely on cleaning up banks' balance sheets.
- **Function:** The Bad Bank buys bad loans at a value below their book value and works on recovery efforts to maximize returns.

Advantages of Bad Banks:

1. **Centralized Management of NPAs:**
   - Provides a streamlined process for managing distressed assets across multiple banks, improving efficiency in resolving bad loans.
2. **Capital Relief for Banks:**
   - By transferring NPAs to the Bad Bank, commercial banks can free up capital held as provisions against bad loans.
   - This allows banks to increase lending to creditworthy borrowers, stimulating economic growth.
3. **Stabilization of the Financial System:**
   - A Bad Bank helps restore the financial health of banks, increasing confidence in the banking system and stabilizing the overall economy.

National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL)
   - **Establishment:** NARCL was proposed in the Economic Survey of 2016 and officially launched in 2021 as India's first Bad Bank.
   - **Objective:** To cleanse the financial system of distressed loans and stabilize the banking sector to foster a healthier economic environment.

Key Roles of NARCL:
   - Purchasing bad loans from commercial banks.
   - Managing and recovering value from distressed assets.
   - Payment Mechanism:
   - 15% of the loan value is paid in cash, and the remaining 85% is paid through government-backed security receipts.

Ownership Structure:
   - 51% stake is held by state-owned banks, and 49% is held by private banks.
   - Collaboration with IDRCL:
   - NARCL, alongside the Government of India, co-created IDRCL to resolve bad loans.

India Debt Resolution Company Ltd. (IDRCL)
   - **Objective:** IDRCL is responsible for unlocking the value in large corporate distress assets (NPAs) within India's banking and financial system.
   - **Ownership Structure:** It is owned by 14 of India's largest private and public sector banks:
   - 51% stake held by private banks.
   - 49% stake held by public sector banks.

Key Functions:

- IDRCL focuses on resolving and selling distressed assets that have been acquired by NARCL.
- It collaborates with NARCL to sell the stressed assets in the market.
- Dual-Entity Approach:
- NARCL focuses on acquiring bad loans from banks.
- IDRCL works on resolving and selling these distressed assets.
- This partnership ensures efficient handling and resolution of stressed assets, allowing banks to concentrate on their core business activities like deposit mobilization and lending.

Conclusion

- The introduction of the Bad Bank through NARCL and IDRCL provides a systematic approach to tackle the growing issue of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in India's banking sector. The collaboration between public and private sector banks ensures a comprehensive and effective resolution of distressed assets, leading to improved financial stability and growth for the economy.

Merging Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

The Indian government has proposed merging Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) to reduce their total number from 43 to 28 as part of a consolidation plan aimed at improving their efficiency and financial viability. This move aligns with the government's vision of 'One State-One RRB.'

Key Highlights of the News:

- Current Status: States such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, and West Bengal currently have more than one RRB.
- Goal: The merger aims to streamline RRB operations by reducing redundancies and improving overall efficiency.

About the Consolidation of RRBs:

- Genesis of Consolidation:
  - Consolidation efforts began following the recommendations of the Dr. Vyas Committee (2001).
  - The process was initiated in 2004-05, reducing RRBs from 196 to 43 by 2020-21 across three phases.

- **Fourth Phase of Consolidation:**
  - The ongoing phase aims to reduce the number of RRBs further to 28.
  - Significance:
    - Reduces overhead expenses.
    - Promotes technology adoption in banking.
    - Enhances the capital base and operational scope, enabling greater exposure to rural credit markets.

About Regional Rural Banks (RRBs):
- **Establishment:**
  - RRBs were set up in 1975 based on recommendations by the Narasimhan Working Group (1975).
  - The initiative was formalized through the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976.
  - The first RRB, Prathama Grameen Bank, was established on October 2, 1975.
- **Objective:**
  - To provide financial support for rural development, especially to small and marginal farmers, agricultural laborers, and rural entrepreneurs.
- **Operational Scope:**
  - While focused on rural areas, RRBs can open branches in urban areas when necessary.
- **Shareholding Structure:**
  - Government of India: 50%
  - State Government: 15%
  - Sponsor Bank: 35%
- **Regulation:**
  - RRBs are classified as Scheduled Commercial Banks and are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
  - Their operations are supervised by NABARD.
- **Priority Sector Lending (PSL):**
  - RRBs are required to allocate 75% of their total outstanding advances to PSL, in contrast to 40% for other Scheduled Commercial Banks.

Dr. Vyas Committee (2001):
- **Purpose:**
  - To examine the role and relevance of RRBs in the rural credit system.
  - To suggest measures for improving their viability and sustainability.
- **Key Recommendations:**
  - Consolidate RRBs to achieve economies of scale.
  - Improve their financial health through operational efficiencies and capital restructuring.

Conclusion: The proposed merger of RRBs is a crucial step toward creating a more efficient and robust rural banking framework. By reducing overheads, adopting modern technologies, and strengthening the capital base, the government aims to enable RRBs to better serve rural communities and contribute to the growth of India's rural economy.

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

The Union Government has decided to enhance the scope of the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) by incorporating four new components: Hydroponics, Aquaponics, Vertical Farming, and Precision Agriculture. These advanced farming techniques aim to modernize horticultural practices and improve productivity.

About MIDH:

- **Launch:** Introduced in 2014-15, MIDH is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme designed to ensure the comprehensive growth of the horticulture sector in India.
- **Scope:**
  - Supports a wide variety of crops, including:
    - Fruits, vegetables, roots, tubers, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, and cocoa.
  - Encourages technical and administrative support for programs like the Saffron Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), and National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA).
- **Implementation:**
  - Operates under the umbrella of the Green Revolution - Krishonnati Yojana.
- **Funding Pattern:**
  - 60% contribution from the Government of India (GoI) and 40% from State Governments.
  - For North Eastern and Himalayan States, the funding ratio is 90:10.

New Components Under MIDH:

1. **Hydroponics:**
   - **Definition:** A soil-free method of growing plants where roots are immersed in water enriched with essential nutrients.
   - **Advantages:**
     - Reduces water usage.
     - Allows year-round cultivation in controlled environments.
2. **Aquaponics:**
   - **Definition:** A combination of hydroponics and aquaculture where plants, fish, and bacteria coexist in a symbiotic environment.
   - **Benefits:**
     - Sustainable nutrient recycling.
     - Produces both crops and fish.
3. **Precision Agriculture:**
   - **Definition:** A technology-driven approach to manage crops with data analysis at detailed levels, optimizing resources like water, fertilizer, and pesticides.
   - **Features:**
     - Use of sensors, drones, and satellite imagery.
     - Enhances productivity and minimizes waste.
4. **Vertical Farming:**
   - **Definition:** Growing crops in vertically stacked layers, often in controlled environments such as greenhouses or urban settings.
   - **Advantages:**
     - Maximizes space utilization.
     - Reduces dependence on arable land.

Significance of MIDH Enhancements:

- **Modernization:** Incorporating cutting-edge techniques like hydroponics and precision agriculture modernizes the horticulture sector.
- **Sustainability:** Encourages resource-efficient farming practices to combat challenges like limited arable land and water scarcity.
- **Economic Growth:** Boosts income for farmers through higher yields and quality produce.
- **Food Security:** Enhances productivity to meet the rising food demand in India.

The integration of these advanced techniques under MIDH reflects India's commitment to adopting innovative agricultural practices for a sustainable and prosperous horticulture sector.

New RBI Framework for Reclassifying FPI to FDI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued an operational framework detailing the process of reclassifying investments from Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) when specific thresholds are breached.

Key Highlights of the Framework

1. **Investment Limit for FPIs**
   - Under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), FPIs are allowed to hold up to 10% of a company's total paid-up equity capital.
   - Breaching this limit triggers mandatory reclassification of the investment as FDI.
2. **Options for FPIs Exceeding the 10% Limit**
   - FPIs must take action if they breach the threshold:
     - Divest the excess holdings, or
     - Reclassify the entire investment as FDI.
   - Compliance must occur within five days of trade settlement, as per RBI guidelines.
3. **Reclassification Conditions**
   - Once reclassified as FDI, the investment will remain categorised as FDI, even if the holdings fall below the 10% threshold later.
   - The FPI and its investor group are treated as a single entity during the reclassification process.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)

Aspect	Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)	Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)
Definition	Long-term investment with significant control or ownership in a company.	Short-term investment in financial assets like stocks and bonds.
Nature of Investment	Involves **physical assets**.	Involves **financial assets**.
Control	Provides **ownership and management control**, making it stable and long-lasting.	Does not involve control, focusing on passive investments.
Market	Made in the **primary market**.	Made in the **secondary market**.
Sector Restrictions	Subject to **sector-specific caps** and government approvals.	Fewer restrictions due to its passive nature.
Regulatory Body	**DPIIT** (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade).	**SEBI** (Securities and Exchange Board of India).
Debt Component	Non-debt creating.	Can be a mix of debt and equity instruments.

Significance of the Framework

1. **Regulatory Clarity:** Ensures seamless and clear transitions between FPI and FDI, avoiding potential regulatory disputes.
2. **Market Stability:** Encourages FPIs to monitor their holdings to avoid unintentional breaches.
3. **FDI Growth:** Supports the government's focus on attracting more stable, long-term investments.
4. **Streamlined Compliance:** Reduces the compliance burden for both FPIs and companies receiving the investment.

This framework aligns with India's strategy to balance capital flows and ensure stable, sustainable foreign investment.

29th U.N. Climate Change Conference (COP29)

The 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) achieved critical milestones in global climate action but also highlighted significant challenges. Below is a summary of the key outcomes, challenges, and the way forward.

Location: Baku, Azerbaijan

Lifestyle and Occupation

- **Traditional Livelihood:** The Chenchus have historically relied on hunting and gathering for their sustenance rather than agricultural activities.
- **Agriculture:** They cultivate tobacco, maize, and millet; however, their diet and survival are largely dependent on natural resources.

Key Outcomes of COP29

1. **Global Carbon Market**
   - Agreement on international carbon market standards under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
   - Offers two pathways for trading carbon offsets, enabling cooperation to achieve emission reduction targets.
   - Potential cost savings of up to $250 billion annually through resource-sharing across borders.
2. **Loss and Damage Fund**
   - Progress in operationalizing the fund to assist countries vulnerable to climate impacts.
   - Challenges remain in equitable fund distribution and governance.
3. **Global Energy Storage and Grid Pledge**
   - Commitments to deploy 1,500 GW of energy storage globally by 2030 to support renewable energy systems.
4. **COP Hydrogen Declaration**
   - Pledges to:
     - Scale up renewable and low-carbon hydrogen production.
     - Decarbonize existing hydrogen production from fossil fuels.
5. **Hydro4NetZero-LAC Initiative**
   - Focuses on modernizing sustainable hydropower infrastructure in Latin America and the Caribbean.
6. **Baku Harmoniya Climate Initiative**
   - Collaboration with FAO to tackle climate change in agriculture through adaptation and mitigation strategies.
7. **Global Energy Efficiency Alliance**
   - Launched by the UAE to promote energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions globally.
8. **Strengthening NDCs**
   - Countries encouraged to enhance their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2025.
9. **Reducing Methane from Organic Waste Declaration**
   - Targets methane reduction in the organic waste sector, aligned with the Global Methane Pledge.
   - India has not signed the declaration.

Challenges at COP29

1. **Climate Finance Deadlock**
   - Developed countries proposed only $250 billion by 2035 as the New Collective Quantified Goal for Climate Finance (NCQG), far below the estimated $700 billion needed annually by 2030.
2. **Operationalizing the Loss and Damage Fund**
   - Complex issues of governance, equitable fund allocation, and effective monitoring persist.
3. **Implementation of Agreements**
   - Many past commitments remain unmet, posing risks to the credibility of new agreements.
4. **Political and Economic Hurdles**
   - Resistance due to national interests, economic constraints, and geopolitical conflicts, such as the Ukraine war, detracts from long-term climate goals.
5. **Monitoring and Accountability**
   - Need for robust mechanisms to track progress and avoid greenwashing.
6. **Just Transition**
   - Transitioning workers and communities from high-carbon to low-carbon industries remains a major challenge.

Way Forward

1. **Global Cooperation and Diplomacy**
   - Strengthen collaborative action, overcome geopolitical tensions, and prioritize climate finance mobilization.
2. **Enhanced Technology Transfer**
   - Scale up initiatives like the International Solar Alliance to facilitate energy transitions in developing countries.
3. **Operationalizing the Loss and Damage Fund**
   - Establish clear criteria for fund allocation and develop efficient disbursement mechanisms.
4. **Strengthening NDCs**
   - Encourage ambitious targets and update commitments by 2025.
5. **Ensuring a Just Transition**
   - Develop policies for reskilling workers and supporting communities dependent on carbon-intensive industries.

Conclusion

COP29 marked significant progress in advancing climate action through agreements on carbon markets, renewable energy targets, and loss and damage support. However, challenges in financing, governance, and implementation underscore the need for stronger global cooperation and accountability mechanisms to meet long-term climate objectives.

BASIC Nations' Request at COP29

The BASIC countries (Brazil, India, South Africa, and China) have raised concerns regarding CBAM and requested discussions on "restrictive trade measures" under the UNFCCC framework.

EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism simplified illustration
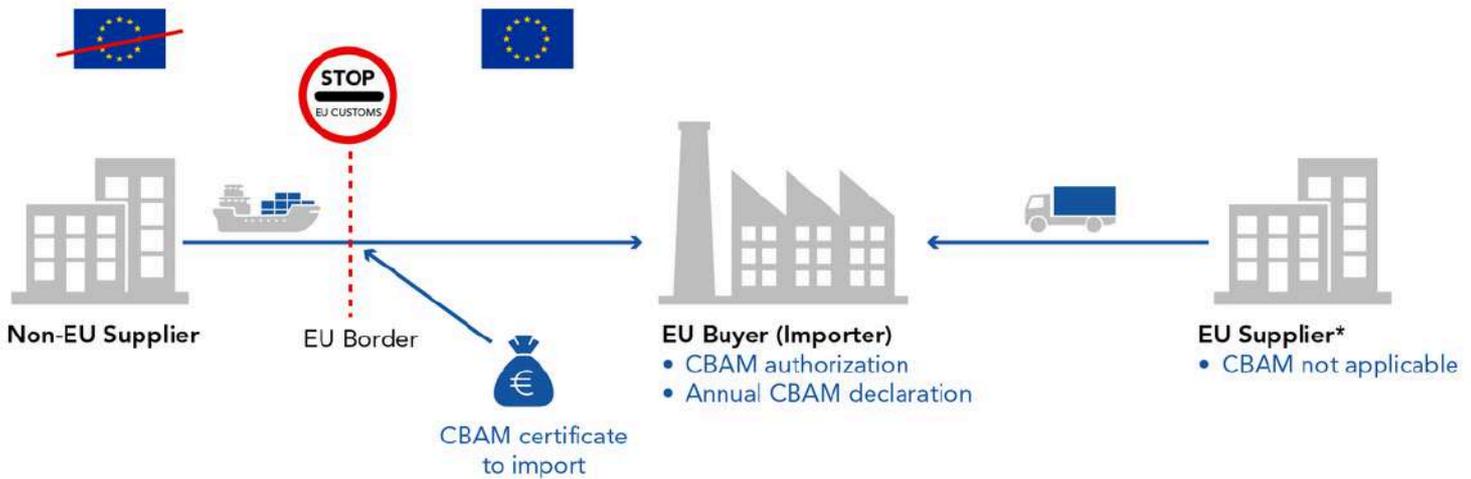
* Including goods originating from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland
Source: The Conference Board, 2022

About Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

Aspect	Details
Introduced By	European Union (EU) in 2023.
Purpose	- Prevent "carbon leakage," where industries shift to regions with weaker environmental laws. - Promote cleaner global production practices.
Target Goods	Taxes on imports like steel, cement, aluminum, and energy-intensive goods.
Framework	Part of the EU's "Fit for 55 in 2030" package, aimed at a 55% reduction in GHG emissions (compared to 1990 levels).
Mechanism	Importers must surrender CBAM certificates annually, reflecting the carbon cost based on declared emissions.
Global Impact	Encourages adoption of cleaner technologies and integrates carbon costs into global supply chains.

Issues for Developing Nations

1. **Export Competitiveness:**
2. Developing countries fear CBAM will reduce their export competitiveness as their industries are less equipped with green technologies.
3. **Differentiated Responsibilities:**
4. CBAM overlooks the Paris Agreement principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), placing undue burden on developing nations.
5. **Economic Disadvantage:**
6. Developed countries with cleaner technologies gain a competitive edge, further marginalizing exporters from developing economies.
7. **Violation of International Agreements:**
8. CBAM may conflict with global trade norms and the Paris Agreement's objective to protect developing nations from adverse socio-economic impacts.

Wider Implications of Climate-Related Trade Measures

1. **Protectionism:**
2. Measures like CBAM could lead to broader trade restrictions, spurring trends like nearshoring (relocating production to nearby countries) and reshoring (bringing production back home).
3. **Innovation:**
4. Positively, CBAM might drive green technology advancements and set higher global environmental standards.
5. **Trade Disruptions:**
6. Coupled with climate-induced disasters, CBAM risks intensifying uncertainties in international trade.
7. **Global Spillover:**
8. Other countries (e.g., Canada, UK) considering CBAM-like measures could further impact global trade dynamics.

About the BASIC Group

- Established: November 28, 2009.
- Members: Brazil, South Africa, India, and China.
- Objective: Advocate for developed countries to take the lead in emission reductions and provide financial support to developing nations during climate negotiations.

Way Forward for Addressing CBAM Concerns

1. **Fairer Frameworks:**
2. Ensure mechanisms like CBAM respect CBDR principles to protect the socio-economic interests of developing countries.
3. **Global Dialogue:**
4. Platforms like COP can be used to negotiate fairer trade policies and sustainable development pathways.
5. **Support for Green Transitions:**
6. Enhance technology transfers and financial assistance to help developing nations adopt cleaner production practices.

By facilitating equitable solutions, such discussions can ensure that global climate action does not disproportionately burden developing economies.

Global Energy Efficiency Alliance Launch:

Launch: The UAE introduced the Global Energy Efficiency Alliance during COP29 in Azerbaijan.

Key Highlights
Objective:
To double annual global energy efficiency rates by 2030 and significantly reduce carbon emissions.
Vision:
The UAE aims to lead the alliance by:
- Sharing expertise in energy efficiency.
- Facilitating knowledge transfer.
- Building effective public-private partnerships.

Key Actions
1. Knowledge Sharing:
2. Promote collaboration to standardize policies and encourage investments in energy efficiency projects.
3. Capacity Building:
4. Support nations in adopting energy-efficient technologies and best practices.
5. Collective Participation:
6. Engage governments, multilateral organizations, and private sector stakeholders to align policies and investments with sustainability goals.

Special Focus on Africa
- Goal:
- Support African countries in their sustainable development journey.
- Actions:
  - Provide financing models tailored to local needs.
  - Share technological solutions to enhance energy efficiency in the region.

This alliance underscores the UAE's commitment to leading global efforts in energy sustainability while prioritizing equitable solutions for developing regions like Africa.

Conference of Parties (COP-16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The 16th COP to the CBD was held in Cali, Colombia, and concluded in November 2024, marking significant advancements in global biodiversity efforts.

Key Highlights of COP-16

1. Continued Focus on Biodiversity Conservation
- Built upon the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) (2022), which set 23 action-oriented targets for 2030, including:
  - The '30-by-30' Goal: Protecting 30% of land and water by 2030.

2. Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health
- Endorsed a plan integrating biodiversity conservation with public health objectives, focusing on:
  - Reducing disease transmission from animals to humans.
  - Lowering non-communicable diseases.
  - Fostering ecosystem health through a unified approach.

3. Digital Sequence Information (DSI) Agreement
- Debates centered on benefit-sharing from the commercial use of genetic resources.
- Outcome: A framework ensuring fair distribution of profits between utilizing countries and resource-origin communities.

4. Resource Mobilization and Financial Initiatives
- Highlighted a $200 billion annual funding requirement for biodiversity targets, with:
  - China contributing $200 million to the Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF) to support developing countries.
  - Creation of the Cali Fund for equitable profit-sharing from genetic data, with 50% directed to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

5. Synthetic Biology
- Introduced a capacity-building action plan for developing countries to:
  - Leverage synthetic biology technologies safely.
  - Promote innovation while safeguarding biodiversity.

6. Marine Biodiversity (EBSAs)
- Advanced processes to identify and protect Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs).

7. Indigenous Representation
- Established a subsidiary body involving Indigenous communities in biodiversity decision-making, recognizing their conservation contributions.

India's Contributions and Commitments

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)
- India unveiled its updated NBSAP (2024-2030), aligning with KMGBF targets.
- Major Goals:
  - Protection:
    - Pledged to protect 30% of terrestrial and marine areas by 2030, emphasizing biodiversity-rich zones.
  - Ecosystem Restoration:
    - Focused on restoring forests, wetlands, and sustainable management of coastal areas.
  - Threat Reduction:
    - Targeted invasive species, pollution, climate impacts, and land-use changes to minimize biodiversity loss.

Expenditure and Financial Requirements
- Announced a ₹81,664 crore budget (2025-2030) for biodiversity conservation, up from ₹32,207 crore (2018-2022).
- Urged $30 billion in international funding to meet biodiversity goals.

Global Implications of COP-16
- Strengthened commitments to biodiversity and climate-linked health goals.
- Accelerated efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and 2050 KMGBF targets, emphasizing equity and collaboration among nations.

56th Tiger Reserve of India

Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh has been declared India's 56th tiger reserve and the state's fourth tiger reserve, furthering conservation efforts under the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Project Tiger.

About Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve

- **Location:**
  - Situated in northern Chhattisgarh, bordering Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- **Landscape:**
  - Lies in the Chota Nagpur Plateau and partly in the Baghelkhand Plateau.
- **Size:**
  - Third-largest tiger reserve in India, following:
    i. Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam (Andhra Pradesh).
    ii. Manas (Assam).
- **Connectivity:**
  - Connected to:
    - Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh) in the west.
    - Palamau Tiger Reserve (Jharkhand) in the east.
- **Rivers:**
  - Origin point for major rivers like Hasdeo, Gopad, and Baranga.
  - Catchment area for rivers Neur, Bijadhur, Banas, and Rehand.
- **Flora:**
  - Sub-tropical and deciduous forests with a dominance of Sal (Sakhua) trees.

About National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- **Established:**
  - 2006, under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Role:**
  - Oversees tiger conservation efforts across India.
- **Composition:**
  - Chairperson: Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
  - Vice-Chairperson: Minister of State for MoEFCC.
  - Members:
    - Three Members of Parliament.
    - MoEFCC Secretary and other officials.

Key Facts about Tiger Reserves in India

- **Total Tiger Reserves: 56**
- **State with Most Tiger Reserves:**
  - Madhya Pradesh (11 tiger reserves).
- **Tiger Reserve with Highest Number of Tigers:**
  - Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand (252 tigers).
- **States with Most Tigers (2022 Census):**
  - Madhya Pradesh: 785 tigers | Karnataka: 563 tigers | Uttarakhand: 560 tigers Maharashtra: 444 tigers.

Stage-IV of GRAP in Delhi

An outbreak of Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) has recently resulted in the death of six people in Rwanda.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has imposed Stage-IV restrictions of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) as Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) surpasses 450, indicating "Severe+" pollution levels.

About the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

GRAP is an emergency response plan designed to tackle air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region through a tiered approach based on AQI levels.

Key Details:

- Approval:
    - Approved by the Supreme Court of India in 2016 (M.C. Mehta v. Union of India).
    - Notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in 2017.
- Implementation Authority:
    - Managed by the CAQM for NCR and adjoining areas.
    - Decisions are informed by forecasts from:
        - India Meteorological Department (IMD).
        - Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).

Stage-IV Specific Measures:

When AQI exceeds 450:

- Ban on Non-Essential Vehicles:
    - No entry of diesel trucks (except those carrying essential goods).
- Shutting Down Industries:
    - Non-compliant industries must halt operations.
- Suspension of Construction:
    - All construction and demolition activities are prohibited.
- Educational and Office Guidelines:
    - Encourage work-from-home arrangements.
    - Schools may suspend outdoor activities.

Objective:

To mitigate severe pollution levels, safeguard public health, and address the environmental crisis in Delhi-NCR.

Stage	AQI Range	Description	Examples of Measures
Stage I	201-300	Poor	- Stop construction of public projects (e.g., highways).
Stage II	301-400	Very Poor	- Restrict the use of diesel generators.
Stage III	401-450	Severe	- Halt construction activities entirely.
Stage IV	> 450	Severe +	- Ban non-essential trucks.
			- Shut down industries that do not use cleaner fuels.

Scientists Discover The Largest Coral Colony on Earth

Researchers have recently discovered the world's largest coral colony in the Solomon Islands, located in the southwest Pacific Ocean.

Key Highlights About the Largest Coral Colony

- **Size and Age:**
  - Measures 112 feet by 105 feet, rising 16 feet from the ocean floor and lying at a depth of 42 feet.
  - Estimated to be around 300 to 500 years old.
- **Type of Coral:**
  - Identified as Pavona clavus (shoulder blade coral).
- **Unique Characteristics:**
  - The colony consists of nearly a billion individual coral polyps working together as a single organism.
  - Described as resembling an "underwater cathedral," evoking a sense of awe and a connection to the past.

About Corals

- **Nature and Structure:**
  - Corals are sessile animals (fixed to the ocean floor) but resemble colorful plants.
  - Composed of polyps, which secrete hard calcium carbonate skeletons.
- **Polyps' Features:**
  - Stomach: A single opening serving as both mouth and anus.
  - Tentacles: Used for defense, capturing prey, and clearing debris.
- **Symbiotic Relationship with Zooxanthellae:**
  - Zooxanthellae (Algae) provide food and nutrients to corals through photosynthesis.
  - Corals give shelter and nutrients to the algae, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.
  - This symbiotic relationship is crucial for the vibrant colors of corals and their survival, making them dependent on favorable environmental conditions.

What is a Coral Reef?

A coral reef is a complex underwater ecosystem primarily formed by coral polyps. These polyps secrete calcium carbonate skeletons, which accumulate over time to create intricate structures that provide habitat and support to a wide variety of marine life.

About the Solomon Islands

- **Location:** Located in Melanesia, part of Oceania, to the east of Papua New Guinea in the southwest Pacific Ocean.
- **Geography:** Comprises two parallel chains of volcanic islands and small coral atolls.
- **Climate:** Tropical with warm and humid conditions, rarely experiencing extreme temperatures due to cooling winds from surrounding seas.

ANRF Launched PAIR Programme

The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) has launched the Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR) Programme to bolster research and innovation capabilities in Indian universities with limited research infrastructure.

ANRF's Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR) Program

About Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)
- **Established By:** The ANRF Act 2023.
- **Recommended by:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- **Apex Body for:** Providing strategic direction for scientific research in India.
- **Aim:** To promote and nurture R&D activities and foster a culture of research and innovation in Indian universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.
- **Integration:** The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), established in 2008, is now subsumed under the ANRF.
- **Governing Board:**
  - **Headed by:** The Prime Minister of India.
  - **Vice Presidents:** The Union Ministers for Science and Technology and Education.

About the Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR) Programme
- **Objective:** To enhance research and innovation capabilities in Indian universities with limited research infrastructure.
- This is achieved through a mentorship-driven hub-and-spoke model, which involves collaborations between high-ranking institutions (hubs) and emerging institutions (spokes).
- **Ministry:** Under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- **Implementing Body:** Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), established under the ANRF Act 2023.

Concept of PAIR (Hub and Spoke Model)
- Hub Institutions:
  - Initially, these will include institutions in the top 25 NIRF overall ranking and Institutions of National Importance in the top 50 NIRF overall ranking.
  - They will act as mentors, providing access to resources and expertise.
- Spoke Institutions:
  - These include Central and State Public Universities ranked in the top 200 NIRF Overall and top 100 NIRF University/State Public University Rankings.
  - Eligibility conditions will be expanded to include other universities and institutions in subsequent phases.

Budget Structure
- Maximum Funding per Network: ₹100 crore.
- 30% of the funding will be allocated to hub institutions.
- 70% will be allocated to spoke institutions.
- Private institutions acting as hubs must contribute 25% of their allocated budget.

RNA Editing Breakthrough

Wave Life Sciences, a Massachusetts-based biotech company, has recently achieved a major milestone by becoming the first to treat a genetic disorder through RNA editing at the clinical level.

About RNA Editing
- RNA and Protein Synthesis:
  - Cells produce messenger RNA (mRNA) from DNA instructions, which is then used to synthesize proteins.
  - Errors in mRNA can result in faulty proteins that cause various genetic disorders.
- Role of ADAR Enzyme:
  - ADAR (Adenosine Deaminase Acting on RNA) converts adenosine in mRNA to inosine, which mimics guanosine.
  - This change can help correct mutations and assist in producing functional proteins.
- Guide RNA (gRNA):
  - gRNA directs the ADAR enzyme to specific sites on mRNA, allowing for targeted corrections of mutations.
  - This method holds potential for treating genetic conditions caused by single-point mutations.

Types of RNA Modifications
There are three main types of RNA modifications:
- Addition: Inserting a nucleotide into the sequence.
- Deletion: Removing a nucleotide from the sequence.
- Substitution: Replacing one nucleotide with another.

Clinical Application in Treating Genetic Disorders

- **WVE-006 Therapy:**
  - Wave Life Sciences developed WVE-006 to treat α-1 antitrypsin deficiency (AATD), a condition leading to liver and lung issues.
  - The therapy uses gRNA to guide ADAR enzymes to correct specific single-point mutations in the SERPINA1 gene.
- **Exploring Broader Applications:**
  - The company is also investigating RNA editing for treating other genetic disorders, including Huntington's disease, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, and certain forms of obesity, all of which involve single-point mutations.
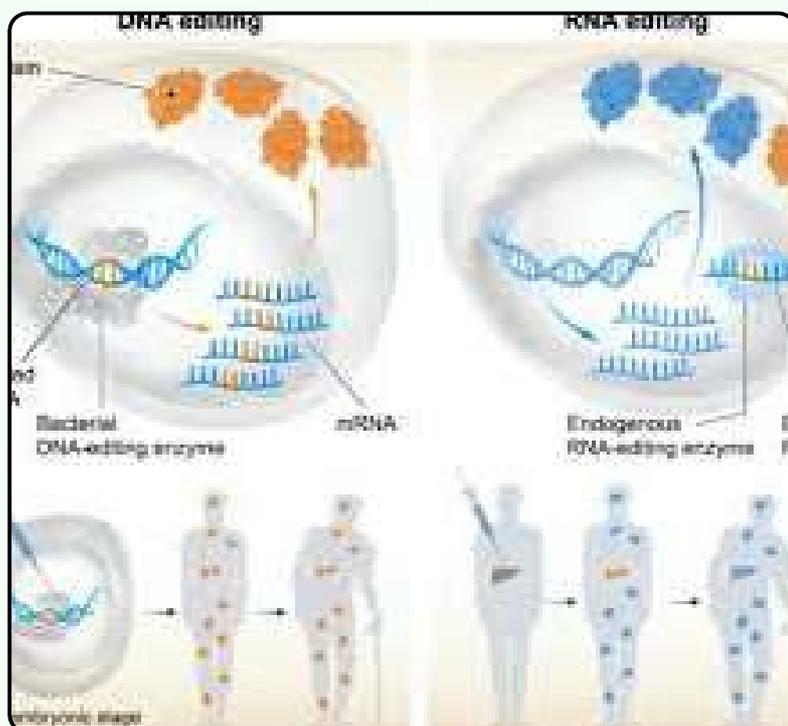
Aspect	DNA Editing	RNA Editing
Target Molecule	DNA	RNA
Structure	Usually double-stranded; some viruses have single-stranded DNA	Mostly single-stranded; some retroviruses have double-stranded RNA
Sugar Component	Deoxyribose	Ribose
Nucleotide Bases	Adenine (A), Guanine (G), Cytosine (C), Thymine (T)	Adenine (A), Guanine (G), Cytosine (C), Uracil (U)
Base Pairing Rules	A pairs with T, G pairs with C	A pairs with U, G pairs with C
Permanency of Edits	Permanent changes in the DNA sequence	Temporary changes in mRNA sequence; effects can fade over time
Genetic Impact	Alters the individual's genome; changes can be passed onto future generations	Alters mRNA temporarily; does not change the genome, thus effects are not heritable
Use of Enzymes	Uses proteins from certain bacteria (e.g., Cas9 in CRISPR) for DNA cutting	Uses **ADAR enzymes** that convert adenosine (A) to inosine (I), mimicking guanosine (G)
Applications	Used in treating inherited diseases, gene therapy, and modifying agricultural species	Potential treatment for diseases caused by single-point mutations (e.g., Huntington's, liver cancer)

India's First Direct-to-Device (D2D) Satellite Connectivity

BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited), the state-owned telecom provider, has launched India's first direct-to-device satellite internet service, aimed at providing broadband connectivity to remote areas.

About Direct-to-Device Satellite Technology
- **Connectivity Solution:**
  - Direct-to-device satellite technology enables devices to communicate directly with satellites in orbit, bypassing traditional ground-based cellular towers.
  - It provides connectivity in regions where cellular or Wi-Fi networks are unavailable, making it ideal for remote or underserved areas.

How It Works
- **Satellite Signal Transmission:**
  - Devices on the ground receive signals directly from satellites positioned in orbit, which are typically geostationary satellites or low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites.
- **Non-Terrestrial Network (NTN):**
  - NTN technology enables seamless two-way communication between devices and satellites, ensuring uninterrupted connectivity.
- **Geostationary Satellites:**
  - Positioned at an altitude of 36,000 km, geostationary satellites provide wide coverage and reliable connections over large areas.

Global Examples of Direct-to-Device Satellite Technology
- **SpaceX's Starlink:**
  - Aims to offer global satellite internet coverage, including capabilities for direct-to-cell communications.
- **AST SpaceMobile:**
  - Developing a satellite-based cellular network for direct connection to standard mobile phones.
- **Lynk Global:**
  - Focuses on direct-to-phone satellite communication, primarily for emergency and remote areas.
- **Constellation Network:**
  - Building a satellite-based network for IoT device connectivity, enhancing communication for connected devices in hard-to-reach locations.

Centenary Celebrations of Iconic Bose-Einstein Statistics

The Science and Technology Minister virtually inaugurated the Centenary Celebrations of the Bose-Einstein Statistics (B-E) postulation at the S.N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences.
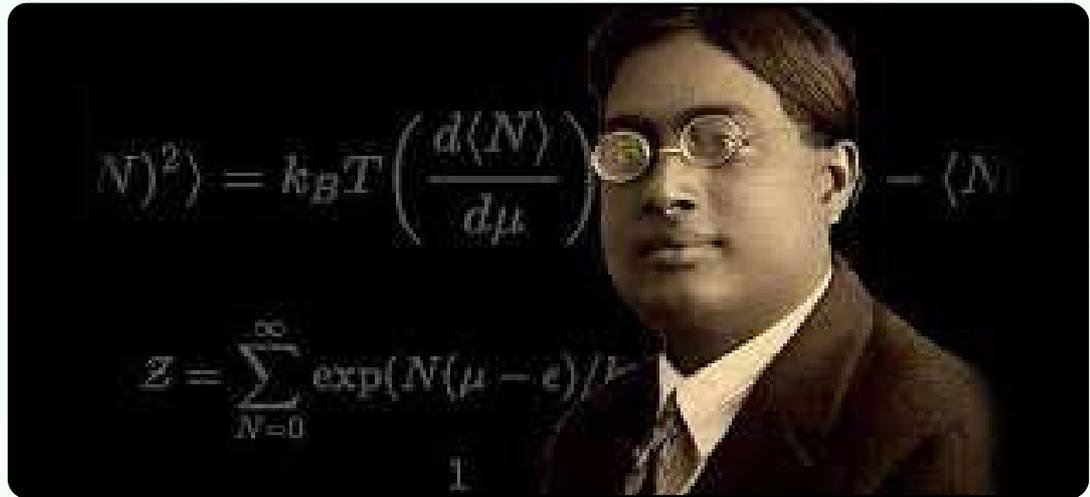
About Bose-Einstein (B–E) Statistics

- Bose-Einstein Statistics:
  - B-E statistics describe how non-interacting, indistinguishable particles are distributed across energy states when they are in thermal equilibrium.
  - In 1924, Satyendra Nath Bose proposed this approach to particle behavior, later developed in collaboration with Albert Einstein.
- Bosons:
  - Particles that follow Bose-Einstein statistics are called bosons, named after Satyendra Nath Bose.
  - Bosons have integer spin values (0, 1, 2, etc.) and include particles such as photons, gluons, and W and Z bosons.

Significance of B-E Statistics

- Lasers and Superconductivity:
  - Bose-Einstein statistics play a central role in the operation of lasers (Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation) and superconductivity.
- Bose-Einstein Condensate (BEC):
  - BEC is a unique state of matter formed near absolute zero (-273.15°C or 0 Kelvin).
  - When bosons are cooled to these extremely low temperatures, they form this state, which exhibits properties unlike the traditional solid, liquid, gas, and plasma states.
- State of Matter:
  - Along with the four fundamental states of matter (solid, liquid, gas, plasma), other states like Bose-Einstein condensates and time crystals have been discovered.
- Application in Particle Physics:
  - Bose-Einstein statistics are fundamental to describing the behavior of certain particles in the Standard Model of Particle Physics.
  - The Standard Model explains the fundamental particles and their interactions, excluding gravity.

First Science Result from Aditya L1 Mission

The first science result from the Aditya-L1 mission has been released, highlighting significant progress in understanding solar phenomena.

Key Findings
- Coronal Mass Ejection (CME):
  - Scientists used the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC) onboard Aditya-L1 to precisely estimate the onset time of a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) that erupted on the Sun on July 16.
  - The VELC is the primary payload of the Aditya-L1 spacecraft.
  - Its unique spectroscopic data allowed for the study of CMEs near the Sun's surface, a challenging task with visible-light observations alone.

About Aditya L1 Mission
- Launch Date: The mission was launched by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on September 2, 2023, from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- Mission Goal: Aditya-L1 is India's first dedicated scientific mission to study the Sun.
- Payload: The mission's primary payload, VELC, was developed by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIAP), Bengaluru.
- Current Orbit: On January 6, 2024, Aditya-L1 was successfully placed in a halo orbit around the Earth-Sun Lagrange point (L1).
- Mission Lifespan: The mission is designed to operate for five years, continuously observing and gathering data on solar phenomena.

What is a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME)?
- Definition: A CME is a massive release of plasma and magnetic field from the Sun's corona into space.
- Cause: CMEs are triggered by the sudden reconfiguration of the Sun's magnetic fields, resulting in an explosive release of energy.
- Frequency: CMEs are more common during the peak of the Sun's 11-year solar cycle.
- Characteristics: CMEs consist of billions of tons of charged particles (plasma) that travel at speeds ranging from hundreds to thousands of kilometers per second.

First 'Black Hole Triple System' Discovered By Astronomers

Astronomers have made a groundbreaking discovery of a black hole triple system, marking a significant milestone in the study of black holes and their formation.

About V404 Cygni

- **Location:** V404 Cygni is located 7,800 light-years away from Earth, in the Cygnus constellation.
- **Mass and Composition:** The black hole has a mass approximately nine times that of our Sun.
- **Triple System:** For the first time, astronomers have identified a black hole gravitationally bound to two ordinary stars, creating a unique triple system.
  - **Close Companion Star:** The black hole is siphoning material from a close companion star, which is about 0.7 times the mass of the Sun. This star orbits the black hole every 6.5 days at a distance about one-seventh of the distance between the Earth and the Sun.
  - **Distant Companion Star:** Another star, 1.2 times the mass of the Sun, orbits the pair at a much greater distance, completing an orbit every 70,000 years.

New Hypothesis on Black Hole Formation

- **Traditional Formation:** Black holes are typically believed to form after the supernova explosion of a massive dying star, where the core collapses and outer layers are expelled.
- **New Hypothesis:** Researchers propose that some black holes may form through a gentler process called "direct collapse", which occurs without an explosive event.
  - **V404 Cygni Formation:** It is suggested that V404 Cygni likely formed through direct collapse or a failed supernova, where the star collapsed without an explosion.
  - **Failed Supernova Hypothesis:** This process may explain why the triple system survived. Without the violent explosion of a supernova, the system remained intact, preventing the destruction that might have broken apart other star systems.
  - **Direct Collapse Process:** In this scenario, the star collapses too quickly for a supernova to occur, resulting in an implosion that does not expel matter.

Implications of the Findings
- **Triple System Evolution:** This discovery supports the theory that many black hole binaries may actually form through triple systems, where one companion star eventually gets consumed by the black hole.
- **New Evidence:** This is the first direct evidence of black hole binary formation through triple evolution, potentially reshaping our understanding of how black hole systems evolve and form.

This finding opens up new avenues for exploring the dynamics of black hole systems and could alter theories about the formation and behavior of black holes in our universe.

Global TB Report 2024: Key Insights on Tuberculosis in India

India continues to face a significant tuberculosis (TB) burden, though there has been a slight improvement in case numbers and mortality rates as reported in the Global TB Report 2024 by the World Health Organization (WHO).
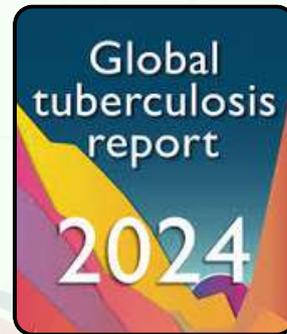
Key Findings from the Report
- **High Disease Burden:** India remains the country with the highest TB burden globally, accounting for 26% of the world's TB cases, which amounts to approximately 28 lakh cases in 2023.
- **Slight Decline in Cases and Deaths:**
  - The number of TB cases and related deaths saw a minor decrease in 2023.
  - Deaths dropped from 3.31 lakh in 2022 to 3.2 lakh in 2023.

Progress and Shortfalls in TB Elimination Targets
- **Targets Not Met:**
  - India's progress in reducing TB cases and deaths has not met WHO's End TB goals. From 2015 to 2023:
    - Cases reduced by 18% (target: 50%).
    - Deaths reduced by 24% (target: 75%).
- **2025 Elimination Goal:** India has set a national target to eliminate TB by 2025, ahead of the global goal. However, substantial challenges remain to meet this ambitious target.

Diagnosis and Treatment Coverage for TB
- **Improved Reporting:**
  - Reported TB cases in India increased to 25.1 lakh in 2023, indicating improvements in diagnosis.
- **Treatment Rates:**
  - India has successfully put 85% of diagnosed TB patients on treatment, which is a positive outcome, placing it among the top 30 countries with the highest TB burden.

Funding Gaps in TB Management

- **Global Funding Shortfall:** Global TB funding reached only $5.7 billion of the $22 billion target in 2023.
- **India's Reduced Funding:**
  - TB funding in India decreased from $432.6 million in 2019 to $302.8 million in 2023.
  - Domestic funding also dropped from $345.9 million to $253 million.
- **High Economic Impact:**
  - Nearly 20% of India's population faced catastrophic health costs due to TB, meaning these households spent over 20% of their income on TB-related expenses.
  - Comparatively, the rate of catastrophic costs is much higher in India than in countries like Thailand (1%) and Pakistan (5%).
  - Globally, 49% of TB-affected households faced catastrophic costs, well above the WHO target of zero.

About Tuberculosis (TB)

- **Causal Agent:** TB is caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis.
- **Prevention:** The BCG vaccine is used to prevent TB, especially in children.
- **Transmission:** TB is an airborne infection, primarily spread through close contact in crowded or poorly ventilated areas.
- **Symptoms of Active Lung TB:**
  - Persistent cough with sputum, sometimes containing blood
  - Chest pain
  - Weakness
  - Weight loss
  - Fever and night sweats

The report highlights both progress and significant challenges in addressing TB in India, underlining the need for continued efforts in diagnosis, treatment, and funding to meet elimination targets and reduce the economic burden on affected populations.

India's Equine Lab in Hisar Earns Global Recognition

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research-National Research Centre on Equines (ICAR-NRC Equine) in Hisar, Haryana has recently achieved World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Reference Laboratory status for Equine Piroplasmosis, marking a significant milestone in global veterinary research.

HISAR, (HARYANA)

राष्ट्रीय अश्व अनुसंधान केंद्र, हिसार

Key Highlights

- Equine Population in India: India is home to around 0.55 million equines (horses, ponies, donkeys, and mules), with the highest concentrations found in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Haryana, according to the 20th Livestock Census.

About Equine Piroplasmosis

- Cause: Equine Piroplasmosis is a tick-borne disease caused by protozoan parasites Babesia caballi and Theileria equi.
  - The disease has a seroprevalence rate of 15-25% across India.
- Affected Species: This disease poses a serious threat to horses, donkeys, mules, and zebras.
- Symptoms: Equine piroplasmosis often presents with non-specific symptoms, which makes diagnosis difficult.
- Transmission:
  - Infected animals can act as long-term carriers, transmitting the parasites to ticks.
  - The disease can also be transmitted through blood-contaminated instruments, leading to iatrogenic transmission.
- Geographic Spread: Equine piroplasmosis is endemic to tropical and temperate regions worldwide.
- Treatment: Currently, there is no available vaccine for equine piroplasmosis.

About the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)

- Established: Founded in 1924 as the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), the organization adopted its current name, World Organisation for Animal Health, in 2003.
- Purpose: WOAH is an intergovernmental organization with a focus on:
  - Transparent dissemination of animal disease information.
  - Enhancing animal health and welfare globally.
  - Promoting a safer, healthier, and more sustainable world.
- India's Role: India is a member country of WOAH.
- Global Recognition: WOAH's standards are recognized by the World Trade Organization (WTO) as the primary international sanitary guidelines for animal health.
- Headquarters: Located in Paris, France.

Significance of WOAH Reference Laboratory Status

The recognition of ICAR-NRC Equine as a WOAH Reference Laboratory for Equine Piroplasmosis highlights India's growing contribution to global animal health research. This recognition not only places India at the forefront of equine disease research but also strengthens the country's role in combating zoonotic diseases and improving veterinary care across the world.

World's First CO2 to Methanol Plant

NTPC has successfully demonstrated the conversion of CO2 captured from flue gas into methanol by synthesizing it with hydrogen produced from a Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) electrolyzer. This marks the achievement of the world's first CO2 to methanol plant.

- **Indigenous Methanol Synthesis Catalyst:** NTPC has also developed its first indigenous methanol synthesis catalyst, which is a significant step toward sustainable and cost-effective methanol production.

About Methanol
- **Chemical Formula:** CH_3OH
- **Common Names:** Methyl alcohol, wood alcohol
- **Appearance:** Clear, colorless, and flammable liquid with a distinct odor.

Key Properties:
- **Miscibility with Water:** Methanol is completely soluble in water, making it a versatile solvent.
- **Flammability:** Highly flammable, requiring careful handling and storage.
- **Toxicity:** Methanol is toxic to humans and animals, particularly when ingested, necessitating precautions in handling.

Applications of Methanol:
1. **Fuel Blending:** Blended with gasoline to enhance octane rating and reduce emissions.
2. **Direct Fuel:** Used in internal combustion engines, especially in racing.
3. **Fuel Cell Technology:** Serves as a fuel source in direct methanol fuel cells.
4. **Industrial Solvent:** Used in various industries like paints, coatings, and cleaning products.
5. **Formaldehyde Production:** A primary feedstock for producing formaldehyde.
6. **Other Chemicals:** Essential in producing acetic acid, MTBE, DME, and more.

CO2 to Methanol Conversion Process

1. CO_2 Capture: Carbon dioxide is extracted from the flue gas, which is a waste byproduct of power plants.
2. Hydrogen Production: Hydrogen gas (H_2) is produced via a Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) electrolyzer, which splits water into hydrogen and oxygen using electricity.
3. Methanol Synthesis: The captured CO_2 is combined with the hydrogen to synthesize methanol, a clean fuel with multiple industrial uses.

Benefits of CO_2 to Methanol Conversion

- Carbon Capture and Utilisation (CCU): This method reduces greenhouse gas emissions and helps in mitigating climate change.
- Sustainable Fuel: Converts CO_2 into renewable methanol, which can be used across industries, thus reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
- Cost and Energy Efficiency: This method is more economical and requires less energy compared to traditional methanol production techniques.

What is Flue Gas?

- Flue gas is a mixture of gases produced as a byproduct of combustion in power plants.
- It primarily consists of:
  - Carbon dioxide (CO_2)
  - Water vapor (H_2O)
  - Nitrogen (N_2)
  - Oxygen (O_2)
- It may also contain pollutants like:
  - Sulfur dioxide (SO_2)
  - Nitrogen oxides (NOx)
  - Particulate matter (PM)

This CO_2 to methanol plant is a significant milestone in reducing carbon emissions and advancing sustainable energy solutions.

AFSPA Reimposed in Six Violence-hit Areas of Manipur

AFSPA IMPOSED IN SIX AREAS OF VIOLENCE-HIT MANIPUR

The Centre has reimposed the Disturbed Areas status under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in six police station jurisdictions in Manipur due to ongoing violence linked to insurgent groups.

Reason for Reimposition:
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) cited a volatile security situation and the active involvement of insurgent groups in the region as the reason for reapplying the AFSPA.

Historical Context of AFSPA:
- Enforcement in Manipur: AFSPA has been in force in Manipur since 1980.
- Partial Withdrawal: AFSPA was partially withdrawn in 2004 following protests over the death of Thangjam Manorama.
- Rollback: Between April 2022 and April 2023, AFSPA was lifted from 19 police stations in the valley areas of the state.

About the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA):

Background:
- Originally enacted by the British in 1942 to respond to the Quit India Movement.
- Post-independence, Jawaharlal Nehru retained it, and it became an official Act in 1958.

Key Provisions:
- Special Powers: AFSPA grants armed forces personnel, including officers of all ranks, special powers to act in areas declared as "disturbed."
  - Section 4: Includes powers to:
    - Use force (including firing) to maintain public order after a warning.
    - Arrest without a warrant if there's reasonable suspicion.
    - Enter and search properties without a warrant.
- Legal Shield for Armed Forces: Personnel operating under AFSPA are shielded from legal actions unless authorized by the central government.

Imposition of AFSPA:
- The Act can be imposed in areas declared as "disturbed" by the Centre or the Governor of a state, generally due to unrest or insurgent activities.
- AFSPA can be repealed if the state government recommends it.

Disturbed Areas under AFSPA:
- Definition: Areas deemed "disturbed" due to conflicts based on religion, race, language, or regional/community disputes.
- Government Role: The Centre or the Governor has the authority to declare an area disturbed, overriding the state government's opinion.

Review and Reforms:
- Jeevan Reddy Committee (2004): Suggested repealing AFSPA and replacing it with a more humane alternative that balances security and human rights.

Current Situation:

- Ongoing AFSPA Implementation:
  - Active in: Parts of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh.
  - Lifted from: Tripura (2015), Meghalaya (2018), and Mizoram (1980s).
- Jammu and Kashmir: AFSPA is still in force under the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990.

This reimposition in Manipur reflects ongoing security challenges and the government's attempt to stabilize the region. However, AFSPA remains a highly debated law due to concerns over human rights and its impact on local communities.

Sagarmala Parikrama: Advancing Autonomous Maritime Technology

An autonomous surface vessel by Sagar Defence Engineering recently completed a 1,500-km voyage from Mumbai to Thoothukudi without human intervention, marking a significant milestone in autonomous maritime technology.

About Sagarmala Parikrama:

Purpose:

- The Sagarmala Parikrama project was launched with the Indian Navy to enhance and advance autonomous maritime capabilities.

Support:

- The project is supported by key entities such as:
  - Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO)
  - Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC)
  - Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) under the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).

Launch:

- Virtually flagged off by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on October 29 during the Swavlamban event.
  - The Swavlamban Event is an annual initiative by NIIO to promote self-reliance in defense by showcasing indigenous technologies.

Significance:

- The successful completion of the Sagarmala Parikrama voyage demonstrates India's progress in the field of unmanned maritime technology, aligning with the Aatmanirbharta vision (self-reliance) in defense.

Future Implications:

- The success of this mission opens up possibilities for using autonomous vessels for various applications, including:
  - Monitoring critical sea lanes
  - Coastal surveillance
  - Anti-piracy operations
- It also positions India in line with global advancements in autonomous maritime systems, indicating significant strides in both defense and technological capabilities.

Sagarmala Parikrama is a key step toward enhancing India's naval defense and maritime monitoring capabilities, emphasizing the country's increasing focus on self-reliance in defense technologies.

First Asian Buddhist Summit Held in New Delhi

The Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) organized the first Asian Buddhist Summit (ABS) on November 5-6, 2024, in New Delhi.

Key Details:
- **Objective:** To foster dialogue, promote Buddhist values, and address challenges within the Asian Buddhist community.
- **Theme:** "Role of Buddha Dhamma in Strengthening Asia."

Highlights:
1. **Buddhist Art & Heritage:** Discussions on preserving and celebrating Buddhist cultural and architectural heritage.
2. **Spread of Buddha Dhamma:** Exploring its influence on Asian cultures and societies.
3. **Holy Relics:** Examining the societal impact of Buddhist relics.
4. **Modern Relevance:** Understanding the role of Buddhist philosophy and literature in today's world.
5. **Buddhism & Science:** Investigating its connection to health and well-being through scientific research.

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

The 7th ISA Assembly has elected India and France as the President and Co-President, respectively, for the term 2024-2026.
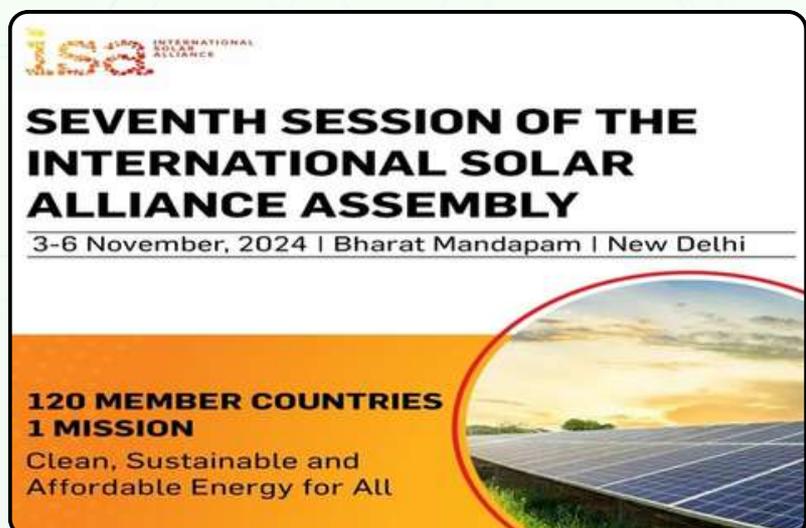
Key Highlights:

- **About ISA:**
  - A treaty-based international organization with 120 member and signatory countries, mostly located between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.
  - Paraguay recently became the 100th member.
  - Established during the 21st COP to UNFCCC in Paris, 2015.
  - Headquarters: India, making it the first intergovernmental organization headquartered in the country.
- **Mission:**
- To mobilize $1 trillion in solar investments by 2030, reduce technology costs, and improve financing.
- **Governance Structure:**
  a. **ISA Assembly:** The apex decision-making body meets annually to implement the ISA Framework Agreement.
  b. **Committees:**
     - One Standing Committee.
     - Four Regional Committees for Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe & Others, and Latin America & the Caribbean.
  c. **Secretariat:**
     - Coordinates actions and implements Assembly decisions.
     - Led by the Director General and located in Delhi, India.

India-Japan MoI for Co-development of UNICORN Masts

India and Japan have signed a Memorandum of Implementation (MoI) for the joint development of UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna) Nora-50 Masts for Indian naval warships.

About UNICORN Mast:

- **Purpose:** A conical structure housing antennas and communication systems to enhance stealth and communication on naval platforms.
- **Developers:**
  - Built by three Japanese companies in collaboration with India's Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
  - BEL also supplies the Advanced Composite Communication System (ACCS) used by the Indian Navy.

Key Features:

1. **Radome:**
   - Integrates multiple antennas into a single radar dome, minimizing electronic signatures and boosting stealth.
2. **TACAN System:**
   - Enhanced version of the Tactical Air Navigation System, which combines airborne and naval units to provide azimuth and distance data visually.
3. **Wider Detection Range:**
   - Capable of detecting missile and drone movements over wide areas by sensing radio waves.

This partnership strengthens India's naval capabilities and aligns with its defense modernization goals.

25th Meeting of South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC-25)

The 25th SATRC meeting was held in New Delhi, India, from November 11-13, 2024, hosted by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT).

Key Highlights:
- Call to Action: Emphasized collaboration among SATRC regulators to share best practices and address challenges in emerging technologies.
- Theme: "Accelerating Telecommunication and ICT Development for Growth and Inclusiveness."
  - Focus on digital transformation for economic and social progress in South Asia.
- Goal: Strengthen cooperation, tackle regulatory challenges, and foster an inclusive digital ecosystem across South Asia.

About SATRC:
- Initiative by: Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT).
- Established: 1997 by APT and ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- Mission: Regional cooperation for harmonized telecom regulations in South Asia.
- Members: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- Focus Areas: Digital inclusiveness, regulatory innovation, policy alignment, and bridging the digital divide.

About Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT):
- Founded: 1979.
- Headquarters: Bangkok, Thailand.
- Established by: An international treaty called the Constitution of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity.
- Mission: Promote the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the Asia-Pacific region.

UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2024

Launch of UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report 2024

Date: Thursday, 7 November 2024
Time: 7:00am EST / 1:00pm CET / 3:00pm EAT

Speakers:

Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP
Henry Neufeldt, Chief Scientific Editor of the UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2024

1. Rising Temperatures: Global temperatures are projected to rise beyond 2.6°C by 2100 under current emission trends.
2. Funding Shortfall for Adaptation: Developing countries require $387 billion/year for climate adaptation. Only $28 billion was funded in 2022, leaving a significant financing gap.

3. National Adaptation Plans: While 171 countries have adaptation plans, implementation progress remains slow.
4. Addressing the Financing Gap: The gap needs to be filled through non-debt-creating finance, such as grants and concessional loans.
5. Challenges with COP28 Framework: COP28's new framework lacks effective metrics to track progress in adaptation efforts.

UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2024

1. Record-High Emissions: Global emissions peaked in 2023, with a 1.3% increase.
2. G20 and Least Developed Countries (LDCs): G20 nations are responsible for 77% of global emissions, while LDCs contribute just 3%.
3. Paris Agreement Targets: To limit warming to 1.5°C, emissions must drop by 42% by 2030. A 28% reduction is required for the 2°C goal.
4. Sectoral Emissions: Power sector: 15.1 billion tonnes CO_2. Transport: 8.4 billion tonnes CO_2. Aviation: Emissions surged by 19.5%, recovering from the pandemic dip.
5. Emission Reduction Potential: Renewables like solar and wind could cut emissions by 27% by 2030.
6. India's Contribution: India contributes 8% of global emissions but maintains a low per capita rate of 2.9 tons.

African Penguin

1. Habitat: Found along southwestern rocky coasts of Africa, stretching from Namibia to Port Elizabeth. Inhabits islands such as Dyer Island.
2. Conservation Status: Listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.
3. Characteristics:
- Among the smallest penguin species.
- Features black, white, and gray waterproof feathers.
- Has a sharply pointed beak and black feet.

India's First AI Data Bank

1. **Launch:** Initiated by the Ministry of Science and Technology during the 7th ASSOCHAM AI Leadership Meet 2024.
2. **What is an AI Data Bank?** A centralized repository housing diverse, high-quality datasets to support the development, testing, and deployment of AI systems.
3. **Significance:** Boosts Innovation: Provides resources for researchers, startups, and developers to build scalable AI solutions. Enhances National Security: Real-time analytics of satellite, drone, and IoT data. Improves surveillance, threat detection, and decision-making. Predictive Analytics: Aids disaster management through risk forecasting. Strengthens cybersecurity with advanced threat prevention systems.
4. **Driving AI Technology:** Promotes advancements across various sectors to ensure scalability and inclusivity.
5. **About ASSOCHAM:** A leading trade association and advocacy group in India representing businesses and industry interests.

Operation Dronagiri

1. **Launch:** Initiated by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
2. **Objective:** To demonstrate how geospatial technologies can enhance citizens' quality of life and make business operations easier.

3. **First Phase States:** Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra.
4. **Focus Sectors:** Agriculture, Livelihoods, Logistics, and Transport.
5. **Implementation Model:** Public-Private Partnership (PPP) involving startups, private companies, and government agencies.

India's First Analog Space Mission

1. **Launch:** The mission was launched by ISRO in Leh, Ladakh.
2. **About Analog Missions:** These missions simulate extreme space conditions on Earth to test technologies and study human and robotic responses.
3. **Implementing Agencies:** The mission is led by ISRO's Human Spaceflight Centre in collaboration with AAKA Space Studio, the University of Ladakh, and IIT Bombay.
4. **Objective:** To simulate interplanetary habitat conditions and explore the feasibility of establishing a sustainable base station beyond Earth.
5. **Location:** Ladakh's isolated, arid, and high-altitude terrain mirrors conditions on Mars and the Moon, making it an ideal site for the mission.
6. **Significance:** The data collected will support India's Gaganyaan program and other future space missions.

Sagarmanthan: The Great Oceans Dialogue

Event Overview: India hosts its first-ever global maritime conference, Sagarmanthan: The Great Oceans Dialogue, in New Delhi. Co-hosted by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

1. Participation and Scope: Representatives from 60-65 countries are expected to attend.
2. Objectives of the Conference: 1. Strengthening Maritime Presence: Despite India being the world's most populous country and a major economy, its maritime presence has been limited. The conference aims to highlight India's goal to increase its role in global maritime trade and shipping. 2. Focus on Maritime Trade and Governance: The conference will emphasize India's importance in global trade, connectivity, and maritime governance, deepening its engagement with international stakeholders.
3. Key Benefits: Enhanced Collaboration: Greater cooperation with global policymakers in the maritime sector.
- Increased Global Attention: Highlighting India's growing role in maritime trade and governance.
- Platform for Global Discussions: Addressing pressing issues related to maritime affairs.

Project Shaurya Gatha

1. Launch Details: Initiated by: Department of Military Affairs and the United Services Institution of India (USI).
2. Launched by: Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan during the Indian Military Heritage Festival (IMHF).
3. Objective: To preserve and promote India's rich military legacy through education and tourism.
4. Key Features:
- Documenting Military History: Preserving significant military events and figures from India's history.
- Promoting Military Tourism: Encouraging visits to key military sites of historical importance.
- Educational Programs: Engaging youth and the general public through educational initiatives related to military history.

Indian Military Heritage Festival (IMHF)
1. Inauguration Details: The 2nd edition was inaugurated by General Anil Chauhan on November 8, 2024, in New Delhi.
2. Purpose: To increase public understanding of India's military heritage, history, and strategic priorities.

INDIAN MILITARY HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Launch of
SHAURYA GATHA
A Joint Initiative of Department of Military Affairs and United Service Institution of India

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: National Education Day

Context of the Day:

1. Date: November 11 is celebrated as National Education Day in India.
2. Purpose: The day commemorates the birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Education Minister.
3. Celebration: National Education Day has been observed annually since 2008.
4. 2024 Theme: The theme for National Education Day 2024 is focused on inclusive, high-quality education.

Maulana Azad's Legacy:

- Roles and Contributions: Prominent Journalist & Freedom Fighter: Azad was a senior leader in the Indian National Congress and contributed significantly to India's freedom struggle.
- Advocacy for Unity: He was committed to promoting Hindu-Muslim unity despite rising communal tensions before Partition.
- Opposition to Partition: Azad strongly opposed the divisive rhetoric of the Muslim League and advocated for an inclusive identity where Indian Muslims could embrace both their religion and national identity.

Al-Hilal and Al-Balagh Journals:

In 1912, Azad launched the Urdu weekly Al-Hilal, aimed at spreading revolutionary ideas and fostering unity between Hindus and Muslims.

- Contributions to India's Education System:

Institution Building: As the first Education Minister after independence, Azad was instrumental in founding several key educational institutions, including:

Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs): The first IIT was established in Kharagpur in 1951.

- University Grants Commission (UGC): Established in 1953 to oversee and regulate higher education in India.
- Jamia Millia Islamia: Co-founded the university and played a significant role in relocating it to New Delhi.
- Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

Educational Budget: Azad significantly increased the education budget from ₹1 crore to ₹30 crore during his tenure.
Focus on Adult Literacy: He emphasized improving adult literacy, recognizing it as a key area for educational development.

Recognition and Legacy:

Posthumous Honour: In 1992, Maulana Azad was posthumously awarded Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor, for his enduring contributions to the country's educational and social development.

Azerbaijan

Location and Geography:
- Transcontinental Country: Azerbaijan is located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.
- Capital and Largest City: Baku, situated on the Caspian Sea coast.
- Borders:
    - East: Caspian Sea
    - North: Russia's republic of Dagestan
    - West: Armenia and Turkey
    - South: Iran
- Highest Peak: Mount Bazarduzu
- Major River: Kura River, the longest river in Azerbaijan.

Economy:
- Azerbaijan is rich in oil and natural gas reserves, which are major contributors to its GDP.
- Key agricultural products include cotton, tobacco, and citrus fruits.

COP29 Climate Talks:
- COP29, a major international climate conference, is scheduled to begin on November 11, 2024, in Azerbaijan.

Zambia

Location:
- **Landlocked Country:** Situated in Southern Africa, nearly midway between the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn in the Southern Hemisphere.
- **Eastern Hemisphere:** It is longitudinally located in the Eastern Hemisphere of the world.
- **Capital:** Lusaka

Languages:
- **Official Language:** English
- **Other Languages:** Nyanja, Bemba

Neighbouring Countries:
- **North:** Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania
- **East:** Malawi and Mozambique
- **South:** Zimbabwe and Botswana
- **West:** Namibia and Angola

Economy:
- **Copper Production:** Zambia is Africa's second-largest copper producer, after the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- **Global Copper Ranking:** Peru is the second-largest copper producer in the world, following Chile.

Political Stability:
- **Reputation for Stability:** Unlike many of its neighboring countries, Zambia has managed to avoid the war and upheaval that has affected much of Africa's post-colonial history, earning a reputation for political stability.

PM Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India (PMYASASVI)

Objective:
The scheme aims to promote educational empowerment among vulnerable groups by helping them overcome financial barriers, enabling them to complete their education.
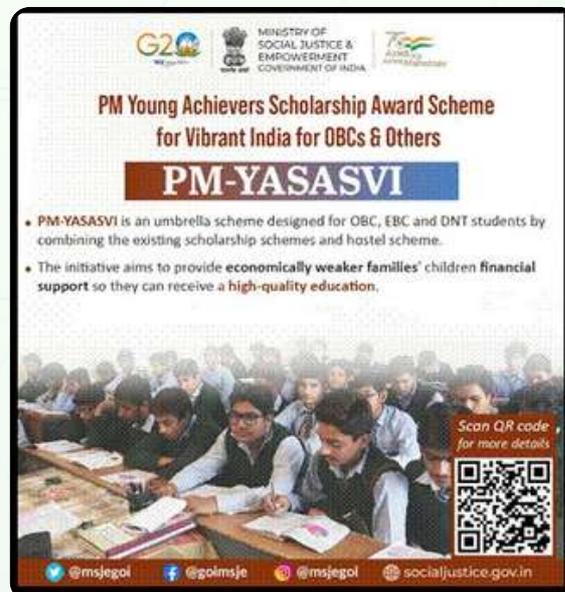
The PMYASASVI focuses on supporting quality education for students from:
- Other Backward Classes (OBC)
- Economically Backward Classes (EBC)
- Denotified Tribes (DNT) communities
- It alleviates financial burdens, ensuring these students can pursue education without economic constraints.

Scholarship Details:
- Pre-Matric Scholarship: For students in Classes 9-10 attending government schools.
- Post-Matric Scholarship: For students pursuing higher education beyond Class 10.

Eligibility:
- Family Income: The family income must be below Rs. 2.5 lakh for eligibility to the Pre-Matric Scholarship.

Implementing Agency:
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Māori Haka Dance

Context: Recently, New Zealand's youngest Member of Parliament, Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, led a haka protest in Parliament against a controversial bill that sought to redefine the Treaty of Waitangi.

About the Haka:
- Traditional Purpose: The haka was originally a war dance performed by Māori warriors to intimidate opponents and prepare for battle.
- Cultural Significance: Beyond its military roots, the haka also serves as a medium for storytelling, celebration, and honoring ancestors.
- Symbolism: The haka embodies strength, defiance, and unity, featuring synchronized movements, chants, and symbolic expressions, such as wide eyes and protruding tongues.

- Cultural Variations: Each haka is unique and conveys a message tied to Māori heritage, resilience, and communal values.

About the Māori Tribe:

- **Indigenous People:** The Māori are the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand (Aotearoa), who are believed to have arrived from East Polynesia around 1300 CE.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The Māori are known for their rich oral traditions, intricate wood carving, and strong spiritual connection to the land.

Treaty of Waitangi (1840):

- **Historical Agreement:** The Treaty of Waitangi was signed between Māori chiefs and the British Crown in 1840, establishing British governance in New Zealand while ensuring Māori rights to their lands, forests, and other resources.
- **Ongoing Controversy:** The differing interpretations of the Treaty's terms in the English and Māori versions have led to ongoing disputes and challenges in defining the exact rights and responsibilities of both parties.

2024 Booker Prize

Winner: British author Samantha Harvey has been awarded the prestigious 2024 Booker Prize for her novel "Orbital."

"Orbital" is a thought-provoking exploration of humanity's connection to Earth and the cosmos.

About the Booker Prize:

- **Established:** The Booker Prize was created in 1969 in the United Kingdom, originally known as the Booker-McConnell Prize.
- **Purpose:** The prize is aimed at celebrating and promoting the highest quality of fiction written in English.

Eligibility Criteria:

- The novel must be an original work written in English (not a translation).
- It must be published in the UK or Ireland during the award year by a registered imprint (self-published works are excluded).

Prize Details:

- **Financial Reward:** The winner receives a £50,000 financial award.
- **International Booker Prize:** Since 2016, an International Booker Prize is awarded annually for a work of fiction or a collection of short stories translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland. The £50,000 prize is shared equally between the author and the translator.

The Booker Prize is considered one of the most prestigious literary awards globally.