



Factly Compilation

17th to 22nd July, 2023

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

1. [How safe is your car? All about BharatNCAP](#)
2. [Lightning not a natural disaster, says Centre](#)
3. [Low-cost perovskite solar cells with superior thermal and moisture stability developed indigenously by Indian scientists](#)
4. [Government forms new panel to review all NSO data](#)
5. [How gaps in cloud system configuration could expose sensitive user data](#)
6. [SC Collegium's quiet transparency is driving change](#)
7. [China event raises concern over India's only ape](#)
8. [India and Indonesia announce launch of the "India - Indonesia Economic and Financial Dialogue" \(EFD Dialogue\)](#)
9. [Western Ghats lost 5% evergreen forest cover, shows analysis](#)
10. [How India and UAE are planning to promote use of local currencies for cross-border transactions](#)
11. [Union Minister says, India has developed the world's latest Steel Slag Road technology](#)
12. [13.5 crore Indians move out of multidimensional poverty in five years: Niti Aayog report](#)
13. [Why are Hollywood writers and actors on strike?](#)
14. [RBI to detail SOP for banks to help expedite rupee trade](#)
15. [New guidelines for designation of senior advocates in the SC: What they say](#)
16. [Rupee-dirham deal is bilateral: envoy](#)
17. [Climate change aiding spread of deadly virus in Europe: What is CCHF](#)
18. [Poor no longer? Dimensions of poverty in India](#)
19. [Peace and prosperity in Mekong region play pivotal role in India's Act East policy, says External Affairs Minister](#)
20. [Radio collars are killing the cheetahs in Kuno. Here is how — and why](#)
21. [Indian group proposes radical new way to settle universe expansion dispute](#)
22. [DGFT implements the Advance Authorisation Scheme, allows duty-free import of inputs for export purposes](#)
23. [Tracking the new railway proposal for Kerala](#)
24. [India reports a record 93% DPT3 immunization coverage in 2022: WHO](#)
25. [Tamil Nadu tops NITI Aayog export preparedness index 2022, Gujarat skids to 4th slot](#)
26. [India climbs seven points to 80 on Passport Index; Singapore at top position](#)
27. [40% of districts do not have nursing colleges, Health Ministry data show](#)
28. [A third of Central varsity teaching positions lying vacant](#)
29. [The Ministry of Culture and the Indian Navy sign an MoU to revive the "ancient stitched shipbuilding method \(Tankai method\)"](#)
30. [A 'dead' Ghaggar and its tributaries wrought havoc in Haryana early July; here is how](#)
31. [A fascinating fusion of rock art at Rudragiri hillock](#)
32. [What are the takeaways from the NATO summit?](#)
33. [ECI to issue digital time vouchers to National and State political parties for campaigning on Doordarshan & All India Radio during election](#)
34. [Rajasthan minimum income Bill: provisions, what makes it unique](#)
35. [Why is Kerch Bridge attack significant?](#)
36. [Over 60 species of plants that can survive extreme dehydration found in Western Ghats](#)
37. ['Zombie fires' in the Arctic: Canada's extreme wildfire season offers a glimpse of new risks in a warmer, drier future](#)
38. [IMD has launched Heat Index](#)

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

39. [NITI Aayog releases Analytical Tools for managing Climate Change and exploring Net Zero Pathways](#)
40. [SC urges Centre to transfer cheetahs to another location](#)
41. [Himalayan glaciers retreating at varying rates, says Union Minister](#)
42. [Rajya Sabha Chairman nominates four women parliamentarians to panel of vice-chairpersons](#)
43. [Portal launched to report violation of ban on e-cigarettes](#)
44. [Industry Leaders Forge Alliance for increasing Demand of Electric Freight Vehicles](#)
45. [Use any Indian language as optional medium, says CBSE](#)
46. [Ports to UPI to green energy, India and Sri Lanka deepen economic ties](#)
47. [Biofortified foods: Industry bats for separate branding](#)
48. [Rule 176 vs Rule 267: What Govt agrees to, what Opp demands](#)
49. [What are Bacteriophages, the 'good viruses' that fight bacteria?](#)

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

1. How safe is your car? All about BharatNCAP

Source: The post is based on the article “How safe is your car? All about Bharat NCAP” published in **Livemint** on **17th July 2023**

What is the News?

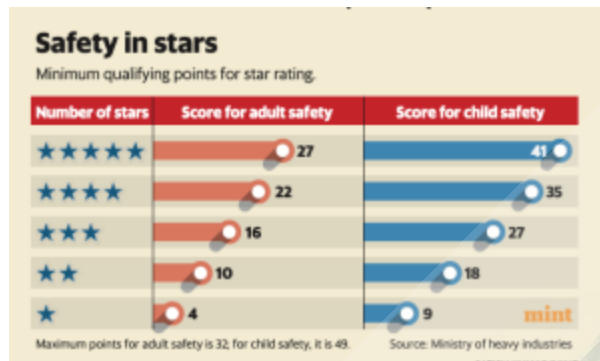
India will get its own crash safety star rating for four-wheelers called Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) from 1st October, 2023. This will help make cars safer than they are today.

What is Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP)?

Bharat NCAP is a new safety assessment programme for passenger vehicles that can seat up to eight people and weigh less than 3.5 tonnes.

As part of the programme, cars will be crash-tested and given points which in turn would translate into stars. The safest of the lot will get five stars.

How will the cars be tested?



Source: Livemint

There will be three types of crash tests — frontal, side and pole-side impact tests. Scoring would be done for both adult safety for front passengers and child safety at the rear.

Out of a maximum 32 points for adult safety, a car would have to score at least 27 for a 5-star rating.

For child safety, a 5-star rating would be awarded for those cars that score a minimum 41 out of 49 points.

Will all cars come with star ratings from 1 October?

Bharat NCAP will be rolled out from 1 October but it will be voluntary, so cars will only be tested at the request of makers.

What's the point if it is not mandatory?

Even in developed countries, NCAPs are mostly voluntary. They are aimed at nudging firms to offer more than the basic safety features by sparking competition.

What is the significance of Bharat NCAP?

Firstly, it will bring India at par with other parts of the world like the US, Europe, Japan, Australia and Latin America that have NCAPs of their own.

Secondly, it will bring about more transparency, create awareness among consumers and help buyers choose cars based on their safety credentials.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

2. [Lightning not a natural disaster, says Centre](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Lightning not a natural disaster, says Centre**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Union Government is not in favour of declaring Lightning a natural disaster as deaths caused by it can be prevented by making people aware of safety steps.

What is Lightning?

[Click Here to read](#)

Deaths due to Lightning:

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data show that 2,880 people died in lightning strikes in 2021. The deaths made up 40% of all accidental deaths caused by “forces of nature”.

The frequency of lightning was the highest in northeastern States and in West Bengal, Sikkim, Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar.

But the number of deaths is higher in the central Indian States of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

Steps taken to prevent Lightning deaths:

India is among only five countries in the world that has an early warning system for lightning — the forecast is available from five days to up to three hours.

Is Lightning categorized as a Natural Disaster in India?

Currently, Lightning is not categorized as a Natural Disaster in India.

Several states have been demanding that lightning deaths be covered as a natural disaster. Once this is notified, the victims will be entitled to compensation from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF). The Centre makes 75% of the contribution to the SDRF.

Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold wave are now considered disasters under the SDRF.

3. [Low-cost perovskite solar cells with superior thermal and moisture stability developed indigenously by Indian scientists](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Low-cost perovskite solar cells with superior thermal and moisture stability developed indigenously by Indian scientists**” published in **Department of Science and Technology’s website**.

What is the News?

Indian scientists have indigenously developed highly stable, low-cost Carbon-based perovskite solar cells.

What is Perovskite?

A perovskite is a material that has the same crystal structure as the mineral calcium titanium oxide also known as Perovskite.

It was first found in the Ural Mountains and named after Lev Perovski who was the founder of the Russian Geographical Society.

Because of their unique crystal make-up, perovskites often display a number of interesting properties, including superconductivity, giant magnetoresistance, and ferroelectricity.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

What are Perovskite Solar Cells(PSC)?

Perovskite Solar Cells(PSC) is a type of solar cell that includes a perovskite-structured compound, most commonly a hybrid organic-inorganic lead or tin halide-based material, as the light-harvesting active layer.

Perovskite Solar Cells(PSC) offer a promising alternative to traditional silicon solar cells as they have higher efficiencies and very low production costs.

However, Perovskite solar cells face the problem of degradation during operation when they come in contact with heat, moisture, light, and other environmental factors. This long-duration stability is a major hindrance in the large-scale commercialisation of the product.

What have the scientists developed?

Scientists have indigenously developed highly stable, low-cost Carbon-based perovskite solar cells with superior thermal and moisture stability which can help overcome the challenges of degradation during operation.

4. [Government forms new panel to review all NSO data](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Government forms new panel to review all NSO data**” published in **The Hindu on 17th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has replaced the Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES) with a Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS).

Why has the government decided to replace the Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES) with the Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS)?

The Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES) was set up in late 2019.

It was tasked with examining economic indicators pertaining to the industrial sector, the services sector and the labour force statistics.

This meant that their purview was limited to datasets like the Periodic Labour Force Survey, the Annual Survey of Industries, the Index of Industrial Production and the Economic Census.

Hence, that's why SCoS has been set up with a broader mandate to review the framework and results of all surveys conducted under the National Statistical Office (NSO).

What are the functions of the Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS)?

Chairman: Pronab Sen, India's first chief statistician and the former chairman of the National Statistical Commission (NSC), has been named as the chairman.

Members: The committee has 10 official members and four non-official members who are eminent academics. It can have up to 16 members.

Mandate: To advise the Ministry on technical aspects for all surveys, such as sampling, design, survey methodology and finalization of results.

– To identify data gaps that need to be filled by official statistics, along with an appropriate strategy to plug those gaps.

– To explore the use of administrative statistics to improve data outcomes.

Role of National Statistical Commission (NSC): The committee will help finalize survey results. But the NSC will have the ultimate authority to approve the publication of those results.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

5. [How gaps in cloud system configuration could expose sensitive user data](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How gaps in cloud system configuration could expose sensitive user data**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th July 2023**

What is the News?

According to a 2023 survey by Thales Cloud Security, 35% of organizations in India note that their data was breached in cloud storage in 2022.

Moreover, 68% of businesses in India have said that more than 40% of data stored in the cloud is classified as sensitive.

What is cloud storage?

Cloud storage is a method through which digital data including files, business data, videos or images are stored on servers in off-site locations.

These servers may be maintained by the companies themselves or by third-party providers responsible for hosting, managing, and securing stored data.

These servers can be accessed either by the public or through private internet connections, depending on the nature of the data.

Why do companies use cloud storage?

Companies use cloud storage to store, access and maintain data so that they do not need to invest in operating and maintaining data centres.

An added advantage of cloud storage is its scalability — organizations can expand or reduce their data footprint depending on its needs.

What are the benefits and risks associated with Cloud Storage?

Benefits: Most cloud providers offer security features like physical security at data centers, in addition to zero-trust architecture, identity and access management and encryption to ensure the security of data on their servers.

Risks: Deployment of incompatible legacy IT systems and third-party data storage architecture.

– Use of weak authentication practices and easily guessable passwords can allow unauthorized individuals to access sensitive data.

– Data stored in the cloud also faces the risk of exposure due to insecure APIs, poorly designed or inadequate security controls, internal threats due to human error and inadequate encryption during transfer or storage.

Who is liable for data protection in the cloud?

The onus of ensuring data security lies with the companies even though they grant access to data to vendors and partners.

If the data is sensitive in nature, it is the company’s responsibility to make sure that a selected vendor has all the right checks in place and has conducted due diligence.

This includes checking cloud compliances like ensuring passwords have two-factor authentication, monitoring access to the database, ensuring it is encrypted and ensuring all firewall rules are set so that only access through certain places and certain departments is allowed.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

6. [SC Collegium's quiet transparency is driving change](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**SC Collegium's quiet transparency is driving change**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Supreme Court Collegium under the present Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud has quietly and transparently streamlined the appointment process of judges to the constitutional courts.

What are steps taken by CJI to ensure transparency in appointment of judges?

While recommending appointments to the Supreme Court, the collegium takes into consideration the following three aspects:

Seniority of Chief Justices and senior puisne Judges in their respective parent High Courts as well as overall seniority of the High Court judges:

The merit, performance and integrity of the judges under consideration: For this, the judgments of the judges are circulated among the members of the collegium, well in advance.

– The Centre for Research & Planning of the court also prepares a compilation of relevant background material to assist the collegium.

– There is also a Judgment Evaluation Committee which goes through the judicial work of the candidates with a fine-tooth comb. The judgments are graded with the very best receiving an “outstanding” grade.

Need to ensure diversity and inclusion in the Supreme Court: It refers to the 1) representation of High Courts which are not represented or are inadequately represented in the Supreme Court 2) appointment of persons from marginalized and backward segments of society 3) gender diversity and 4) representation of minorities.

7. [China event raises concern over India's only ape](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**China event raises concern over India's only ape**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th July 2023**

What is the News?

Global Gibbon Network (GGN) held its first meeting in China to discuss conservation of Hoolock Gibbon.

What is Hoolock Gibbon?



Hoolock Gibbon is the only ape found in India.

It is native to eastern Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Southwest China.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

In India, they are confined to the seven states of northeast India with Brahmaputra as the distribution boundary.

They form an arboreal species and prefer to live in canopies of the evergreen forests in northeast India.

They traverse across the canopy using their very long forelimbs hanging and jumping from branch to branch.

Along with this, they are famous for their loud hoolou calls (that inspires their name “Hoolock”) and duets which both male and female of a group indulge in.

Threats: Hoolock gibbon faces threat primarily from the felling of trees for infrastructure Projects.

How many species of Hoolock Gibbon are there in India?

According to Zoologists, Northeast of India houses two species of the ape — the eastern hoolock gibbon (Hoolock leuconedys) found in a specific region of Arunachal Pradesh and the western hoolock gibbon (Hoolock hoolock) distributed elsewhere in the Northeast.

But a study led by Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in 2021 proved through genetic analysis that there is only one species of ape in India. It debunked earlier research that the eastern hoolock gibbon was a separate species based on the colour of its coat.

However, the Red List maintained by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categorizes the **Western hoolock gibbon** as **Endangered** and the **Eastern hoolock gibbon** as **Vulnerable**.

8. [India and Indonesia announce launch of the “India – Indonesia Economic and Financial Dialogue” \(EFD Dialogue\)](#) (EFD Dialogue)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India and Indonesia announce launch of the “India – Indonesia Economic and Financial Dialogue” (EFD Dialogue)**” published in **PIB on 16th July 2023**

What is the News?

India and Indonesia have announced the launch of the “India – Indonesia Economic and Financial Dialogue”.

This platform was launched during the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG).

What is India – Indonesia Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD)?

Aim: To enhance collaboration on bilateral and international economic and financial matters by bringing together economic policymakers and financial regulators from both countries.

Areas of cooperation include: macroeconomic challenges and global economic prospects, bilateral investment relations, and cooperation in G20 and ASEAN matters.

Significance: EFD Dialogue will not only deepen the bilateral relationship between India and Indonesia, but also contribute to the broader economic and financial stability of Southeast Asia and the world.

How much is the Bilateral Trade between India and Indonesia?

The evolution of India’s ‘Look East Policy’ in 1991, followed by the ‘Act East Policy’, has facilitated a rapid development in bilateral relations between India and Indonesia particularly in the commercial and cultural fields.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

Indonesia has emerged as India's largest trading partner in the ASEAN region, with our trade seeing an eightfold increase since 2005, reaching an impressive \$38 billion in FY 2022-23.

9. Western Ghats lost 5% evergreen forest cover, shows analysis

Source: The post is based on the article “**Western Ghats lost 5% evergreen forest cover, shows analysis**” published in **The Hindu on 14th July 2023**

What is the News?

According to Western Ghats Spatial Decision Support System(WGSDSS), Western Ghats, which is among 36 global biodiversity hotspots, has seen a loss of 5% evergreen forest cover.

What is Western Ghats Spatial Decision Support System(WGSDSS)?

Launched by: Indian Institute of Science's Energy and Wetlands Research Group

Purpose: It is a web portal that has been designed as part of the ongoing ecological research in the Western Ghats.

What did this web portal find about the Western Ghats?

Loss of Forest Cover: Western Ghats has seen a loss of 5% evergreen forest cover with an increase of 4.5% built-up cover, and 9% agriculture area.

– The interior forest constitutes only 25% of the forest landmass, depicting the fragmentation pressure, impacting local ecology.

Ecological Sensitivity or Fragility: Ecological sensitivity or fragility refers to permanent and irreparable loss of extant life forms or significant damage to the natural processes of evolution and speciation with the alterations in the ecological integrity of a region.

– Researchers have classified the vulnerability of the regions in the Western Ghats into four categories of Ecologically Sensitive Regions (ESR) — very high ecological fragility, high ecological fragility, moderate ecological fragility, and low ecological fragility.

– The ESR analysis of the Western Ghats depicts 63,148 square km area under very high ecological fragility, 27,646 square km under high ecological fragility, 48,490 square km as moderate, and 20,716 square km as low ecological fragility.

Recommendations: Western Ghats region witnessed large-scale land cover changes during the past century due to unplanned developmental activities with industrialisation and globalization.

– This necessitates implementing mitigation measures involving stakeholders to address the impacts through location-specific conservation measures.

10. [How India and UAE are planning to promote use of local currencies for cross-border transactions](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How India and UAE are planning to promote use of local currencies for cross-border transactions**” published in **Indian Express on 15th July 2023**

What is the News?

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have signed a pact to establish a framework to promote the use of the rupee and UAE Dirham (AED) for cross-border transactions.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

What is the mechanism being setup by India and UAE to promote use of local currencies for cross-border transactions?

The mechanism for the use of local currencies for transactions between India and the UAE aims to put in place a Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS).

This system would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies.

India is likely to use this mechanism to pay for crude oil as well as other imports from the UAE, which is currently made in US dollars.

Note: Bilateral trade between India and the UAE was around \$85 billion in FY23. India is also the third largest oil importer in the world and the UAE was its fourth biggest supplier of crude.

What are the expected benefits of this mechanism?

Firstly, it would enable the development of an INR-AED foreign exchange market.

Secondly, this arrangement would also promote investments and remittances between the two countries.

Thirdly, the use of local currencies would optimize transaction costs and settlement time for transactions, including for remittances from Indians residing in the UAE.

Why has India signed this mechanism with the UAE?

The move to ink the pact with the UAE is part of a concerted policy effort by India to internationalize the rupee to bring down the dollar demand as a means to insulate the domestic economy from global shocks.

Government officials had earlier indicated that apart from Russia, countries in Africa, the Gulf region, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh had also expressed interest in trading in rupee terms.

11. Union Minister says, India has developed the world's latest Steel Slag Road technology

Source: The post is based on the article **“Union Minister says, India has developed the world's latest Steel Slag Road technology”** published in **PIB** on **17th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Union Minister of Science & Technology has announced that India has developed the world's latest Steel Slag Road technology.

What is Slag?

Slag is made up of impurities melted out of the ore during the steel-making process in most of the Steel Plants.

Use of Steel Slag in Road construction:

CSIR- Central Road Research Institute (CRRI), New Delhi has pioneered the development of use of Steel slag in road construction.

In 2022, Surat in Gujarat became the first city in the country to get a processed steel slag (industrial waste) road.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has also used steel slag to construct a long-lasting heavy-duty road at Arunachal Pradesh along the India-China border area.

Besides, India's largest road building agency, National Highway Authority of India successfully tested the Steel Slag Road technology on NH-66 (Mumbai- Goa).

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About **135.5 million (13.5 crore) persons have exited poverty** between 2015-16 and 2019-21.

– In 2015-16, one in four Indians (24.85%) met the criteria for multidimensional poverty. By 2019-21, this percentage decreased to 14.96% or one in seven.

Rural areas saw a faster reduction in their MPI value, compared to urban areas. The incidence of poverty fell from 32.59% to 19.28% in rural areas compared to a decline from 8.65% to 5.27% in urban areas between 2015-16 and 2019-21.

Uttar Pradesh has registered the **largest decline in the number of poor** with 3.43 crore people escaping multidimensional poverty.

The number of states with **less than 10 per cent people living in multidimensional poverty doubled** in the five years between 2016 and 2021.

– In 2015-16 (NFHS-4), only seven states had less than 10% of their population living in multidimensional poverty — Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Kerala.

– In 2019-21 (NFHS-5), the list had doubled to include 14 states, with the seven new additions being Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, and Uttarakhand.

Except for Bihar, no other state in India has more than one-third of its population living in multidimensional poverty.

– Even Bihar has also made remarkable improvement. In 2015-16, over 51.89 per cent of Bihar's population lived in multidimensional poverty. By 2019-21, the figure had dropped to 33.76 per cent.

13. Why are Hollywood writers and actors on strike?

Source: The post is based on the article **“Why are Hollywood writers and actors on strike?”** published in **The Hindu on 18th July 2023**

What is the News?

Hollywood actors joined the ongoing strike of the Writers Guild of America (WGA) after their contract negotiations with studios broke down.

This is Hollywood's biggest labour fight in six decades and marks the first dual strike of both writers and actors since 1960.

Why are Hollywood writers and actors protesting?

Pay issues: The profits of the entertainment industry have increased from \$5 billion in 2000 to a whopping \$30 billion in 2019.

– But the average pay of the writer-producer position has gone down by 4% over the past decade. Adjusted for inflation, this is a 23% decline.

Use of Artificial Intelligence(AI): AI has emerged as a crucial area where actors and writers want production houses to limit the use of AI so their professions are not endangered in the near future.

– Writers are demanding that AI not be used to create new and unpaid content from their original work and their scripts not be used to train AI like language learning models.

– As for the actors, they do not want studios to use their AI-created likeness or performances without their consent or without compensation.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

What is the economic impact of this strike?

The strike does not just affect its participants but a large number of those employed in production related jobs and tertiary industries such as costume, catering, lighting, for hire location providers, and so on.

The last writers' strike in 2007 which lasted 100 days cost \$2.1 billion to California's economy alone.

14. [RBI to detail SOP for banks to help expedite rupee trade](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“RBI to detail SOP for banks to help expedite rupee trade”** published in **The Hindu** on **18th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to issue a standard operating procedure for banks to expeditiously issue FIRC (Foreign Inward Remittance Certificate) and Electronic bank realization certificates(e-BRCs).

This is being done to overcome the problems faced by exporters with the [rupee-based trading mechanism for foreign trade](#).

What is FIRC (Foreign Inward Remittance Certificate)?

Fostering rupee trade

The RBI will soon urge banks to follow an SOP to expedite the issuance of FIRC and e-BRC certificates, says a govt. official



- Exporters had approached the Commerce Ministry citing delays in the generation of e-BRCs
- Due to the delay, exporters had a problem validating their exports and claiming any benefits
- The official adds that there was no bar on traders using any currency for international payments

Source: The Hindu

FIRC is a document that acts as a testimonial for all the inward remittances entering India.

Most of the statutory authorities accept this document as proof that an individual or a business, such as a limited company, partnership firm, sole proprietorship firm and others, has received a payment in foreign currency from outside the country.

What is an Electronic Bank Realization Certificate(e-BRC)?

An Electronic Bank Realization Certificate(e-BRC) is a vital digital certificate for export businesses.

A bank issues the e-BRC to confirm that the buyer made payment to the exporter against the export of services or goods.

Businesses availing export benefits under the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) must produce a valid BRC. The BRC is the proof of realization of payment against exports.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

[15. New guidelines for designation of senior advocates in the SC: What they say](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**New guidelines for designation of senior advocates in the SC: What they say**” published in **Indian Express on 17th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Supreme Court has issued new guidelines on designating lawyers as ‘Senior Advocates’ in the apex court.

The guidelines were issued by the court following the judgment in the Indira Jaising Vs Supreme Court case, which modified the criteria.

What is a Senior advocate?

Section 16 (1) of the Advocates Act, 1961 states there shall be two classes of advocates, namely, senior advocates and other advocates.

Section 16 (2) allows an advocate to be designated as a senior advocate if he consents to it and if the Supreme Court or a High Court is of opinion that by virtue of his ability, he is deserving of such distinction.

What is Indira Jaising Vs Supreme Court case?

[Click Here to read](#)

What are the new guidelines issued by the Supreme Court on designating lawyers as ‘Senior Advocates’?

Committee for Designation of Senior Advocates: All matters relating to the designation of Senior Advocates in the Supreme Court of India shall be dealt with by a Permanent Committee.

– The committee will be composed of the following: (1) Chief Justice of India Chairperson (2) Two senior-most Judges of the Supreme Court of India (3) Attorney General for India (4) A member of the Bar, nominated by the Chairperson and Members.

– The committee will meet twice a year. The Committee shall have a permanent secretariat. The composition of the Secretariat will be decided by the Chief Justice of India in consultation with the members of the Committee.

Eligibility to be designated as a Senior advocate: The candidates need to be at least ten years’ standing as an Advocate or ten years’ combined standing as an Advocate and as a District and Sessions Judge or as a Judicial Member of any Tribunal in India to be designated as Senior Advocates at the Supreme Court.

– They must practice mainly in the Supreme Court but advocates with domain expertise of practising before specialized Tribunals may be given concession.

– The age limit for applying for the designation of Senior Advocate is now 45 years unless the age limit is relaxed. The age limit can be relaxed by the Committee.

Role of Secretariat: The Secretariat of the Committee shall initiate the process for designation of Senior Advocate at least once every year by inviting applications from Advocates-on-Record/Advocates for designation as Senior Advocates.

— The Committee will examine each application on the basis of the data provided by the Secretariat and make its overall assessment on the basis of a point- based format.

– The points will be given to the advocate based on years of practice, pro-bono work undertaken, judgements, publications and a personality test.

– The Committee may short-list the number of candidates to be selected for interview by the Full Court comprising all judges.

Factly Compilation for the Month of July (Third Week) 2023

– The Full Court may review its decision to designate a person as a Senior Advocate and recall the conferment of designation if the Advocate is found guilty of conduct which according to the Full Court disentitles him to designation.

16. Rupee-dirham deal is bilateral: envoy

Source: The post is based on the article **“Rupee-dirham deal is bilateral: envoy”** published in **The Hindu** on **18th July 2023**

What is the News?

The United Arab Emirates Ambassador to India has said that the India-UAE rupee-dirham deal signed is bilateral, and does not carry any agenda to “de-dollarize” the global economy.

What is the India-UAE rupee-dirham deal?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Central Bank of the UAE has agreed to establish a framework for enabling the use of the two countries’ local currencies for cross-border transactions.

As per the memorandum of understanding between the two central banks, all current account payments, including those involving the two countries’ exporters and importers, and certain “permitted” capital account transactions could be settled using either the rupee or the dirham.

To facilitate settlement, the two banks are set to put in place a Local Currency Settlement System and at a later date interlink their payments messaging systems.

What are the benefits of India-UAE rupee-dirham deal?

The immediate benefits of this settlement mechanism would be the development of a rupee-dirham foreign exchange market that would help in pricing the two currencies independent of their exchange rates with other currencies such as the dollar and the euro.

Indian and UAE businesses also would not need to factor in exchange rate risks when quoting to supply goods or services to buyers in the other country thus improving the ease of doing business and boosting trade.

What about the Air Service Agreement between India and UAE?

The discussions on revision of the Air Service Agreement (ASA) signed in 2014 between India and UAE has reached a deadlock.

UAE wants more flights to carry passengers from India. But India is reluctant to increase the number of seats between UAE cities including Dubai and some 15 Indian cities as it could take away business from Indian airlines.

As a result, data from travel portals show an increase in airfares of 45-50% to Dubai from New Delhi, Bengaluru and Kochi as compared with pre-COVID fares.

Climate change aiding spread of deadly virus in Europe: What is CCHF

Source: The post is based on the article **“Climate change aiding spread of deadly virus in Europe: What is CCHF”** published in **Indian Express** on **18th July 2023**

What is the News?

According to the World Health Organization(WHO), Climate Change is helping in the spread of deadly viruses like Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF).

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What is Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF)?

Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever(CCHF) is a viral haemorrhagic fever usually transmitted by ticks.

Hosts: The virus is present in the tick family of insects. Animals such as cattle, goats, sheep and hares serve as amplifying hosts for the virus.

Transmission: Transmission to humans occurs through contact with infected ticks or animal blood. CCHF can also be transmitted from one infected human to another by contact with infectious blood or body fluids such as sweat and saliva.

First detected in: The disease was first described in the Crimean Peninsula in 1944 and given the name Crimean hemorrhagic fever.

– In 1969 it was recognized that the pathogen causing Crimean haemorrhagic fever was the same as that responsible for an illness identified in 1956 in the Congo Basin.

– The linkage of the two place names resulted in the current name for the disease and the virus.

Endemic countries: CCHF is endemic in all of Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and in Asia.

Fatality rate: CCHF outbreaks constitute a threat to public health services as the virus can lead to epidemics. It also has a high case fatality ratio (10–40%).

– The first fatality from the disease in Europe was in Spain. In India, **one person succumbed to CCHF last month in Gujarat.**

Treatment: There is no vaccine for the virus in either humans or animals, and treatment generally consists of managing symptoms.

How is Climate Change amplifying the spread of viruses like CCHF?

As temperature patterns are disrupted , pathogens are thriving in geographies that traditionally had a climate hostile to them.

For instance, Europe is generally known for colder climate. But now it is reeling under heatwave and wildfires.

This warmer temperature expands the habitat of ticks and other insects and gives them more time to reproduce. This is leading to spread of viruses like Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF).

[17. Poor no longer? Dimensions of poverty in India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Poor no longer? Dimensions of poverty in India”** published in **Livemint** on **19th July 2023**

What is the News?

Niti Aayog has published the second edition of National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A progress of Review 2023.

What is Multidimensional Poverty(MDP)?

Historically, poverty estimation was done by largely focusing on income as the sole indicator.

However, there was criticism that monetary and consumption-based poverty measures fail to capture the impact of lack of other non-monetary factors on standard of living.

Niti Aayog’s National Multidimensional Poverty Index is modeled on the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index. It captures overlapping deprivations in health, education and living standards.

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Niti Aayog published the first National MPI baseline report for India in 2021.

How do we measure Multidimensional Poverty(MDP)?

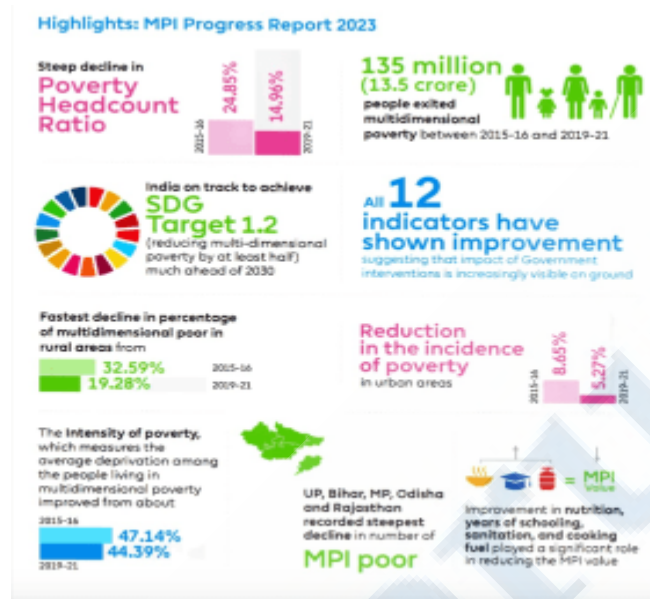
National MPI divides these three broad indicators health, education and living standards into further dimensions.

For instance, health includes nutrition, child-adolescent mortality and maternal health, while education considers years of schooling and school attendance.

All these indicators are weighed in to calculate the 'deprivation score'. The deprivation score is the sum of the weighted status of all the indicators for an individual.

If the deprivation score is more than 0.33, then an individual is considered multidimensionally poor.

What are the key findings of National Multidimensional Poverty(MDP) 2023?



Source: Niti Aayog

A quarter of Indians were multidimensionally poor in 2015-16 which fell to 15% in 2019-21.

The decline was the highest in Bihar (51.9% to 33.8%), Madhya Pradesh (36.6% to 20.6%) and Uttar Pradesh (37.7% to 22.9%).

The southern states were already doing well, so their decline was tiny. Kerala had the lowest share of MDP persons: 0.55%.

The number of MDP Indians dropped by an estimated 135 million — that's 10% point drop over the five years.

Note: The global MPI has estimated India's MDP shares at 27.7% for 2015-16 and 16.4% for 2019-21.

[Click Here to read more](#)

How did India reduce multidimensional poverty so fast?

India achieved such rapid poverty reduction due to improvement in seven standard-of-living sub-indicators— cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, housing, electricity, assets, and bank accounts.

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For instance, around 58 percent of Indians were deprived of clean cooking fuel in 2015-16, but by 2019-2021, it was only 44 per cent.

Similarly, the percentage of individuals lacking adequate sanitation facilities dropped from 51.88 per cent to 30.13 per cent.

However, when it comes to indicators like health and education, the reduction has not been so slow.

[18. Peace and prosperity in Mekong region play pivotal role in India's Act East policy, says External Affairs Minister](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Peace and prosperity in Mekong region play pivotal role in India's Act East policy, says External Affairs Minister**” published in **The Economic Times** on **16th July 2023**

What is the News?

India's External Affairs Minister has addressed the 12th Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Mechanism meeting.

What is Mekong Ganga Cooperation(MGC)?

Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) was launched in 2000 at Vientiane, Lao PDR with the signing of the Vientiane Declaration.

The grouping was initially called **Ganga Suvarnabhumi Programme (GMSP)**.

Aim: Both the Ganga and the Mekong are civilizational rivers and the MGC initiative aims to facilitate closer contacts among the people inhabiting these two major river basins.

Members: It is an initiative by six countries – India and five ASEAN countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Meetings: The MGC meetings are co-chaired alternately every year between India and one of the 5 Mekong countries.

Areas of cooperation: The four foundational areas of cooperation under MGC include tourism, culture, education, and transport & communication.

– It has further expanded to include new areas like health and traditional medicine, agriculture and allied sectors, small and medium enterprises, water resources management, science and technology, skill development, and capacity building.

What is the Quick Impact Project Initiative?

The Government of India announced the implementation of Quick Impact Projects(QIP) in CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam) countries at the 6th Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in 2012.

Each QIP project costs not more than US\$ 50,000/.

The emphasis of QIPs is on short gestation high visibility projects with a normal gestation period of up to one year, which directly benefits the local communities with results that are immediate and visible.

The type of projects under QIP includes the creation or up-gradation of physical infrastructure such as roads, local community centers and social infrastructures such as in the education, health, sanitation, or community development sectors.

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[19. Radio collars are killing the cheetahs in Kuno. Here is how — and why](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Radio collars are killing the cheetahs in Kuno. Here is how — and why**” published in **Indian Express on 19th July 2023**

What is the News?

Two cheetahs died of suspected septicaemia from festering neck wounds caused by radio collars in Kuno National Park.

What are Satellite or radio collars?

The cheetah’s movements are tracked using satellite transmitters attached to the collars fitted around the neck of the animal.

With the help of Satellite Collar IDs, the wildlife officials can closely track their travels, activities and health.

The GPS in the collars is similar to that used in smartphones and other electronic devices. Satellites can easily identify the electronic signals that the GPS chips broadcast. It is designed in such a way that it won’t be destroyed due to animal’s movements.

Apart from the location, the tool is used to learn about the animal’s physical state as it helps in communicating health-related information which can be used to determine whether the animal needs to be treated.

How cheetah’s might have died due to Satellite or radio collars?

Carrying something on the body for long has its downsides. A study published in the Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research found a significantly higher presence of Staphylococcus aureus bacteria on the wrists of watch wearers compared to others. Staph getting into blood can lead to sepsis or death.

What are the factors that could have made the cheetahs in India more vulnerable due to collars than other big cats and individuals of the species in Africa?

Firstly, a 2020 study led by researchers from the UK criticized the 3% collar weight rule for not factoring in “animal athleticism”. The researchers found that during movement, the forces exerted by collars were generally equivalent to up to five times the collar’s weight for a lion — and a massive 18 times for a cheetah.

Secondly, pathogens that aggravated the wound under the collar could be novel either to the African cheetahs or to Indian conditions. These animals could be vulnerable to certain local pathogens to which Indian tigers and leopards may be immune.

[20. Indian group proposes radical new way to settle universe expansion dispute](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Indian group proposes radical new way to settle universe expansion dispute**” published in **The Hindu on 17th July 2023**

What is the News?

Researchers from the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS), Bengaluru, the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune, and University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), have proposed a new way to determine the Hubble constant.

What is Hubble Constant?

The Hubble constant is a unit that describes how fast the universe is expanding at different distances from a particular point in space.

It is one of the keystones in our understanding of the universe’s evolution.

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It gets its name from Edwin Hubble who was first to calculate the constant from his measurements of stars in 1929.

How is Hubble Constant measured?

Two details are required to calculate the value of the Hubble constant 1) distance between the observer and astronomical objects and 2) velocity at which these objects are moving away from the observer as a result of the expansion of the universe.

So far, scientists have used three methods to get these details:

- **First method:** They compare the observed brightness of a stellar explosion, called a supernova, with its expected brightness to figure how far away it could be. Then they measure how much the wavelength of the light from the star has been stretched by the expansion of the universe – i.e. the redshift – to figure how much it's moving away.
- **Second method:** They use changes to the cosmic microwave background (CMB) – radiation leftover from the Big Bang event – to estimate the Hubble constant.
- **Third method:** They use gravitational waves, ripples in spacetime produced when massive astronomical objects – like neutron stars or black holes – collide with each other.

Drawbacks with these methods: Measurements from the first method have reported a Hubble constant about two units higher than the one derived by the second method. The third method hasn't yet matured enough to provide a precise measurement.

What is the new method proposed by scientists to understand universe expansion rate?

The new method proposed by the researchers uses **gravitational lensing**.

Gravitational lensing is when massive objects in space can warp spacetime. This bends all kinds of waves that travel near the objects, distorting them. The phenomenon is typically used to describe when light waves are bent.

As we have seen before, sometimes, extreme lensing of some objects can make them visually appear as multiple objects in the sky. Just like that, lensing can produce multiple copies of the same gravitational signal that can reach Earth at different times.

The researchers believe that the delays between the signals could be used to calculate the universe's expansion rate.

- **Note:** Scientists are yet to find lensed gravitational waves but there's good reason to believe that they will in the next two decades. This is because the upcoming generation of gravitational wave detectors are expected to be able to sense about a million gravitational waves a year.

[21. DGFT implements the Advance Authorisation Scheme, allows duty-free import of inputs for export purposes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**DGFT implements the Advance Authorisation Scheme, allows duty-free import of inputs for export purposes**” published in **PIB on 17th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is implementing the Advance Authorisation Scheme.

What is an Advance Authorisation Scheme?

Directorate General of Foreign Trade(DGFT) implements the Advance Authorisation Scheme under the Foreign Trade Policy.

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Purpose: The scheme allows duty-free import of inputs for export purposes.

– In addition to any inputs, packaging material, fuel, oil and catalyst which is consumed / utilized in the process of production of export products is also allowed.

– The quantity of inputs allowed for a given product is based on specific norms defined for that export product, which considers the wastage generated in the manufacturing process.

[22. Tracking the new railway proposal for Kerala](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tracking the new railway proposal for Kerala**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2023**

What is the News?

Kerala has proposed a new semi-high speed train project expected as an alternative to the Silver Line project.

What is the new semi-high speed train proposed by Kerala?

The semi-high speed train will travel the 420-km Thiruvananthapuram-Kannur north-south corridor.

It will cover the distance in three and a half hours. It is expected to cruise at an average speed of 125 kmph.

It is being projected as an alternative to the Thiruvananthapuram -Kasargod [Silver Line project](#).

Why are high speed trains a priority?

Trains in Kerala are operating at rock-bottom speed. Even express trains in the State operate at an average speed of less than 50 kmph due to frequent stops, huge number of sharp curves.

What happened to the High Speed Rail Corridor and Silverline Project?

High Speed Rail Corridor: In 2014, Kerala government entrusted the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) with the task of readying a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for a high-speed rail corridor linking Thiruvananthapuram with the northernmost district Kasaragod. But the project was considered too ambitious and costly and failed to take off.

The Silver Line project has met with massive resistance as it was to be built over a tall embankment constructed over the ground, and would have led to massive displacement of people.

– Environmental activists and others expressed fears that this would worsen flooding in many areas, since the embankment would block natural flow of water even if drains and canals were built at intervals.

[23. India reports a record 93% DPT3 immunization coverage in 2022: WHO](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India reports a record 93% DPT3 immunization coverage in 2022: WHO**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2023**

What is the News?

The WHO and UNICEF estimates for national immunization coverage for 2022 has been released recently.

As per the estimate, the coverage rate for DPT3 vaccine in India rose to an all-time high of 93% in 2022. This has surpassed the previous pre-pandemic best of 91% recorded in 2019.

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What is DPT3 Vaccine?

The DPT vaccine or DTP vaccine is a class of combination vaccines against three infectious diseases in humans: diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), and tetanus.

The vaccine components include diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and either kill whole cells of the bacterium that causes pertussis or pertussis antigens.

Note: Toxoid vaccines use a toxin (harmful product) made by the germ that causes a disease. They create immunity to the parts of the germ that cause a disease instead of the germ itself.

What does WHO and UNICEF say about the DPT3 vaccination coverage in the South-East Asia Region?

In the WHO South-East Asia Region, the coverage rate for DPT3 vaccine recovered to the pre-pandemic level of 91%, a sharp increase from the 82% recorded in 2021.

The number of zero-dose children (those that have not received even the first dose of DPT vaccine) halved to 2.3 million in 2022 from 4.6 million in 2021.

Similarly, the number of partially vaccinated children (those that have received at least one dose of DPT vaccine but did not complete the primary series of three doses) reduced to 6.5 lakh in 2022 from 1.3 million in 2021.

The region had the best immunization recoveries among all the WHO regions. This can be majorly attributed to the efforts being made by India and Indonesia.

[24. Tamil Nadu tops NITI Aayog export preparedness index 2022, Gujarat skids to 4th slot](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Tamil Nadu tops NITI Aayog export preparedness index 2022, Gujarat skids to 4th slot” published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2023**

What is the News?

NITI Aayog has released the third edition of Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022.

What is the Export Preparedness Index(EPI)?

[Click Here to read](#)

What are the key findings of Export Preparedness Index(EPI) 2022?

Topped by: Tamil Nadu has topped the index followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka.

– Gujarat, which held the top position in EPI 2021 (released in 2022) has been pushed to the fourth slot in EPI 2022.

Hilly States: Uttarakhand secured the top position among hilly/Himalayan states in the EPI 2022.

Landlocked States: Haryana topped the chart among the landlocked regions, indicating its preparedness for exports. It was followed by Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

Union Territories/Small States: Goa has ranked first followed by Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Ladakh.

Districts: Out of the 680 districts engaged in exports, the top 100 districts contribute about 87% of the total exports from India.

– Among export districts, Jamnagar in Gujarat tops the index. It was followed by Surat, Mumbai Suburban, Mumbai, Pune, Bharuch and Kanchipuram.

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India's exports: Despite global slowdown, India's exports in 2021-22 crossed an unprecedented USD 675 Billion, with trade in goods accounting for USD 420 billion.

– The value of merchandise exports crossed USD 400 billion in FY2022, an ambitious goal set by the government, reaching up to USD 422 billion by March 2022.

Recommendations: 1) Location-specific strategies to boost exports 2) Diversification of export markets (such as based on GI products) 3) Leveraging foreign markets using FTAs 4) Identifying high-growth sectors such as pharmaceuticals, automotive, textiles and renewable energy and 5) Improvement in data availability.

25. India climbs seven points to 80 on Passport Index; Singapore at top position

Source: The post is based on the article “**India climbs seven points to 80 on Passport Index; Singapore at top position**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2023**

What is the News?

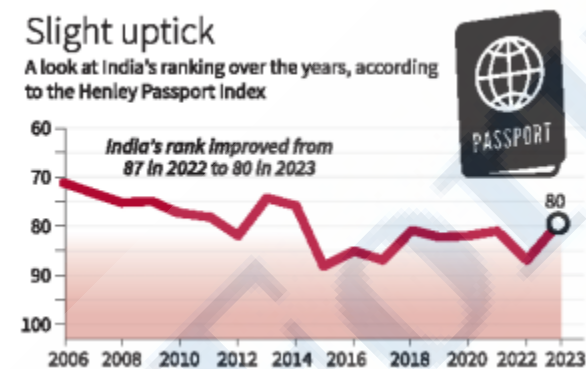
Henley Passport Index 2023 has been released by the consultancy firm named 'Henley & Partners'.

What is the Henley Passport Index?

Henley Passport Index is the ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.

The index includes 199 passports and 227 travel destinations.

What are the key rankings of Henley Passport Index 2023?



Source: The Hindu

Globally: Singapore has topped the index. It is now officially the most powerful passport in the world with its citizens able to visit 192 travel destinations out of 227 around the world visa-free.

– Germany, Italy, and Spain occupied the second place.

– Japan, which occupied the top position Index for five years, has dropped to the third place.

India: India has climbed seven places in 2023 and is ranked at **80th position**. Indian citizens can now enjoy visa-free access to 57 destinations.

– In 2014, India was ranked 76 with 52 countries allowing Indian passport holders visa-free access but its performance has not been linear.

– It ranked 88 in 2015 (visa-free access to 51 countries), 85 in 2016, 87 in 2017, 81 in 2018, 82 in 2019 and 2020, and 81 in 2021.

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What is the Henley Openness Index?

Henley Openness Index measures how many nations does a country allows visa-free access to.

The top 20 'most open' countries are all small island nations or African states, except for Cambodia.

Here, India was ranked 94 out of a total of 97 ranks for allowing only four countries visa-free access.

26. 40% of districts do not have nursing colleges, Health Ministry data show

Source: The post is based on the article “**40% of districts do not have nursing colleges, Health Ministry data show**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2023**

What is the News?

Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved 157 new nursing colleges for 24 states and 3 union territories.

What is the present status of Nursing services in India?

Nursing services form the backbone of any medical establishment. India currently has close to 35 lakh nurses, but its nurse-to-population ratio is only 2.06:1000 against a global benchmark of 3:1000.

There has been a 36% growth in the number of institutions offering undergraduate nursing education since 2014-15 resulting in a 40% growth in nursing seats. But there is a regional skew within these statistics. **For instance:**

- About 64% of the nursing workforce is currently trained in just eight States.
- 42% of nursing institutions are concentrated in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana while 17% are in the western States of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.
- Only 2% of nursing colleges are in the northeastern States.
- There are no nursing colleges in 40 percent of districts across India.
- The growth of nursing colleges also lags far behind the 81% growth rate of medical colleges with the number of undergraduate and postgraduate medical seats surging at 110% and 114%, respectively, since 2014-15.

What does the WHO say on the global nursery workforce?

According to the WHO, approximately 27 million men and women make up the global nursing and midwifery workforce, accounting for nearly 50% of the global health workforce.

There is a global shortage of health workers, in particular nurses and midwives, who represent more than 50% of the current shortage in health workers.

The largest shortages of nurses and midwives are in Southeast Asia and Africa.

What is the scheme launched by the Government of India to address shortage of nurses?

Government has approved 157 new nursing colleges for 24 states and 3 union territories.

The nursing colleges will be set up in co-location with the existing medical colleges in India.

Funding: The financial contribution of the central government for the project will be Rs 1570 crore.

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– The central government will provide Rs 10 crore for setting up these colleges and the state governments can invest in the remaining amount depending upon the project report to be prepared for each college.

Significance: The new colleges will add about 15,700 nursing graduates every year.

27. A third of Central varsity teaching positions lying vacant

Source: The post is based on the article “A third of Central varsity teaching positions lying vacant” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2023**

What is the News?

According to a Right To Information(RTI) reply, over 30% of teaching positions are lying vacant in 45 Central Universities across India.

What is the data regarding the vacant position lying in Central Universities across India?

Vacant seats: Over 30% of teaching positions are lying vacant in 45 Central Universities across India.

State wise: Around 88% of the teaching positions were vacant in Odisha’s central universities — the highest among all States.

– On the other hand, Mizoram and Kerala had the least share of vacancies — 15% or less.

Universities: Central University of Andhra Pradesh had a 100% vacancy, with none of the sanctioned teaching positions filled.

– The Central University of Odisha, Dr. Harisingh Gour University in Madhya Pradesh, the Central Kashmir University and the Tripura University had over 50% of seats vacant.

Caste wise: Only 20% of teacher positions sanctioned under the general category were vacant compared to 44% among OBC positions, 38% among SC positions and 45% among ST positions.

– Notably 71% of posts sanctioned under the EWS quota and 58% under the Persons with Disabilities were also vacant.

– Hence, among all the reservation groups, General Category positions had the least vacancy share.

What are the main reasons for these higher vacancies in Central Universities?

Location: Vacancies can arise in some universities which are located in remote rural areas. For instance, the Central University of Odisha is located in Sunabeda town of Koraput district in Odisha which is up to 486 km away from the State capital, Bhubaneswar.

Age of the University: Central University of Andhra Pradesh was founded in 2018. This is a fairly new university. It usually takes three to five years for a Central University to have a fully functional campus. In these campuses, teaching faculty from older Universities are often asked to mentor and handhold until vacant positions get filled.

What are the steps being taken by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to address vacancies in Central Universities?

CU- Chayan portal has been launched by University Grants Commission (UGC).

Purpose: It is a unified recruitment portal designed and developed specifically for faculty recruitment in Central Universities.

– The portal provides a common platform for listing vacancies/advertisements/ faculty positions across all Universities. The Portal makes the recruitment process entirely online, from

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application to screening with alerts to all the portal users.

[28. The Ministry of Culture and the Indian Navy sign an MoU to revive the “ancient stitched shipbuilding method \(Tankai method\)”](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“The Ministry of Culture and the Indian Navy sign an MoU to revive the “ancient stitched shipbuilding method (Tankai method)””** published in **PIB on 19th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Ministry of Culture and Indian Navy have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to revive and preserve the 2000-year-old technique of shipbuilding known as the **Tankai method**.

What is the Tankai method?

The Tankai method is a 2000-year-old technique of shipbuilding. It is also known as ‘stitched shipbuilding method’.

In this method, the ships are constructed by stitching wooden planks together rather than using nails.

This method offers flexibility and durability to ships making them less susceptible to damage from shoals and sandbars.

The arrival of European ships led to a shift in shipbuilding techniques. But this art of stitching ships has survived in a few coastal regions of India, primarily for small local fishing boats.

How is the Ministry of Culture planning to revive the Tankai method?

The Ministry of Culture and Indian Navy have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to revive the Tankai method.

As per the MoU, the plan is to construct an ocean-going wooden stitched sail ship using the ancient Tankai method.

Significance: The significance of this stitched ship project extends beyond its construction. It aims to revive the maritime memory and instill a sense of pride in India’s rich maritime heritage among its citizens.

– Additionally, it aims to promote cultural memories among the Indian Ocean littoral countries.

[29. A ‘dead’ Ghaggar and its tributaries wrought havoc in Haryana early July; here is how](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“A ‘dead’ Ghaggar and its tributaries wrought havoc in Haryana early July; here is how”** published in **Down To Earth on 17th July 2023**

What is the News?

Ghaggar River and its tributaries have caused widespread devastation in Haryana after reclaiming their floodplains.

Where is Ghaggar River?

Ghaggar-Hakra River is an intermittent river in India and Pakistan that flows only during the monsoon season.

The river is known as Ghaggar before the Ottu barrage, and as Hakra downstream of the barrage in the Thar Desert.

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Origin: It originates in the village of Dagshai in the Shivalik Hills of Himachal Pradesh and flows through Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Tributaries: The main tributaries of the Ghaggar are the Kaushalya, Tangri, Markanda, Beghna and Sukhna and Chautang.

What happened now?

Ghaggar river and its tributaries are considered dead rivers in the state and are heavily encroached upon.

These rivers are facing threats from growing residential settlements, industrial units and sewage. The rivers have been so badly encroached that it would be difficult to locate them on the ground.

However, this monsoon heavy rains in the Shivalik hills caused flash floods in the catchment areas of the Ghaggar and its tributaries.

Due to this, many cities in Haryana have been flooded causing heavy losses.

[30. A fascinating fusion of rock art at Rudragiri hillock](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“A fascinating fusion of rock art at Rudragiri hillock”** published in **The Hindu on 19th July 2023**

What is the News?

Rudragiri hillock stands as a shining example of the rich historical and artistic legacy of Andhra Pradesh.

What is Rudragiri Hillock?

Rudragiri Hillock is located in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

It is nestled amidst the Eastern Ghats, features five naturally formed rock shelters at its foothills, facing westward.

It features a unique combination of prehistoric rock paintings from the Mesolithic period and exquisite artwork from the Kakatiya dynasty, dating back to around 1300 AD.

Key Findings from the Rudragiri Hillock site:

The first cave presents a narrative mural portraying the intense battle between the Vanara brothers, Vali and Sugriva.

In the middle cave, a grand sketch of Hanuman, accompanied by sacred symbols of the conch (Sankha) and the fire altar (Yagna Vedi) is present. Hanuman is depicted carrying the Sanjivani hill in his right hand symbolizing his mission to save Lakshmana's life.

The third cave houses the prehistoric rock paintings from the Mesolithic era. The Kakatiya artist chose the same rock shelter to superimpose the elegant figure of Hanuman who is portrayed in a unique 'Anjali' posture, folding his hands in a divine offering.

What is the Rudragiri Hillock connection with Telangana?

There is a striking resemblance between the splendid frescoes on Rudragiri's rock shelters and those discovered in Muppavaram and Pandavula Gutta in Warangal district of Telangana.

These similarities suggest that the Ramayana scenes depicted at Rudragiri might have drawn inspiration from the artworks at Muppavaram.

Moreover, the **Ganapati Deva** (1199-1262 AD), the founder of Muppavaram temple and a prominent figure of the **Kakatiya dynasty** likely patronized the rich ancient mural heritage found at Rudragiri.

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[31. What are the takeaways from the NATO summit?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What are the takeaways from the NATO summit?**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2023**

What is the News?

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit was held recently at Vilnius, Lithuania.

What is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization(NATO)?

[Click Here to read](#)

What are the key takeaways from the recent NATO summit?

Firstly, NATO acknowledged that the Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security, peace, and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Their approach towards strengthening their defenses and deterrence against Russia remains the recurring theme of the Summit document.

Secondly, there was an expectation of a timeline for the Ukrainian membership of NATO. However, this did not happen but the leaders reiterated that NATO will be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine when allies agree and conditions are met.

– In this regard, the launch of the NATO-Ukraine Council as a forum for crisis consultations and decision-making indicated that NATO tried to assuage the feelings of Ukraine for not being included in the alliance by creating a mechanism for its wider engagement, support and future inclusion as a full member.

Thirdly, the inclusion of Finland and approval of Sweden as NATO members indicates a few things.

– It signals that NATO continues to practice Article 10 of the Washington Treaty signed in April 1949 which states that member countries can invite other European countries to become members of NATO.

– Turkey moving back from its long-standing opposition to Sweden’s inclusion in NATO is also a significant shift.

Fourthly, the summit minced no words on the challenges and threats emerging from China’s stated ambitions and coercive policies. It stated that NATO faces threats from China’s malicious hybrid cyber operations, as well as confrontational rhetoric and disinformation, which specifically aim at NATO allies and pose a threat to the security of the Alliance.

[32. ECI to issue digital time vouchers to National and State political parties for campaigning on Doordarshan & All India Radio during election](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**ECI to issue digital time vouchers to National & State political parties for campaigning on Doordarshan & All India Radio during elections**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has introduced a digital time voucher system for political parties to access government-owned electronic media, such as Doordarshan and All India Radio for campaigning during elections.

Background:

The scheme regarding political parties’ access to government-owned electronic media such as Doordarshan and All India Radio for campaigning during elections was initially notified in 1998.

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This scheme holds a statutory basis under Section 39A of the Representation of People's Act, 1951.

Under this Scheme, an equitable base time is allotted to each National Party and Recognized State Party of the state concerned uniformly on DD & AIR.

– An additional time is allotted based on the poll performance of the parties in the last assembly elections from the respective States/UT or in the last general Elections to Lok Sabha, as the case may be.

What is a Digital Time Voucher introduced by EC now?

A digital voucher is a type of voucher that is given online and can be redeemed at a later date.

Election Commission of India (ECI) has planned to issue digital time vouchers to National & State political parties for campaigning on Doordarshan & All India Radio during elections.

These vouchers can be redeemed by political parties at designated Doordarshan or AIR centres in exchange for total time allotted.

Each political party shall be given time Vouchers of different denominations of, 5 minutes and 10 minutes, equal to the total time allotted to it for telecasts on Doordarshan and broadcasts on AIR.

The political party shall have the discretion to choose any representatives and allow them to use those time vouchers provided that no such individual representative shall be allowed to use more than 20 minutes of the total time allotted to that party, either on Doordarshan or on AIR.

What is the significance of this Digital Time Voucher by EC?

Firstly, with this the political parties will not be required to send their representatives to ECI/CEO Offices for collection of the time vouchers physically during elections.

Secondly, this step also reflects the EC's commitment to leveraging technology for the betterment of the electoral process and ease of all stakeholders.

– **Note:** EC had also recently introduced a web portal for online filing of financial accounts by political parties with the Election Commission.

33. [Rajasthan minimum income Bill: provisions, what makes it unique](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Rajasthan minimum income Bill: provisions, what makes it unique”** published in **Indian Express on 21st July 2023**

What is the News?

The Rajasthan government has tabled the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023.

What is Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023?

Aim: To cover the entire adult population of the state with guaranteed wages or pension.

Categories: The Bill has three broad categories: 1) right to minimum guaranteed income 2) right to guaranteed employment and 3) right to guaranteed social security pension.

Expenditure: Government anticipates an additional expenditure of Rs 2,500 crore per year for this scheme, which may increase with time.

Key Provisions of the Bill:

Minimum guaranteed income: Each adult citizen of the state has been guaranteed a minimum income for 125 days a year through the Rajasthan government's flagship Indira Gandhi Shabri

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Rozgar Guarantee Yojana for urban areas and through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in rural areas.

Right to guaranteed social security pension: Government will provide eligible categories such as aged, disabled, widows, and single women with a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month. Importantly, the pension will be increased at the rate of 15 per cent each year.

Right to guarantee employment: According to the Right to Employment, once the work in a rural or urban employment schemes are finished, the entitled minimum wages must be paid weekly or not later than a fortnight.

– To implement this, a Program Officer will be appointed by the State government. In rural areas, the officer must not be below the rank of a Block Development Officer (BDO). In urban areas, they must be an Executive Officer of the relevant local body.

– The officer will ensure that the work site is within a five-kilometer radius of the location in which the job card is registered in both rural and urban areas.

– The Program Officer must also ensure the applicant gets work within 15 days of receiving the application. If not, the applicant is eligible for unemployment allowance on a weekly basis and in any case not later than a fortnight.

What is the significance of this bill?

Firstly, Mahatma Gandhi had said “true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members”. Hence, it **is a moral responsibility** of every government to ensure that everyone gets justice.

– Therefore, the Bill is part of a bouquet of schemes and measures undertaken by the Rajasthan government **to provide relief from inflation.**

Secondly, the bill contains many firsts in the country. The bill’s approach, guaranteeing minimum employment and pensions by law, distinguishes it from the cash transfer schemes that various other states have.

[34. Why is Kerch Bridge attack significant?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why is Kerch Bridge attack significant?**” published in **The Hindu On 21st July 2023**

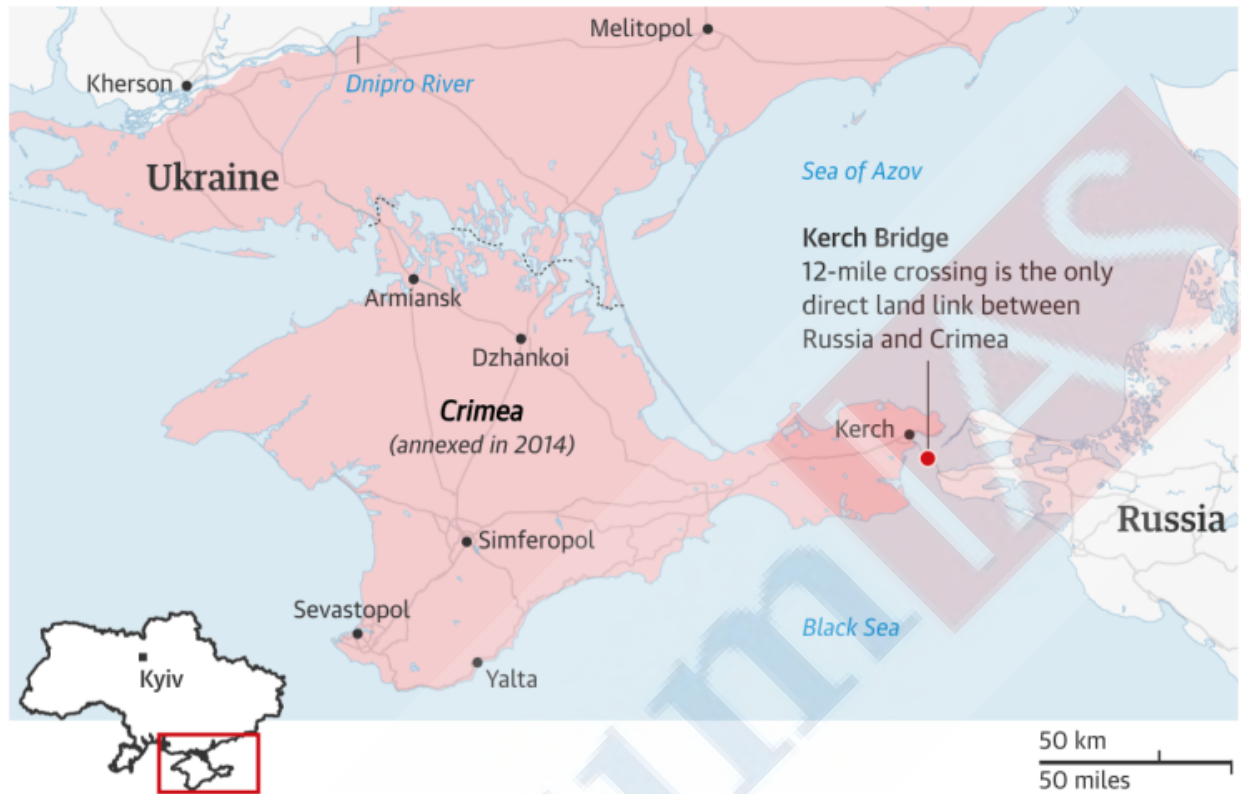
What is the News?

The Kerch Bridge has come under attack. One section of the bridge was damaged in what the Russians called an attack by two Ukrainian sea drones.

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What is Kerch Bridge?

■ Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine



Guardian graphic. Source: the Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats Project

Source: Guardian

The Kerch Bridge also known as the Crimean Bridge was built by Russia after it invaded and de-facto annexed the peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

The bridge links the Russian mainland to the Crimean Peninsula in the Black Sea.

The bridge is a vital supply route for goods heading to the Crimean Peninsula from Russia.

What is Kerch Strait?

Kerch Strait is a strait in Eastern Europe.

It connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, separating the Kerch Peninsula of Crimea in the west from the Taman Peninsula of Russia's Krasnodar Krai in the east.

The most important harbor, the Crimean city of Kerch, gives its name to the strait, formerly known as the Cimmerian Bosphorus.

It has also been called the Straits of Yenikale after the Yeni-Kale fortress in Kerch.

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[35. Over 60 species of plants that can survive extreme dehydration found in Western Ghats](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Over 60 species of plants that can survive extreme dehydration found in Western Ghats**” published in **Down to Earth** on **19th July 2023**.

What is the News?

Researchers have recently discovered 62 **Desiccation-tolerate vascular(DT) plant** species in India’s Western Ghats.

What are Desiccation-tolerate vascular plant species?

Desiccation-tolerant vascular (DT) plants are those plant species that are able to withstand extreme dehydration.

They can lose up to 95% of their water content and can revive themselves once water is available again.

This unique ability allows them to survive in harsh, arid environments that would be uninhabitable for most other plants.

These plants are found in both flowering and non-flowering species and in both temperate and tropical climates.

The global population of these species ranges between 300 and 1,500.

Desiccation-tolerate vascular(DT) plant species in India:

Indian desiccation tolerant plants are primarily found in forest rock outcrops and partially shaded tree trunks.

Ferricretes (a hard, erosion-resistant layer of sedimentary rock) and basaltic plateaus (plateaus produced by volcanic activity) seemed to be the preferred habitats.

A study has recently found 62 desiccation-tolerant vascular plant species in Western Ghats. Of these, 16 are endemic to India while 12 are exclusive to Western Ghats outcrops.

Among these discovered, nine genera of DT plants are reported as new also in a global perspective. They are identified as *Pyrosia*, *Aleuritopteris*, *Corallodiscus*, *Arundinella*, *Bhidea*, *Bothriochloa*, *Danthonidium*, *Dimeria* and *Glyphochloa*.

What is the significance of this discovery?

The discovery of the desiccation-tolerant (DT) vascular plants has potential applications in agriculture. For instance:

- Desiccation-resistant vascular plants can be used particularly in areas where water is scarce.
- Desiccation-resistant vascular plant genes can be used to develop a high temperature tolerant crop variety to boost climate resilience.

[36. ‘Zombie fires’ in the Arctic: Canada’s extreme wildfire season offers a glimpse of new risks in a warmer, drier future](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**‘Zombie fires’ in the Arctic: Canada’s extreme wildfire season offers a glimpse of new risks in a warmer, drier future**” published in **Down To Earth** on **19th July 2023**

What is the News?

Due to rise in global temperature, fires are spreading farther north and into the Arctic, leading to a rise in “**zombie fires**”

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What are Zombie Fires?

Zombie fires are fires that seem to come back from the dead.

After a wildfire has been extinguished on the surface, some of it can still burn belowground in secret, fuelled by peat and methane.

These fires can continue to burn all through winter, hidden under a layer of snow, and in spring as the temperature rises, the snow melts and the soil dries out, the wildfires can re-ignite and spread once again.

Why are Zombie Fires occurring in the Arctic region?

Wildfires have been a natural part of northern forest and tundra ecosystems for thousands of years.

However, the severity, frequency and types of wildfires in northern and Arctic regions have changed in recent decades.

One major reason for this is the rising temperature: The Arctic is warming nearly four times faster than the rest of the world, a phenomenon known as **Arctic amplification**.

This rise in temperature brings with it a number of changes to the environment that make the forest and tundra more susceptible to burning for longer.

Why is Zombie Fires a concern for the Arctic region?

Firstly, as the organic-rich Arctic soils dry up because of changing climate conditions, they can burn slowly and release vast amounts of smoke into the atmosphere.

Secondly, fires that spread underground are harder for firefighters to tame and extinguish, thus demanding more resources for longer periods of time.

Finally, these zombie fires don't die easily. Recent research finds that Arctic fires can smolder through the winter and reignite during early spring when temperatures rise.

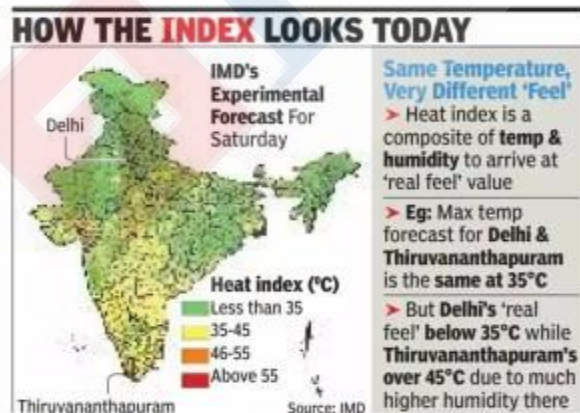
37. IMD has launched Heat Index

Source: The post is based on the article **"IMD has launched Heat Index"** published in **PIB on 20th July 2023**.

What is the News?

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has launched the Heat Index on an experimental basis.

What is the Heat Index?



Source: TOI

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Heat Index is also known as the apparent temperature. It is the temperature humans feel when relative humidity combines with the air temperature.

For instance, you may experience unusually high levels of heat despite the official temperature forecast indicating a 'normal' range. Say, if the absolute humidity of an area is high, you may feel hot, even though the temperature may not necessarily be that high.

Similarly, say there is a wind blowing; you will automatically feel colder, even if the temperature may not be so low.

How will the Heat Index be calculated by IMD?

At present, heat index is derived using the heat index equation similar to what is used by National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), USA.

What are the colour codes used for Heat Index?

The colour codes used for Experimental Heat Index are as follows: **1) Green:** Experimental heat Index less than 35 deg C **2) Yellow:** Experimental heat Index in the range 36-45 deg C **3) Orange:** Experimental heat Index in the range 46-55 deg C and **4) Red:** Experimental heat Index greater than 55 deg C.

[38. NITI Aayog releases Analytical Tools for managing Climate Change and exploring Net Zero Pathways](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**NITI Aayog releases Analytical Tools for managing Climate Change and exploring Net Zero Pathways**” published in **PIB on 20th July 2023**.

What is the News?

Niti Aayog has launched the revamped version of India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS) 2047.

What is India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS) 2047?

IESS is an open source web based tool launched by Niti Aayog. It has been designed with the help of IIT Bombay.

Purpose of the tool: To assess the integrated impact of various green energy policies of the Government of India.

– To analyze emissions, cost, land and water requirements of India till 2047 by assessing the demand and supply of energy in the country.

The tool will be updated on a **yearly basis**.

Significance of IESS tool: It is user-friendly interactive tool that can help ministries/ departments to develop a variety of energy transition scenarios to achieve net-zero.

– The tool is also flexible enough to provide many permutations and combinations of net-zero pathways.

– It can also help in computing the energy needs and estimates of the country and hence reduce India's dependency on external agencies for the estimates.

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[39. SC urges Centre to transfer cheetahs to another location](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**SC urges Centre to transfer cheetahs to another location**” published in **The Hindu on 21st July 2023**

What is the News?

The Supreme Court has asked the Union government why the recent deaths of Cheetah’s was becoming a “prestige issue”.

It also asked why the cheetahs were all released in Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, and not spread out across sites.

What has happened to Cheetahs?

20 cheetahs were translocated to Kuno National Park in India from Namibia and South Africa as part of efforts to revive the cheetah population in India.

Later, four cubs were born to one of the Cheetah.

Among these 24 cheetah’s, eight cheetahs have died which includes three cubs born in India.

What did the Supreme Court say on Cheetah’s deaths?

The Supreme Court has said that the deaths of 40% of the 20 cheetahs brought from South Africa and Namibia to the Kuno National Park (KNP) within a year does not present a good picture.

The court said that instead of having cheetahs in one place, we can create one or more habitats for them.

[40. Himalayan glaciers retreating at varying rates, says Union Minister](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Himalayan glaciers retreating at varying rates, says Union Minister**” published in **PIB on 20th July 2023**

What is the News?

The Union Minister of Earth Sciences has said that the majority of Himalayan glaciers analyzed are melting or retreating at varying rates in different regions.

Melting of Himalayan Glaciers:

Chandra Basin in Western Himalayas: National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) has been monitoring six glaciers in the Chandra basin in western Himalaya since 2013.

– A state-of-the-art field research station ‘**Himansh**’ established in Chandra basin and operational since 2016 for conducting field experiments and expeditions to glaciers.

– NCPOR has found that the Chandra basin has lost about 6% of its glacial area during last 20 years.

Garhwal Himalayas: Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG) has been pursuing cryospheric research on different aspects that include glacier dynamics, hydrology and hazards using both satellite data and ground-based observations.

WIHG have observed that glaciers in the Garhwal Himalaya have shown an overall retreat of glaciers with variable rate of melting.

Himalayan Karakoram region: Indian Space Research Organization’s (ISRO’s) Space Application Centre (SAC) has mapped 5234 glaciers of Himalayan-Karakoram (H-K) region which indicated varied loss in glacier area in the region.

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Why are the Himalayan Glaciers melting?

The melting of glaciers is a natural process and cannot be controlled. The recession or melting of glaciers is mainly caused by global warming and climate change.

Therefore, the rate of melting of glaciers can't be prevented or slowed down, unless all the factors responsible for global warming and climate change can be controlled.

What is the impact of melting of Himalayan Glaciers?

Melting of Glaciers will not only severely affect the flow in Himalayan river system but will also give rise to natural disasters.

It may also lead to shift of tree line in the Himalaya and may also cause change in phonological behavior of plants. It may also impact the livelihoods of mountain people and downstream populations.

[41. Rajya Sabha Chairman nominates four women parliamentarians to panel of vice-chairpersons](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Rajya Sabha Chairman nominates four women parliamentarians to panel of vice-chairpersons”** published in **The Hindu on 21st July 2023.**

What is the News?

Rajya Sabha Chairman has reconstituted the panel of vice chairpersons.

For the first time in the history of the Rajya Sabha, the Chairman has nominated four women parliamentarians to the panel of vice-chairpersons, giving women **equal representation** in the panel.

One among the newly nominated women members is S. Phangnon Konyak. She is the first woman to be elected as a Member of the Rajya Sabha from Nagaland in April 2022 and the second woman from the State to be elected to either House of the Parliament or the State Assembly.

What is the Panel of Vice-Chairpersons?

Under the Rules of Rajya Sabha, the Chairman nominates from amongst the members a panel of vice-chairpersons.

Any one of the members of the Panel of Vice-Chairpersons can preside over the House in the absence of the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman. He has the same powers as the Chairman when so presiding. He holds office until a new panel of vice-chairpersons is nominated.

When a member of the panel of vice chairpersons is also not present, any other person as determined by the House acts as the Chairman.

It must be emphasized here that a member of the panel of vice chairpersons cannot preside over the House, when the office of the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman is vacant.

During such time, the Chairman's duties are to be performed by such member of the House as the president may appoint for the purpose. The elections are held, as soon as possible, to fill the vacant posts.

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42. [Portal launched to report violation of ban on e-cigarettes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Portal launched to report violation of ban on e-cigarettes**” published in **The Hindu on 22nd July 2023**.

What is the News?

The Union government has asked the state governments to effectively implement the Centre’s ban on e-cigarettes.

What are e-cigarettes?

[Click Here to read](#)

About the ban on e-cigarettes:

In 2019, Parliament passed the [Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes \(Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage, and Advertisement\) Act \(PECA\)](#) to curb the use and sale of e-cigarettes in India.

Despite this ban, e-cigarettes continue to be sold on e-commerce sites even to children below 18.

This is happening because of the weak implementation of PECA Act leading to easy availability of e-cigarettes through online, retail, convenient stores, stationery shops and near educational institutions.

Now to curb this, the Health Ministry has launched an online portal www.violation-reporting.in to facilitate reporting of violations under PECA Act.

The portal will allow faster action against any reported violations of ban on e-cigarettes.

43. [Industry Leaders Forge Alliance for increasing Demand of Electric Freight Vehicles](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Industry Leaders Forge Alliance for increasing Demand of Electric Freight Vehicles**” published in **PIB on 22nd July 2023**

What is the News?

NITI Aayog has organized the **e-FAST India** event on the sidelines of the 14th Clean Energy Ministerial.

What is the Clean Energy Ministerial?

[Click Here to read](#)

What is e-FAST India?

Launched in: September, 2022

Full Form: e-FAST stands for Electric Freight Accelerator for Sustainable Transport – India.

Purpose: It is India’s first electric freight platform.

Aim: To galvanize the transition towards cleaner and greener freight transportation (Freight transport is the movement of goods from one place to another).

Led by: NITI Aayog and supported by the collaborative efforts of 12 knowledge partners.

Features: The platform will help strengthen partnerships and identify and support innovative freight solutions.

– The platform also aims to promote freight electrification, supported by ground-based demonstration pilots and research that is supported by evidence.

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– Additionally, it will assist with scalable trials and provide information for policymakers that aim to hasten India's freight electrification.

44. Use any Indian language as optional medium, says CBSE

Source: The post is based on the article “Use any Indian language as optional medium, says CBSE” published in **The Hindu on 22nd July 2023.**

What is the News?

Central Board of Secondary Education(CBSE) has allowed affiliated schools to use Indian Languages as an optional medium of instruction from pre-primary stages to Class 12.

What does the National Education policy say on the use of Indian Languages as a medium of instruction in schools?

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisages the use of mother tongue or regional or Indian languages as the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, and preferably till Grade 8 and beyond.

The policy also highlights the significant cognitive advantages of multilingualism for young learners, particularly when they were exposed to several languages from the foundational stage.

What are the challenges in the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools?

There are several challenges such as: 1) availability of skilled teachers capable of teaching in multilingual settings **2)** creation of high-quality multilingual textbooks and **3)** limited time available, especially in two-shift government schools as multilingual education demands additional instructional time allocation.

What are the steps the government is taking to promote multilingual education?

The Ministry of Education has directed the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to prepare textbooks in the 22 Scheduled Languages of the country.

45. Ports to UPI to green energy, India and Sri Lanka deepen economic ties

Source: The post is based on the article “Ports to UPI to green energy, India and Sri Lanka deepen economic ties” published in **Indian Express on 22nd July 2023.**

What is the News?

The President of Sri Lanka has paid an official visit to India.

During the visit, India and Sri Lanka adopted a ‘vision document’ for a deeper economic partnership between the two countries.

What is the India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision document?

The vision document has been called ‘Promoting Connectivity, Catalysing Prosperity: India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision’.

Aim: To strengthen bilateral and economic partnership between India and Sri Lanka.

Pillars: The document is based on five pillars: maritime connectivity; air connectivity; energy and power connectivity; trade, economic and financial connectivity and people-to-people connectivity.

Key Features of these five Pillars:

Maritime connectivity: The document outlines cooperation in development of ports and logistics at Colombo, Trincomalee and Kankesanthurai, with an aim to consolidate regional logistics and shipping.

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– It also talks of resumption of passenger ferry services between Nagapattinam in India and Kankesanthurai in Sri Lanka besides working towards early resumption of ferry services between Rameswaram and Talaimannar.

Air connectivity: Currently, there is a single flight a day between Chennai and the northern Lankan city of Jaffna.

– The two countries agreed to expand this flight to Colombo as well as explore connectivity between Chennai and Trincomalee, Batticaloa and other destinations in Sri Lanka.

Energy and power connectivity: The two countries have plans to **establish a high-capacity power grid interconnection**. This is to enable bidirectional electricity trade between Sri Lanka and other regional countries, including those of the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) initiative.

– The document also talks of expediting implementation of understanding reached on the **Sampur Solar power project** and LNG infrastructure and exploring **cooperation in Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia**.

– The two countries will also be working on a **multi-product petroleum pipeline from India's South to Sri Lanka**.

– They will also undertake a mutually agreed **joint exploration and production of hydrocarbons in Sri Lanka's offshore basins** to develop Sri Lanka's upstream petroleum sector.

Trade, economic and financial connectivity: The two sides will undertake discussions on the **Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement** with an aim to comprehensively enhance bilateral trade and investments in new and priority areas.

– They have decided to **designate Indian Rupee as currency for trade settlements** between the two countries.

– Both sides also agreed to **operationalise UPI-based digital payments** for further enhancing trade and transactions between businesses and common people.

People-to-people connectivity: The two countries have planned to promote awareness and popularize India's Buddhist circuit, and Ramayana trail as well as ancient places of Buddhist, Hindu and other religious worship in Sri Lanka for enhancing tourism.

[46. Biofortified foods: Industry bats for separate branding](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Biofortified foods: Industry bats for separate branding”** published in **The Hindu Businessline on 19th July 2023**.

What is the News?

According to a report, the global market of biofortification is projected to reach \$217.21 million by 2030 from the current \$100.84 million (in 2022).

What is Biofortification?

Biofortification is the process of improving the nutritional quality of food crops.

This can be achieved through agronomic practices, conventional breeding or biotechnology based approaches like genetic engineering and genome editing.

Biofortification of staple crops such as rice is intended as a sustainable, cost-effective and food-based means of delivering target micronutrients to populations who do not have access to or cannot afford diverse diets and other existing interventions such as fortified foods and supplementation.

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It is identified by the Copenhagen Consensus as one of the highest value-for-money interventions for micronutrient deficiency: gaining 17 USD worth of benefits for every 1 USD spent.

What are the steps being taken by the government of India to promote biofortified foods?

On World Food Day 2020, the Prime Minister dedicated to the nation 17 biofortified seed varieties of eight local and traditional crops, including wheat and paddy rice. These varieties have been developed by utilizing the local landraces and farmer's varieties.

Further, to encourage biofortification amongst farming communities, Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) has started the Nutri-Sensitive Agricultural Resources and Innovations (NARI) programme for promoting family farming linking agriculture to nutrition.

Government is seeking the private sector's help to popularize the biofortified foods. The private industry wants separate branding of biofortified foods, similar to what has been done for "organic" products.

47. Rule 176 vs Rule 267: What Govt agrees to, what Opp demands

Source: The post is based on the article "**Rule 176 vs Rule 267: What Govt agrees to, what Opp demands**" published in **Indian Express on 22nd July 2023**

What is the News?

The Parliament transacted no business amid opposition parties' demand for a discussion on the ongoing violence in Manipur.

The government agreed for a 'short-term' discussion under **Rule 176**. But the Opposition pressed for suspending all business under **Rule 267** and that the Prime Minister make a suo motu statement followed by a discussion.

What is Rule 176?

Rule 176 allows for a Short-duration discussion not exceeding two-and-a-half hours on a matter of urgent public importance.

It says that any member desirous of raising discussion on a matter of urgent public importance may give notice in writing to the Secretary-General specifying clearly and precisely the matter to be raised.

The notice shall be accompanied by an explanatory note stating reasons for raising discussion on the matter in question and it must be supported by the signatures of at least two other members.

Once the Chairman admits the notice, the chairman in consultation with the Leader of the Council, will fix the date on which such a matter may be taken up for discussion and allow such time for discussion not exceeding two and a half hours.

The rule says there shall be no formal motion or voting under a short duration discussion.

What is Rule 267?

According to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, Rule 267 relates to suspension of rules.

Rule 267 says "Any member, may, with the consent of the Chairman, move that any rule may be suspended in its application to a motion related to the business listed before the Council of that day and if the motion is carried, the rule in question shall be suspended for the time being."

Simply put, under this rule, Rajya Sabha MPs can give a written notice to suspend all listed business and discuss an issue of importance the country is facing.

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According to Parliament records, the last time the Rajya Sabha witnessed a discussion under Rule 267 was on November 16, 2016. The issue was demonetisation.

48. What are Bacteriophages, the 'good viruses' that fight bacteria?

Source: The post is based on the article **“What are Bacteriophages, the ‘good viruses’ that fight bacteria?”** published in **Indian Express on 21st July 2023.**

What is the News?

Scientists are exploring the potential of bacteriophages to treat bacterial infections that are resistant to antibiotics.

What are Bacteriophages?

A bacteriophage or phage is a virus that infects bacteria.

They were discovered independently by Frederick W. Twort in Great Britain (1915) and Félix d'Hérelle in France (1917).

D'Hérelle coined the term bacteriophage, meaning “bacteria eater,” to describe the agent's bactericidal ability.

How do Bacteriophages kill bacteria?

Bacteriophages are harmless to human cells as they do not recognize them as their bacterial prey.

They work by hunting down bacteria and attaching themselves to the surface of a bacterial cell, before injecting viral DNA material into the cell.

The viral DNA then replicates inside the bacteria, sometimes by borrowing the DNA replication hardware of the bacteria.

Once all the bacteria are lysed (dead), they'll stop multiplying. Like other viruses, phages can lay dormant (in hibernation) until more bacteria show up.

What is Phage Therapy?

Phage therapy is the therapeutic use of bacteriophages for the treatment of bacterial infections.

Advantages of Phage Therapy: It has reduced side effects and reduced risk of the bacteria developing resistance, since bacteriophages are much more specific than antibiotics.

– They are typically harmless not only to the host organism but also to other beneficial bacteria such as the gut microbiota, reducing the chances of opportunistic infections.

Disadvantages of Phage Therapy: Disadvantages include the difficulty of finding an effective phage for a particular infection; a phage will kill a bacterium only if it matches the specific strain.