



Factly Compilation

7th to 12th August, 2023

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1. [Forest Conservation Bill: An encompassing green](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Forest Conservation Bill: An encompassing green**” published in The Indian express on 7th August 2023.

Syllabus Topic: Environment Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

News: In this article author discusses the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023, passed by the Indian Parliament. The Bill, committed to sustainable development, seeks to integrate tribal people living in forests into mainstream development, enhance green cover, provide basic amenities to forest dwellers, and ensure secure borders by enabling infrastructure development in border areas.

Evolution of Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023

The origin of the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023, traces back to **the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980**. This Act aimed to control the use of forest land for non-forest purposes.

However, issues arose when the Act’s provisions were interpreted differently across states, especially regarding government-recorded forest lands and private plantations.

The Supreme Court’s 1996 orders in the Godavarman case expanded the Act’s applicability. The court stated the Act applies not only to notified forest land but also to lands resembling forests.

Post Godavarman case, the Act started applying to areas even if they weren’t government-recorded forests. This led to fears among private plantation owners and slowed afforestation outside forests.

This uncertainty was a hindrance in enhancing green cover to meet **the Nationally Determined Contribution** targets, aiming to create **a carbon sink of 2.5 to 3.0 billion tons of CO2 equivalent**.

To address these issues, the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 was introduced, providing clear guidelines and removing the ambiguities, thereby streamlining the conservation and development of forest lands.

What are the benefits of Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023?

Inclusive Development: The Bill helps tribal people, especially those in deep forests, join India’s development journey, enhancing their living conditions.

Enhancing Green Cover: As per the **2021 India State of Forest Report**, **forest cover is 21.71% of India’s area**. The Bill encourages afforestation outside forests, contributing to further increase in cover.

Regulated Land Use: The Bill offers minor exemptions for forest land diversion, without giving blanket permission, ensuring all conservation concerns are addressed.

Border Security: It allows infrastructure development in border areas, facilitating swift deployment of forces, improving national security.

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Education and Health Access: The Bill paves the way for tribal children and elderly people to access education and healthcare facilities.

Conservation Efforts: It promotes activities like ecotourism, increasing local communities' commitment to conservation.

Climate Mitigation: By regulating forest management, the Bill contributes to mitigating the impact of climate change.

Boosting Livelihoods: It provides new livelihood sources to local communities, further connecting them with mainstream development.

What are the concerns of Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023?

Read here: [What are the concerns with the Forest \(Conservation\) Amendment Bill?](#)

2. [Four years after Article 370 abrogation: The unanswered, uncomfortable questions about India's federalism](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Four years after Article 370 abrogation: The unanswered, uncomfortable questions about India's federalism**” published in “The Indian express” on 7th August 2023.

Syllabus: issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure,

News: The author discusses concerns about India's federalism due to the repeal of Article 370, including the unclear meaning of statehood, the issue of local people's say in governance, and whether this action sets a dangerous precedent.

About India's federalism

The Supreme Court of India acknowledged federalism as a basic feature of the Constitution in the S R Bommai v Union of India case (1994).

India practices “asymmetrical federalism”, meaning states have different relationships with the Union.

This unique model is a result of both design and historical events.

Asymmetrical federalism has helped India remain united despite various secessionist movements.

Articles 371-A to 371-J demonstrate that a uniform approach to federalism isn't suitable for India, highlighting the need for local adaptations.

What are the major concerns for India's federalism due to the repeal of Article 370?

Statehood Meaning: The repeal of Article 370 has led to the “downgrading” of Jammu & Kashmir from a full state to a Union Territory. It prompts questions about what statehood within the Union of India signifies. It's the first instance where a full state has been demoted to a Union Territory.

People's Voice: The action raised concerns about whether residents of a state should have a say in how they're governed. Previously, changes in a state's status were often made with the approval of that state's legislative assembly, a convention that wasn't followed in this case.

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Setting a Precedent: The removal of Article 370 might set a precedent for the unilateral revocation of special provisions made for other states. This could destabilize the unique asymmetrical federalism India has cultivated to accommodate different needs across its states.

Delay in Restoration: Four years after the revocation, there's no timeline for restoring Jammu & Kashmir's statehood. This could negatively affect the region's governance and societal harmony.

Centralization Concerns: The action appears to centralize power, contrasting with the trend of decentralization to strengthen the Union. It raises questions about the future direction of India's federalism.

3. [On government direction on Indian drug standards: A partial remedy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Express View on government direction on Indian drug standards: A partial remedy**" published in "The Indian express" on 7th August 2023.

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: A much-needed action was taken last week when the government issued a directive requesting that drug producers adhere to WHO guidelines.

What are the recent incidents that have dented the country's reputation as a reliable source of inexpensive generics?

In October 2022, over **60 children in Gambia died due to kidney complications from cough syrups** made by Haryana-based Maiden Pharmaceuticals.

Within three months, another cold remedy by Marion Biotech in Noida was blamed for **19 children's deaths in Uzbekistan.**

In March 2023, **Cameroon authorities associated a batch of cough medicines from an Indore-based firm with at least 12 fatalities.**

The World Health Organization found toxic content in seven Indian-made cough syrups.

Surveys by Indian authorities have also revealed serious shortcomings in at least 160 pharma units.

What are the reasons for such incidents?

Lack of WHO certification: Less than 20% of Indian pharma units are WHO-certified, indicating poor quality control.

Outsourcing to MSMEs: Large companies often outsource production to small and medium-sized enterprises where quality might be compromised for cost reduction.

Inadequate regulatory staffing: For instance, Haryana's drug monitoring department had less than 40% of its required staff during the Maiden Pharma case investigation.

Misallocation of inspectors' duties: Inspectors often handle administrative work related to licenses, causing a neglect in drug safety and efficacy checks.

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Limited testing facilities: India only has 31 government-run drug testing labs, which is not sufficient.

Lack of transparency and public information: There is limited information about inspection procedures and violations that could warn regulatory authorities, doctors, and healthcare institutions.

What should be done?

Implement WHO standards: The government should require all pharmaceutical manufacturers to adhere to these global norms.

Improve regulatory oversight: This includes hiring more staff for drug monitoring and focusing their work on drug safety checks.

Enhance testing facilities: Increase the number of state and central drug testing laboratories.

Create a violation database: This would alert authorities, healthcare institutions, and doctors about inspections and violations.

Increase transparency: Publicly share information about procedures followed during investigations and manufacturing standards.

4. [Vikram S Mehta writes on the climate crisis: The global way out](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Vikram S Mehta writes on the climate crisis: The global way out**” published in “The Indian express” on 7th August 2023.

Syllabus: Environment Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment & Disaster and disaster management.

News: In this article discusses the growing global warming crisis and the challenges in addressing it due to political and social divisions. They mention a book by Duhaime suggesting the human brain can be conditioned for pro-environment actions. The author believes that, like the global response to Covid19, collaboration is key.

What are the challenges in addressing growing global warming crisis?

Political and Social Divisions:

The world is divided geopolitically, especially between the US and China.

Escalating tensions and economic nationalism hinder global cooperation.

The US Inflation Reduction Act and Europe’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) show a swing towards economic nationalism.

Economic Implications:

Former US Secretary Henry Paulson warns against only focusing on solar and wind.

Solar facilities can destroy forests.

Mining can harm sensitive areas.

Wind turbines have caused one million bird deaths.

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Environmental Warnings:

The World Meteorological Organization **says July was the “hottest week on record”**.

One year between 2024-2027 will exceed the 1.5 C temperature rise limit set at COP 21.

Xinjiang saw a high of 52.2 C.

Phoenix faced 19 straight days of above 43 C.

Forest fires are increasing in southern Europe.

Natural Tipping Points:

The North Atlantic Gulf stream is at risk of collapsing by the 2050s.

Such a collapse would drastically change global climates.

What should be done?

Limit Global Warming: Ensure global temperatures don't exceed 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels, as set in COP 21.

Renewable Energy: Increase the share of renewables in the energy mix, as suggested by the president of COP28, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber.

Innovate: Scale up technologies like green hydrogen and carbon capture.

Financial Commitments: Governments should meet their financial pledges towards climate action.

Holistic Solutions: Avoid singular solutions like solely focusing on solar and wind, as they can have unintended environmental consequences. For example, solar facilities on forested land or wind turbines causing bird deaths.

Global Cooperation: Collaborate internationally to address the crisis, as done during the Covid19 pandemic.

Brain Conditioning: Leverage the “plasticity” of the human brain, as mentioned in Duhaime's book, to encourage pro-environment policies.

Avoid Destruction: Refrain from projects that harm nature, such as mining in sensitive areas.

5. [5% of birds in India are endemic, says Zoological Survey of India publication](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“5% of birds in India are endemic, says Zoological Survey of India publication”** published in **The Hindu on 7th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has released a publication titled **“75 Endemic Birds of India”**.

What are the key highlights from the publication “75 Endemic Birds of India”?

Endemic birds: India is home to 1,353 bird species, which represents approximately 12.40% of global bird diversity. Out of these bird species, 78 (5%) are endemic to the country.

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The highest number of endemic species have been recorded in the **Western Ghats**, with 28 bird species.

– Some of the species recorded in the Western Ghats are the Malabar Grey Hornbill, Malabar Parakeet, Ashambu Laughing Thrush and White-bellied Sholakili.

Endemic bird species not sighted in last few decades: Of the 78 species, three species have not been recorded in the last few decades. They are:

– **Manipur Bush Quail** (*Perdica manipurensis*), listed as ‘Endangered’ in IUCN Red List with its last recorded sighting in 1907;

– **Himalayan Quail** (*Ophrysia superciliosa*), listed as ‘Critically Endangered’ with its last recorded sighting in 1876 and

– **Jerdon’s Courser** (*Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*), listed as ‘Critically Endangered’ with its last confirmed sighting in 2009.

Threatened Endemic Bird species of India: Of the 78 endemic species, 25 are classified as ‘Threatened’ by the IUCN.

– Three species (Bugun Liocichla or *Liocichla bugunorum*; Himalayan Quail or *Ophrysia Superciliosa* and Jerdon’s Courser or *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*) are listed as ‘Critically Endangered’.

– Five of the endemic birds are categorized as ‘Endangered’, and 17 as ‘Vulnerable’, while 11 are categorized as ‘Near Threatened’ on the IUCN Red List.

6. [North India’s first River Rejuvenation Project Devika is nearing completion](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**North India’s first River Rejuvenation Project Devika is nearing completion**” published in **PIB on 6th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Union Minister has said that North India’s first River Rejuvenation **Project Devika** is nearing completion.

What is Project Devika?

Project Devika aims to rejuvenate Devika River. It is North India’s first river rejuvenation project.

It was launched in 2019 under the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP).

Under the project, bathing “ghats” (places) on the banks of the Devika River will be developed, encroachments will be removed, natural water bodies will be restored and catchment areas will be developed along with cremation ground.

The project also includes the construction of three sewage treatment plants, development of two cremation ghats, protection fencing and landscaping, small hydropower plants and three solar power plants.

On completion of the project, the rivers will see reduction in pollution and improvement in water quality.

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What is River Devika?

Devika river originates from the hilly Suddha Mahadev temple in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir and flows down towards western Punjab (now in Pakistan) where it merges with the Ravi river.

The river holds religious significance as it is revered by Hindus as the sister of river Ganga.

In 2020, Devika Bridge was inaugurated in Udhampur. Apart from taking care of traffic congestion, the Devika Bridge was also meant to help smooth passage of Army convoys and vehicles.

7. [India launches 'Neerakshi' – Autonomous Underwater Vehicle for mine detection](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“India launches ‘Neerakshi’ – Autonomous Underwater Vehicle for mine detection”** published in **Hindustan Times on 29th July 2023.**

What is the News?

India has launched an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle called 'Neerakshi' for detecting underwater mines.

What is Neerakshi?

Neerakshi is an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) designed to detect mines.

Developed by: It is a collaboration of Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd and Aerospace Engineering Private Ltd (AEPL).

Functions: It can be used for a variety of functions ranging from mine detection to mine disposal to underwater survey.

– It has an endurance of nearly 4 hours, and is capable of operating up to a depth of 300m.

Significance: It is the first of its kind in India and will be tested by the Navy, Coast Guard, and Army before being available commercially.

– It is part of GRSE's broader ambitions to create autonomous sea surface vehicles, sea-based drones and explore green propulsion technologies.

8. [Musk's Starlink: why the new sovereign of low-earth orbit is bad news?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Musk's Starlink: why the new sovereign of low-earth orbit is bad news?”** published in **The Hindu on 7th August 2023.**

What is the News?

In January 2023, pictures of a Ukrainian drone with a modified Starlink satellite dish circulated on Russian Telegram channels. This raised concerns about using the dish for controlling the drone remotely and for military purposes.

Later, Starlink Elon Musk tweeted that Starlink will not be used for long-range drone strikes.

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With this, the world was informed that Elon Musk billionaire had effectively changed the rules of engagement for the Russia-Ukraine war.

How does Starlink work?

Starlink is a satellite constellation that comprises thousands of small satellites in low-Earth orbit. SpaceX first began sending them into space in 2019 and currently, there are more than 3,000 of these satellites that send internet signals to designated ground receivers.

Unlike traditional internet providers, Starlink doesn't require any ground infrastructure. One just needs to have a small satellite dish or a receiver device to access high-speed internet, much like satellite TV.

The company also has a mobile application for Android and iOS that uses augmented reality to help customers choose the ideal location and position for their receivers.

Hence, currently, Starlink service is the undisputed king of the section of space called low-earth orbit (LEO).

Starlink's role in Russia-Ukraine war:

Starlink has emerged as a crucial communication tool for Ukraine's armed forces because their own mediums of communication were compromised by Russian hackers.

Ukrainian soldiers are using Starlink internet to upload pictures of probable Russian targets. These images are subsequently evaluated by the commanders and they then decide whether to bomb the target and if so, from where.

Moreover, Starlink has made drone warfare much easier. A report has suggested that Ukraine used the internet service to successfully attack Sevastopol — the Crimean headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

Why does China fear Starlink?

Starlink has been vital to Ukraine's war effort. The system is also hard to jam.

From the perspective of China, this not only puts its friend Russia at a disadvantage, it also raises concerns about Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims. If Taiwan were given access to Starlink, it would make a Chinese invasion that much more difficult.

Moreover, China is also fearful that the US, through Starlink, is covering up territory in low-Earth orbit. China, too, wants to be a power in this domain.

What are the concerns raised by analysts?

Despite Starlink's manifold advantages and uses for Ukraine, experts have cautioned against Elon Musk's formidable dominance in the launch market and satellite-internet operations.

They also point out that Elon Musk is an unaccountable single individual and has other business interests that might influence his decisions.

The obvious solution to this is that we need more LEO satellite constellations – government, private or some combination of the two – that provide Internet access.

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9. [18th Century Tamil manuscripts found in monastery in Italy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**18th Century Tamil manuscripts found in monastery in Italy**” published in **The Hindu on 7th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Palm manuscripts from the 18th Century titled **Gnanamuyarchi** have been found in an Armenian monastery in Northern Italy.

What is Gnanamuyarchi?

Gnanamuyarchi are Tamil manuscripts found in an Armenian monastery in Northern Italy.

The manuscript could be a copy of the **first Tamil translation of *Spiritual Exercise***, written by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century.

The translation was mostly done by **Michele Bertoldi**, known in Tamil as Gnanaprakasasamy.

The manuscript was initially misclassified as ‘Indian Papyrus Lamulic Language–XIII Century,’ unaware that they were written in Tamil.

The monastery authorities think the manuscripts might have been brought to Italy by Armenians in Chennai.

10. [Revised manufacturing rules for drug firms: what changes, and why](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Revised manufacturing rules for drug firms: what changes, and why**” published in **Indian Express on 7th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Government of India has directed all pharmaceutical companies in the country to implement the revised Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), bringing their processes at par with global standards.

What are Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)?

[Click Here to read](#)

What is the need of these GMP Standards for pharmaceutical companies?

One, implementation of these GMP norms will bring the Indian industry on par with global standards.

Two, there have been a string of incidents where other countries have reported alleged contamination in India-manufactured syrups, eye-drops, and eye ointments. The deaths of Children in the Gambia, Uzbekistan and the United States have been linked to these products.

Three, a risk-based inspection of 162 manufacturing units by the government found several deficiencies — incoming raw materials not being tested before use, product quality not being reviewed, infrastructure deficiency to prevent cross-contamination, faulty design of manufacturing and testing areas, missing qualified professionals and poor documentation.

Fourth, GMP standards are also important as only 2,000 of the 10,500 drug manufacturing units in the country at present meet global standards being WHO-GMP certified.

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Fifth, implementation of the revised good manufacturing practices (GMP) standards are also listed in the 2018 draft schedule M of the drugs and cosmetics rules.

What are the major changes GMP standards will bring?

The revised GMP guidelines focus on quality control measures, proper documentation, and IT backing to maintain quality of medicines produced.

It also introduces pharmaceutical quality systems, quality risk management, product quality review and validation of equipment.

This will mean companies will have to carry out regular quality reviews of all its products, verify consistency of the quality and the processes, thorough investigation of any deviation or suspected defect and implementation of any preventive actions.

It also suggests a change control system to evaluate all changes that may affect the production or quality of the product.

The guidelines also state that companies should have **GMP-related computerized systems**, which ensure that there is no tampering of data related to the processes.

How will these changes help?

Instituting the same quality across the industry will give confidence to regulators from other countries. In addition, it will improve the quality of drugs in the domestic markets.

11. Money Bills vs Finance Bills: What are the differences, what the court has ruled

Source: The post is based on the article **“Money Bills vs Finance Bills: What are the differences, what the court has ruled”** published in **Indian Express on 4th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister has said that the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill, 2023 is an ordinary Bill and not a money bill.

Earlier, it was reported that the Bill was being introduced under Article 117 of the Constitution, which deals with special provisions for Financial Bills.

What are Financial Bills?

A Financial Bill is any Bill that relates to revenue or expenditure is a financial Bill.

A Money Bill is also a specific type of financial Bill, that must deal only with matters specified in Article 110 (1) (a) to (g).

Article 117 of the Constitution deals with the special provisions relating to financial Bills.

Financial bills are responsible for fiscal matters such as government spending or revenue. It specifies the amount of money to be spent by the government and the way it is to be spent.

The two prerequisites for any financial Bill to become a Money Bill are: First, it must only be introduced in the Lok Sabha and not the Rajya Sabha. **Secondly**, these bills can only be introduced on the President's recommendation.

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What are the different types of Financial Bills?

Financial Bill I: Article 117 (1) indicates that a Bill that makes provision for any of the matters specified in clauses (a) to (f) of Article 110 (1) can be introduced or moved only on the President's recommendation and cannot be introduced in the Rajya Sabha.

– Examples of this first category of Financial Bills are Money Bills and other Financial Bills originating solely in the Lok Sabha.

Financial Bill II: Article 117 (3) of the Constitution deals with the second category of Financial Bill.

Such Bills are more like ordinary Bills. The difference between this kind of Financial Bill and an ordinary Bill is that if the former is enacted, it will involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India and cannot be passed by either House unless the President has recommended its consideration.

In other respects, such Financial Bills are just like ordinary Bills and can even be introduced in the Rajya Sabha, amended by it, or be subjected to deliberation by both Houses in a joint sitting.

What is a Money Bill?

Article 110 defines a "Money Bill" as one containing provisions dealing with taxes, regulation of the government's borrowing of money, and expenditure or receipt of money from the Consolidated Fund of India, among others.

Article 109 delineates the procedure for the passage of such a Bill and confers an overriding authority on the Lok Sabha in the passage of Money Bills.

The Speaker certifies a Bill as a Money Bill..

What is the key difference between a Financial Bill and a Money Bill?

The Financial Bill has the provision of including the Rajya Sabha's (Upper House) recommendations but the Money bill does not make their inclusion mandatory.

The Lok Sabha has the right to reject the Rajya Sabha's recommendations when it comes to Money Bills.

What are the Supreme Court's views on the Money Bill and Financial Bill?

Finance Act 2017: In 2019, a Constitution Bench struck down amendments to the 2017 Finance Act, which was passed as a Money Bill, altering the structure and functioning of various tribunals.

– However, the Supreme Court referred the matter of whether the 2017 Finance Act amendments could have been passed as a Money Bill to a seven-judge bench, indicating uncertainty about their classification.

– In this case, the court also expressed its doubts over the correctness of the Constitution Bench's 2018 verdict upholding the 2016 Aadhaar Act, which was passed as a Money Bill too.

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[12. Samudrayaan: Three-member team to explore depths of the ocean in first manned ocean mission](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Samudrayaan: Three-member team to explore depths of the ocean in first manned ocean mission**” published in **CNBC on 7th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Samudrayaan project is set to send three personnel to a depth of 6000 meters in the ocean in a submersible vehicle.

What is the Samudrayaan Mission?

Samudrayaan is India’s first manned ocean mission. It is a part of the Deep Ocean Mission.

Objective: It is designed to study deep-sea resources and conduct biodiversity assessments.

Features: The mission aims to send 3 people to a depth of 6,000 meters in the sea in a manned submersible vehicle called **MATSYA 6000**.

– The submersible will allow scientific personnel to observe and understand unexplored deep sea areas by direct interventions. Further, it will enhance the capability for deep sea man rated vehicle development.

Implementation: The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) in Chennai is designing and developing the Samudrayan project and it is likely to be ready by 2026.

Significance: The mission is significant as it will allow scientific personnel to observe and understand unexplored deep-sea areas through direct intervention.

— It also aligns with the Government of India’s vision of ‘New India’, highlighting the Blue Economy as one of the ten core dimensions of growth.

[13. PM to launch revamp of 508 railway stations at ₹24,470 crore](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**PM to launch revamp of 508 railway stations at ₹24,470 crore**” published in **The Hindu on 7th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone for the redevelopment of 508 railway stations spread across the country.

These stations were part of the **Amrit Bharat Stations scheme** in which almost 1300 prime railway stations in the country will be redeveloped.

What is the Amrit Bharat Stations scheme?

Launched by: Ministry of Railways

Objective: To develop railway stations on a continuous basis with a long-term approach.

Key Features of the scheme: The scheme is based on preparing Master Planning for long term and implementation of the same as per needs and demand of the station to station.

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– It aims to improve the amenities at the stations like improvement of station access, circulating areas, waiting halls, toilets, lift/escalators necessary, cleanliness, free Wi-Fi, Kiosks for local products through schemes like ‘One Station One Product’, better passenger information systems among others.,

– The scheme also envisages improvement of building, integrating the station with both sides of the city, amenities for Divyangjans, sustainable and environment friendly solutions, provision of ballastless tracks, ‘Roof Plazas’ as per necessity, phasing and feasibility and creation of city centers at the station in the long term.

Railway Stations covered: Under the scheme, almost 1300 prime railway stations in the country will be redeveloped.

What are the other steps taken by the government of India in the Railways sector?

In the last 9 years more than 2200 km dedicated freight corridors have been constructed leading to a reduction in the travel time of the goods train. Now goods reach western ports from Delhi-NCR in 24 hours, a task that used to take 72 hours.

LED lights have been installed in about 70,000 coaches and the number of bio-toilets in trains has increased 28 times as compared to 2014.

By 2030, India will be a country whose railway network will run on net zero emissions.

14. Centre to look into ‘Havana Syndrome’: What it means and the term’s history

Source: The post is based on the article “**Centre to look into ‘Havana Syndrome’: What it means and the term’s history**” published in **Indian Express on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Central government has told the Karnataka High Court that it will look into the matter of the ‘Havana Syndrome’ in India.

A petitioner had approached the court requesting a writ of mandamus for an enquiry on Syndrome in India and the prevention of high-frequency microwave transmission in India.

What is Havana Syndrome?

MEDICAL SYMPTOMS RESULT OF ESPIONAGE WARS?

WHAT IS HAVANA SYNDROME?

Havana syndrome is a set of medical signs and symptoms first reported in late 2016 by American and Canadian embassy staff in Havana, Cuba, and subsequently in other countries including the US, Austria, Germany, and now India



The apartments in Guangzhou where US diplomats developed the symptoms

WHAT DO US INTEL AGENCIES SAY?

The US intel services have not reached a consensus on a formal determination of the cause of the Havana syndrome though unnamed sources in intelligence and in two presidential administrations have expressed suspicions to the press that Russian military intelligence is responsible

WHEN WAS IT FIRST DETECTED?

> In 2016, a number of Canadians and Americans living in Havana complained of **concussion-like symptoms, including headaches, dizziness, nausea and difficulty in concentrating.** Some described hearing buzzing or high-pitched sounds before falling sick

> In 2018, US diplomats in China reported problems similar to those reported

in Cuba, as did undercover CIA agents working in other countries with partner agencies on missions aimed at countering Russian covert operations

> Last month, US vice-president Kamala Harris was delayed for three hours as she was about to fly to Hanoi, Vietnam, after a US official in Vietnam reported Havana syndrome symptoms



Source: National Academy of Sciences & media reports

WHAT DO EXPERTS SAY?

While there is no expert consensus on the exact cause, a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine expert committee concluded in December 2020 that microwave energy (especially directed radio frequency energy) 'appears to be the most plausible mechanism in explaining these cases among those that the committee considered' but that 'each possible cause remains speculative'. The Biden admin has started calling them 'unexplained health incidents (UHIs)'

Source: TOI

It refers to a set of mental health symptoms that are said to be experienced by United States intelligence and embassy officials in various countries.

It typically involves symptoms such as hearing certain sounds without any outside noise, nausea, vertigo and headaches, memory loss and balance issues.

This syndrome was first experienced by US State Department personnel in Cuba's Havana in late 2016 and hence, the name Havana Syndrome.

What is the cause of Havana Syndrome?

The exact cause is uncertain, but it was initially suspected to be a deliberate act by Cuban authorities due to strained relations. It was initially called a "sonic attack."

However, later research suggested that the victims might have been exposed to powerful microwaves, which could damage the nervous system and create a sensation of sound. Prolonged

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exposure to such microwaves can affect balance, memory, and even cause permanent brain damage.

Despite extensive research, experiments, and medical examinations of victims, the US has not found concrete evidence to confirm the existence of the “microwave weapon” responsible for Syndrome.

What do we know about Havana Syndrome in India?

In India, the first case was reported in 2021 when a US intelligence officer traveling to New Delhi with a CIA director reported its symptoms.

15. Steps taken for sustainable groundwater management in the country

Source: The post is based on the article ‘**Steps taken for sustainable groundwater management in the country**’ published in **PIB on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Minister of State for Jal Shakti has informed Lok Sabha about the steps taken for sustainable groundwater management in the country.

Groundwater Level in the country:

The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) periodically monitors groundwater levels throughout the Country on a regional scale, through a network of monitoring wells.

Analysis of water level data collected by CGWB during November 2022 in comparison with the decadal mean of November (2012-2021) has revealed that about 61.1% of the wells monitored have registered rise in ground water level whereas about 38.9 % wells have registered fall in water level.

Steps taken for sustainable groundwater management in the country:

National Aquifer Mapping and Management (NAQUIM) programme

The Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Groundwater – 2020 has been prepared with respective State counterparts. The master plan includes artificial recharge in both rural and urban areas including water scarce cities.

Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA): It was launched in 2019 in water stressed blocks of 256 districts in the country with the primary aim to effectively harvest the monsoon rainfall through creation of artificial recharge structures, watershed management, recharge and reuse structures, intensive afforestation and awareness generation etc.

– Further, to emphasize the importance of sustainability of groundwater for drinking water supply schemes, [Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain 2023](#) is targeting “Source sustainability for drinking water” for source strengthening/ sources stabilization of rural drinking water supply schemes.

Atal Bhujal Yojana: It was launched in collaboration with States in certain water stressed areas of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

– The primary aim of the scheme is demand side management through scientific means involving the local communities at village levels leading to sustainable groundwater

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management in the targeted areas.

16. [Meri LiFE, Mera Swachh Seher Campaign](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Meri LiFE, Mera Swachh Seher Campaign** ” published in **PIB on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Minister of State for Housing & Urban Affairs has informed Rajya Sabha about the ‘Meri LiFE, Mera Swachh Shehar’ campaign.

What is the Meri LiFE, Mera Swachh Shehar campaign?

Launched by: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Aim: To spread awareness regarding Mission LiFE and to nudge behaviour change of citizens to minimize waste generation, promote resource conservation and contribute to a cleaner and greener environment by adopting ‘Reduce, Reuse, Recycle’ (RRR) in their everyday life.

Features: The campaign focused on empowering Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to set up ‘Reduce, Reuse, Recycle’ (RRR) Centres as a one-stop solution for citizens, institutions, commercial enterprises etc. to deposit unused or used plastic items, clothes, footwear, books and toys.

Duration of the campaign: The campaign was launched on 15th May 2023 for the period of 3 weeks till World Environment Day 2023 on 5th June, 2023.

– **Note:** The campaign is not a scheme. It is a public outreach and mass engagement campaign being implemented by ULBs under Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban (SBM-U) 2.0. No separate organizations have been formed by Government of India for this campaign.

17. [Ministry of Tourism has formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism to boost Medical Tourism](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ministry of Tourism has formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism to boost Medical Tourism** ” published in **PIB on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Ministry of Tourism in order to boost Medical Tourism in the country has formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism.

What is the National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism?

Aim: To provide an institutional framework, strengthening the ecosystem for medical and wellness tourism, developing a brand and ensuring quality assurance.

Key Pillars: The Strategy has identified the following key pillars to promote India as a destination for medical value travel and wellness tourism. These are:

- Develop a brand for India as a wellness destination
- Strengthen the ecosystem for medical and wellness tourism

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- Enable digitalization by setting up Online Medical Value Travel (MVT) Portal
- Enhancement of accessibility for Medical Value Travel
- Promoting Wellness Tourism
- Governance and Institutional Framework

What are the ongoing activities going on to promote Medical Tourism in India?

Firstly, the Ministry of Tourism releases global print, electronic and online media campaigns in important and potential markets overseas, under the 'Incredible India' brand-line, to promote various tourism destinations and products of the country.

- Digital promotions are also regularly undertaken on the theme of Medical Tourism.

Secondly, in the case of e-Medical Visa and for e-Medical Attendant Visa, triple entry is permitted and extension may be granted up to 6 months on case to case basis on merits of each case by the Foreigners Regional Registration Officers (FRRO)/Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO) concerned.

Thirdly, the Union Ministry of Health is coordinating with other Ministries and stakeholders viz. Hospitals, Medical Value Travel (MVT) facilitators, Insurance Companies, NABH etc to promote medical value travel in the country.

18. In Jaisalmer fossils, scientists find a new dinosaur species, name it after Thar desert

Source: The post is based on the article “**In Jaisalmer fossils, scientists find a new dinosaur species, name it after Thar desert**” published in **TOI n 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Scientists from IIT-Roorkee and Geological Survey of India(GSI) have discovered the oldest fossil remains of a dinosaur species in Jaisalmer.They have named it 'Tharosaurus indicus'.

What is Tharosaurus indicus?

Tharosaurus indicus is the name given to the fossil remains of a long-necked, plant-eating dicraeosaurid dinosaur found in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

It has been named 'Tharosaurus indicus' as the first name refers to the 'Thar desert' where the fossils were found and the second after its country of origin.

Why is this finding significant?

First Time found in India: The dicraeosaurid dinosaurs have been found previously in North and South Americas, Africa and China. But such fossils were not known from India. This is the first time it has been discovered in India.

Oldest known diplodocoid dinosaur: The rocks in which the fossils of Tharosaurus indicus were found are dated to be around 167 million years old, which makes this new Indian sauropod not only the oldest known dicraeosaurid dinosaur but also globally the oldest diplodocoid (broader group which includes dicraeosaurids and other closely related sauropods).

Note: Theories so far had suggested that the oldest dicraeosaurid was from China (about 166-164 million years old).

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19. Indian-made syrup found contaminated in Iraq, alerts WHO

Source: The post is based on the article “**Indian-made syrup found contaminated in Iraq, alerts WHO**” published in **The Hindu on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The World Health Organisation has raised an alert against an India-manufactured contaminated syrup sold in Iraq.

What is the alert WHO has issued?

Paracetamol syrup Cold Out is manufactured by Chennai-headquartered Fourrts Laboratories.

This syrup was found to contain 0.25% diethylene glycol (DG) and 2.1% ethylene glycol (EG), the WHO alert said.

The acceptable limit for both contaminants in medical products is not more than 0.10 per cent.

WHO has issued an alert warning people against consuming the syrup as contaminants in these syrups are known to cause abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, headache, altered mental status, inability to pass urine, acute kidney injury and death.

Why is this a concern for India?

Atleast five of the syrups under scrutiny by WHO involves Indian manufacturers.

The contaminated India-made syrups have been linked to deaths of children in the Gambia, Uzbekistan and Cameroon. The most likely source of contaminants are solvents like propylene glycol, glycerine used for syrups.

There have also been reports of bacterial contaminants in eye drops and ointments from the United States and Sri Lanka.

20. Indian Army Inducts Swathi Mk2 Radar For Mountain Surveillance

Source: The post is based on the article “**Indian Army Inducts Swathi Mk2 Radar For Mountain Surveillance**” published in **The Republic on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Indian Army has inducted the lighter and more compact version of the indigenously developed Weapon Locating Radar(WLR-M) called “Swathi Mountains.”

What is Swathi Mk2 Radar or Swati Mountains?

Swati Mountains is an indigenously developed Weapon Locating Radar(WLR).

It is an advanced electronically scanned phased array radar, specifically designed for operations in mountainous and high-altitude areas.

It was developed by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) in Bengaluru.

What is Weapon Locating Radar(WLR)?

The Weapon Locating Radar(WLR) is a crucial tool for modern armies.

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It uses advanced signal processing techniques to autonomously detect and track hostile artillery, mortars, and rocket launchers.

It even tracks friendly fire trajectories, enabling precise calculations for more accurate artillery strikes.

The radar is impressive because it can spot small flying objects in different conditions and predict where they will land.

One of its strengths is that it can quickly move and set up, adapting to different needs. It can also scan different places without needing to move physically.

What are the different variants of Swati Radar?

The Swathi radar comes in two versions:

Swathi Plains version: It is primarily designed to locate hostile guns, mortars, and rockets, and it can also track the fall of shot from friendly weapons for corrective measures on flat terrains like Plains, as the name of the version suggests.

Swathi Mountains version: It is a compact and mobile radar designed for use in mountainous areas. It can detect mortar shells, rockets and other projectiles while ignoring false signals like birds or aircraft. It also predicts the trajectory and impact point of incoming objects, correcting for altitude to improve accuracy. The radar stores data and communicates with higher-level units for better coordination.

[21. Why no disaggregated data on tribal populations, asks House panel](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Why no disaggregated data on tribal populations, asks House panel”** published in **The Hindu on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

A parliamentary committee on the empowerment of women has submitted a report on Health conditions of the Tribal population.

What did the Parliamentary committee said on the health conditions of Tribal Population?

In tribal areas, there's a growing occurrence of genetic issues like sickle cell disease and G6PD (Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency) deficiency.

Around 1.5 crore tribal individuals were tested for sickle cell disease in specific districts, revealing that 10.5 lakh people are carriers of the condition, and about 50,000 have been diagnosed with the disease.

Over half of tribal women in their reproductive years suffer from anemia.

Hypertension is also quite common among tribals along with a higher rate of communicable diseases such as leprosy, tuberculosis, and cholera when compared to other social groups.

What are the concerns raised by the Parliamentary committee?

Parliamentary committee has pulled up the Union government for lacking detailed health data about tribal populations.

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The committee found it puzzling how the Ministries could create effective policies or action plans for the health of tribal mothers and infants without accurate maternal mortality ratio data.

On this, the Tribal Affairs Ministry informed the committee that they were working on establishing a central database for monitoring tribal health and had partnered with a non-profit organization, Piramal Swasthya to gather data for 117 tribal districts.

What are the recommendations given by the Parliamentary committee on tribal health?

Firstly, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs should work with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to generate tribal health data with separate classifications like girl children, adolescent girls, women of various age groups and women senior citizens to help in evolving custom-made health interventions.'

Secondly, community influencer groups and tribal leaders must also be engaged to instill behavioral changes among the tribal community for better health and nutrition outcomes.

Thirdly, the government should complete the screening of all tribals for sickle cell disease in a time-bound manner so that the next generation of the tribal people are free from this disease.

Fourthly, make use of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in coordination with the Ministry of Rural Development for building all-weather roads in tribal areas so that the tribal population, including pregnant women, can access healthcare facilities in time.

22. More students using smartphones for entertainment than study: survey

Source: The post is based on the article “**More students using smartphones for entertainment than study: survey**” published in **The Hindu on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Union Education Minister has released the State of Elementary Education in Rural India report.

What is the State of Elementary Education in Rural India Report?

The report is based on a survey conducted by the Development Intelligence Unit(DIU), a collaboration between Transform Rural India and Sambodhi Research and Communications.

The survey was conducted on 6,229 parents of schoolchildren aged six to 16 in rural communities across 21 States.

What are the key findings of the report?

Increased access to smartphones: Around 49.3% of students in rural India have access to smartphones.

– However, a significant portion, 76.7% of these students primarily use their phones for entertainment purposes, such as playing video games and watching movies.

– Only 34% of smartphone-accessible students use their devices for study-related downloads, while 18% access online learning through tutorials.

Higher Education: At least 78% of the parents of girls and 82% of the parents of boys wanted to educate their children to the level of graduation or above.

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Reasons for dropout and out-of-school children: Among the parents of 56 students who dropped out of school, 36.8 percent mentioned that their daughters' dropout was due to the need to contribute to the family's earnings.

– For boys, the primary reason cited for dropping out was lack of interest in studies.

Learning environment at home: The survey revealed that 40% of parents have age-appropriate reading materials available at home, beyond school books. Additionally, only 40% of parents engage in daily conversations with their children about their school learning, while 32% have such discussions a few days a week.

Parental participation: A positive aspect observed was that 84% of parents regularly attend parent-teacher meetings, demonstrating their active involvement in their children's education.

23. What is the Jan Vishwas Bill, 2023 proposed by Centre?

Source: The post is based on the article **“What is the Jan Vishwas Bill, 2023 proposed by Centre?”** published in **The Hindu on 9th August 2023.**

What is the News?

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 has been passed in Parliament.

What is Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023?

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 amends 42 laws, across multiple sectors, including agriculture, environment, and media and publication and health.

The Bill converts several fines to penalties, meaning that court prosecution is not necessary to administer punishments. It also removes imprisonment as a punishment for many offences.

The changes proposed to the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** have caused the most controversy. This act governs the import, production, distribution, and sale of drugs and cosmetics in the country.

Currently, the Act defines four types of offenses — adulterated drugs, spurious drugs, mislabeled drugs, and Not of Standard Quality drugs (NSQs) — each carrying varying degrees of punishment (combining imprisonment and fines) depending on the severity of the offense.

How is the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill detrimental to the public health sector?

The Bill has two main drawbacks for public health:

Firstly, it lets makers of substandard drugs (NSQ drugs) avoid serious penalties, even though these drugs can harm patients. For instance, drugs lacking proper active ingredients or failing to dissolve won't effectively treat the intended illness, leading to poor patient outcomes.

Secondly, the Bill also lowers penalties for pharmacy owners who breach their licensing terms.

What did the government said about the concerns raised against the bill?

In response to concerns about the Bill being seen as favoring industries, the Health Minister stated that India is the pharmacy of the world. It aims to provide high-quality medicines while also supporting business growth.

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Hence, rationalizing laws, eliminating barriers and bolstering growth of businesses are important.

24. [ISRO transfers satellite bus technology to private firm](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“ISRO transfers satellite bus technology to private firm”** published in **Economic Times on 5th August 2023.**

What is the News?

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has begun transferring IMS-1 Satellite Bus technology to Alpha Design Technologies, a Bengaluru-based private company.

The transfer was facilitated by ISRO’s commercial arm NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) through an agreement.

What is the IMS-1 satellite bus?

The IMS-1 satellite bus was developed by the UR Rao Satellite Centre.

Purpose: It is a small satellite platform designed to enable low-cost access to space.

– The bus can serve as a dedicated vehicle for many different payloads, facilitating Earth imaging, ocean and atmospheric studies, microwave remote sensing and space science missions.

Features: The bus weighs about 100 kilograms and can carry a 30-kilogram payload. The solar arrays onboard generate 330 watts of power.

– It comes with four reaction wheels with a 1 Newton thruster that is good for pointing accuracy with an accuracy threshold of 0.1 Degrees.

Used in: The bus was used in previous ISRO missions like IMS-1, Youthsat and Microsat-2D.

25. [Trial done in India shows nutrition support prevents TB, related deaths](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Trial done in India shows nutrition support prevents TB, related deaths”** published in **The Hindu on 9th August 2023.**

What is the News?

A trial conducted in India highlights the importance of nutritional supplementation in significantly reducing the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) among household contacts of TB patients and lowering mortality rates in those diagnosed with active pulmonary TB.

What is the importance of nutrition in tuberculosis (TB)?

Undernutrition accounts for more than 40% of new TB cases annually surpassing other risk factors like diabetes, HIV infection, smoking and alcohol.

For example, research by the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT) demonstrated that TB patients weighing under 35 kg had four times higher mortality than those weighing over 45 kg.

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What is the study conducted by researchers to highlight the importance of nutrition in tuberculosis (TB)?

The study was conducted on two groups: household contacts of TB patients and patients diagnosed with active pulmonary TB.

In a controlled trial with family members of TB patients, providing nutritional support resulted in a 39-48% decrease in TB cases compared to those without support.

The researchers also provided nutritional supplementation to 2,800 **individuals undergoing treatment for active pulmonary TB.**

– Treatment success rate was nearly 94% among TB patients, with only about 4% deaths during the six-month follow-up.

– Early weight gain in the first two months was linked to a 60% lower risk of TB-related mortality.

26. Row over Select Committee for Delhi Services Bill: What is this body, did Raghav Chadha flout rules?

Source: The post is based on the article “**Row over Select Committee for Delhi Services Bill: What is this body, did Raghav Chadha flout rules?**” published in **Indian Express on 9th August 2023.**

What is the News?

At least four MPs have complained that their names had been included in a proposed Select Committee for the Delhi Services Bill without their consent. As a result, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman has announced a probe.

What is a Select Committee?

India's Parliament has several types of committees which discharge different functions.

There are 12 **Standing Committees** that are permanent in nature, with their members nominated from time to time by the Chairman.

Then there are **ad hoc or temporary committees** which are set up for a specific purpose, such as examining a particular Bill, and are dissolved once that purpose has been served. A **Select Committee** belongs to this category.

Procedure to be followed for a Select committee: A Select Committee is temporary in nature and it follows the procedure laid down in the Rules of Procedure.

– Under Rule 125 of the Rajya Sabha Rules and Procedures, any member may move an amendment that a Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

– This means that the motion to refer a Bill to a Select Committee can either be moved by the member in-charge of the Bill, or by any other MP.

How are Select committee members selected?

The members of the Select Committee on a Bill are appointed by the House when the motion that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee is made.

– No member is appointed to a Select Committee if he is not willing to serve on the Committee.

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- The mover has to ascertain whether the member proposed by him is willing to serve on the Committee.
- The rules do say that a proposed member's consent has to be taken before he can serve on a Select Committee.
- However, they do not specifically mention collecting signatures of those whose names have been proposed.

What is the actual number of members in a Select Committee?

The actual number of membership of the Select Committee is not fixed; it varies from Committee to Committee.

- If it is a Joint Committee, the proportion of members from the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha is 1:2.
- The Chairman of the Committee is appointed by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha from among the members of the Committee.
- The member or Minister in-charge of the Bill is generally included as a member of the Committee.

How does the Select committee work?

The quorum for each sitting needs to be one-third of the total number of members of the committee.

- In case of equality of votes on any matter, the chairman (or any other person presiding) will have a second or casting vote.
- A select committee may appoint a sub-committee to examine any special points connected with the Bill.

What are the functions of the Select Committee?

The main functions of a Select Committee are:

- **Detailed Examination:** The Committee carefully reviews the Bill, going through each part.
- **Ensuring Clarity:** It ensures that the Bill accurately represents the intended purpose and goals.
- **Gathering Input:** The Committee can request opinions from experts, individuals, and groups, either in writing or through discussions.
- **Understanding Policy:** It may ask Government officials to explain the Bill's intentions and provide necessary information.
- **Formulating Conclusions:** After hearing evidence, the Committee reaches conclusions and might make changes to the Bill's clauses.

What happens once a Select Committee's report is submitted?

The report of the committee is of a recommendatory nature. The government can choose to accept or reject its recommendations.

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A Select Committee can also include its version of the Bill. If they do so, the minister in charge of that particular Bill can move for the committee's version of the Bill to be discussed and passed in the House.

[27. National Dental Commission Bill, 2023 Passed by the Parliament to Elevate Dental Education and Healthcare Standards](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“National Dental Commission Bill, 2023 Passed by the Parliament to Elevate Dental Education and Healthcare Standards”** published in **PIB on 8th August 2023.**

What is the News?

The National Dental Commission Bill, 2023 has been passed by the Parliament. The bill seeks to repeal the Dentists Act, 1948,

What is the National Dental Commission Act, 2023?

The National Dental Commission Act envisions a complete overhaul of the dental education and profession landscape to bring it on par with international benchmarks.

Key features include:

Constitution of National Dental Commission and State Dental Councils: The Act establishes the National Dental Commission and mandates the formation of State Dental Councils or Joint Dental Councils. This structure aims to decentralize authority and enhance effective regulation.

Three Autonomous Boards: The Act will empower three distinct Autonomous Boards: the Under-Graduate and Postgraduate Dental Education Board, the Dental Assessment and Rating Board (DARB), and the Ethics and Dental Registration Board (EDRB). These boards will carry out specific functions, contributing to a comprehensive regulatory framework.

Fixed Tenure and Professional Development: The Act will introduce a fixed tenure for the Chairperson, Members, and Secretary of the Commission, with no possibility of reappointment.

Online National Register and Dental Advisory Council: The Act will provide for maintaining an online and live National Register of licensed dentists and dental auxiliaries.

– Furthermore, it establishes a Dental Advisory Council with representation from all States/Union Territories to ensure comprehensive insights and guidance.

Collaborative Approaches: The Act will facilitate joint sittings with relevant statutory bodies, including the National Medical Commission, Pharmacy Council of India, Indian Nursing Council, National Commission for Indian System of Medicine among others.

Fee Regulation and Constitutions: The Act will empower the Commission to frame guidelines for fee determination for fifty percent of seats in private dental colleges and deemed Universities.

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[28. Unleashing Limitless Energy: US Scientists Repeat Nuclear Fusion Breakthrough](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Unleashing Limitless Energy: US Scientists Repeat Nuclear Fusion Breakthrough”** published in **News18 on 7th August 2023.**

What is the News?

Scientists in the US have successfully conducted a second nuclear fusion reaction experiment that resulted in a net energy gain.

What is Nuclear Fusion?

Nuclear fusion is the process which gives the Sun its energy.

Scientists from more than 50 countries have been trying to recreate it on Earth since the 1960s.

They hope it could eventually provide huge quantities of clean energy for the world.

In nuclear fusion, pairs of tiny particles called atoms are heated and forced together to make one heavier one.

It is the opposite of nuclear fission, in which heavy atoms are split apart. Nuclear power stations currently use nuclear fission to generate electricity.

Why is nuclear fusion so important?

Nuclear fission produces radioactive waste, which can be dangerous and must be stored safely – potentially for hundreds of years.

The waste produced by nuclear fusion is less radioactive and decays much more quickly.

Nuclear fusion doesn't need fossil fuels like oil or gas. It also doesn't generate greenhouse gases, which trap the Sun's heat and are responsible for climate change.

Most fusion experiments use hydrogen, which can be extracted cheaply from seawater and lithium, meaning fuel supplies could last for millions of years.

It has been described as the **“holy grail” of energy production.**

How does Nuclear Fusion work?

When two atoms of a light element such as hydrogen are heated and combine to form a single heavier element such as helium, the nuclear reaction produces massive amounts of energy which can be captured.

But getting two identical elements to combine is actually very hard.

Because they have the same positive charge they naturally repel each other. A lot of energy is needed to overcome this resistance.

In the Sun, this happens thanks to extremely high temperatures of around ten million degrees Celsius, and significant pressure – more than 100 billion times that of the Earth's atmosphere.

On Earth, scientists have used various different techniques to attempt to recreate these conditions. But it has proved very difficult to maintain the high temperature and pressure needed for long enough.

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What have the scientists achieved now?

In 2022, scientists in the US first achieved a net energy gain in a fusion experiment using lasers. That experiment briefly achieved what's known as fusion ignition by generating 3.15 megajoules of energy output after the laser delivered 2.05 megajoules to the target.

In other words, it produced more energy from fusion than the laser energy used to drive it.

The scientists have successfully conducted this nuclear fusion reaction experiment for a second time that resulted in a net energy gain.

29. How a WTO provision became a tool for nations to curb imports

Source: The post is based on the article **“How a WTO provision became a tool for nations to curb imports”** published in **Business Standard on 9th August 2023.**

What is the News?

The Government of India has recently imposed restrictions on the import of laptops, tablets, and personal computers.

The new regulations mandate Companies to obtain licences from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade to import these items.

India has imposed these restrictions in accordance with the Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures under the World Trade Organization(WTO).

Note: In 2020 also, India had imposed restrictions on imports of pneumatic tyres used for cars, buses, lorries, scooters, and motorcycles,

What is Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures?

The WTO Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures says import licensing should be simple, transparent and predictable so as not to become an obstacle to trade.

For example, the agreement requires governments to publish sufficient information for traders to know how and why the licences are granted.

It also describes how countries should notify the WTO when they introduce new import licensing procedures or change existing procedures.

What does the WTO reports say on Import Licensing?

As per Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures, all WTO members are required to notify their laws, rules and procedures on import licensing as well as changes to these regulations

But the WTO trade-monitoring reports have identified import licensing as one of the main trade-restricting measures introduced by governments with 13 WTO members not submitting any notification on this as of end-2022.

In 2022, the WTO members raised several new and recurring specific trade concerns regarding import curbs.

The European Union(EU) and the United States questioned Angola's import-licensing requirements, Egypt's import licensing for certain agricultural products and Indonesia's commodity-balancing mechanism.

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During India's latest Trade Policy Review in 2020, South Korea complained the import a licensing requirement by India for pneumatic tyres was causing "serious damage" to some firms doing business in India.

30. Steps taken by Government of India to improve Women's Health

Source: The post is based on the article "**Steps taken by Government of India to improve Women's Health**" published in **PIB on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare has informed Lok Sabha about the steps taken to improve Women's Health.

What are the steps taken by the Government of India to improve women's health?

Comprehensive Primary Health Care(CPHC) through Ayushman Bharat- Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs): In 2018, the Government of India announced 1,50,000 Ayushman Bharat- Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) to be established across the country by December 2022.

– The existing Sub- Health Centres (SHC), Primary Health Centres (PHC) and Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHC) are transformed into AB-HWCs to deliver Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) that includes preventive, promotive, curative, palliative and rehabilitative services which are universal, free, and closer to the community.

National Free Drugs Initiative: States/UTs are supported to provide essential drugs based on the level of public health facilities free of cost to all who access these facilities.

Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN)

Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY): It is a demand promotion and conditional cash transfer scheme. It was launched in 2005 with the objective of reducing Maternal and Infant Mortality by promoting institutional delivery among pregnant women.

Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK): It aims to eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for pregnant women and sick infants by entitling them to free delivery including caesarean section, free transport, diagnostics, medicines, other consumables, diet and blood in public health institutions.

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA): It was launched in 2016. It provides pregnant women fixed day, free of cost assured and quality Antenatal Care on the 9th day of every month.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY): It came into effect from 2017. It is a direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme under which cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhanced nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss.

Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative (LaQshya): It was launched in 2017. It aims to improve the quality of care in labour room and maternity operation theatres to ensure that pregnant women receive respectful and quality care during delivery and immediate post-partum period.

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31. [Defence Ministry to switch to locally built OS Maya amid threats](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Defence Ministry to switch to locally built OS Maya amid threats**” published in **The Hindu on 8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Defence Ministry has decided to replace the Microsoft Operating System (OS) in all computers connected to the Internet with the Maya Operating System(OS).

What is Maya Operating System(OS)?

Maya OS is a new operating system that is based on Ubuntu, a popular Linux distribution that uses free and open-source software.

Developed by: Ministry of Defence Ministry with the help of various government agencies, including the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), and the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

Advantages: One of the main advantages of Maya OS is that it has a similar interface and functionality as Windows, making it easy for users to adapt to it.

– It also has a feature called **Chakravayuh** which is an end-point anti-malware and antivirus software that creates a virtual layer between the user and the internet, blocking hackers from accessing sensitive data.

What is Ubuntu?

Ubuntu is a popular Linux operating system known for its strong security. It's considered more secure than Windows because it has fewer vulnerabilities and malware issues.

Ubuntu is also distributed as free and open-source software, which means that anyone can inspect, modify, and improve its code. This allows Ubuntu to benefit from the collective efforts of thousands of developers and users who contribute to its development and security.

It also has built-in security features like a firewall, strict user permissions, and regular updates to guard against threats.

What is the significance of using Maya OS?

India's critical infrastructure has seen numerous cyberattacks and security breaches in recent years. Some of the most notable incidents include the cyberattack on Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) in 2019, the Mumbai Power Grid outage in 2020, the ransomware attacks on Oil India Limited and Spice Jet servers in 2022, and the Goa Flood Monitoring System hack.

Hence, using an indigenous operating system could not only be a promising step towards securing India's vital computer systems from malicious actors, but also reduce the country's reliance on foreign software and enhance its cyber resilience.

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32. Story of the Assam Rifles, against whom Manipur Police have filed an FIR

Source: The post is based on the article “**Story of the Assam Rifles, against whom Manipur Police have filed an FIR**” published in **Indian Express on 10th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Manipur Police have registered a criminal case against the Assam Rifles for obstruction of duty and criminal intimidation.

The police have accused the personnel of the Assam Rifles of the arrogant act of giving a chance to the accused Kuki militants to escape freely to a safe zone.

What are Assam Rifles?

The Assam Rifles are a central armed police force. It is one of the six central armed police forces (CAPFs) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

The other five forces are the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

Role: Assam Rifles are tasked with maintaining law and order in the Northeast along with the Indian Army. It also guards the Indo-Myanmar border.

Historical Background: Assam Rifles is India's oldest paramilitary force. It was formed in 1835 as a militia called the 'Cachar Levy' to primarily protect British Tea estates and their settlements against tribal raids.

Contributions: Since its formation in 1835, Assam Rifles has gone on to fight in two World Wars, the Sino-Indian war of 1962.

– The Post-Independence role of the Assam Rifles continued to evolve ranging from conventional combat role during Sino-India War 1962, operating in foreign land as part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka in 1987 (Op Pawan) to peacekeeping role in the North-Eastern areas of India.

– Hence, it remains the most awarded paramilitary force in both pre- and post-independent India.

Dual Control: Assam Rifles is the only paramilitary force with a dual control structure. While the administrative control of the force is with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). But its operational control is with the Indian Army, which is under the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

– This means that salaries and infrastructure for the force is provided by the MHA, but the deployment, posting, transfers, and deputation of AR personnel is decided by the Army. All its senior ranks, from DG to IG and sector headquarters are manned by officers from the Army. The force is commanded by a Lieutenant General of the Indian Army.

Demand of Assam Rifles: A large section within the Assam Rifles wants to be under the administrative control of the MoD as that would mean perks and retirement benefits that are far better than those enjoyed by the CAPFs under MHA. However, Army personnel retire early — at age 35 — while the retirement age of CAPFs is 60 years.

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33. [How National Green Hydrogen Mission seeks to Reduce Cost of Green Hydrogen](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How National Green Hydrogen Mission seeks to Reduce Cost of Green Hydrogen**” published in **PIB on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Union Minister for New & Renewable Energy has informed Lok Sabha about the steps taken to promote Green Hydrogen.

How is Green Hydrogen produced?

Green Hydrogen can be produced through electrolysis of water using renewable electricity, and from biomass through thermochemical and biochemical routes.

The costs of the electrolyzers and input renewable energy are the two major components of Green Hydrogen production cost.

At present, there is very limited production of Hydrogen through renewable sources in the country.

Several entities have announced plans to set up production facilities for Green Hydrogen/Green Ammonia in India. However, these are still at a preliminary stage.

What is the National Green Hydrogen Mission?

Aim: To make India a Global Hub for production, usage and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.

Components: The following components have been announced as part of the Mission:

- Facilitating demand creation through exports and domestic utilization;
- Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme. The programme comprises two distinct financial incentive mechanisms to support domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and production of Green Hydrogen;
- Pilot Projects for green steel, mobility, shipping, decentralized energy applications, hydrogen production from biomass, hydrogen storage, etc.;
- Development of Green Hydrogen Hubs; Support for infrastructure development;
- Establishing a robust framework of regulations and standards; Research & Development programme; Skill development programme; and Public awareness and outreach programme.

What are the expected benefits of the National Green Hydrogen Mission?

Firstly, it is expected to lead to development of 5 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) Green Hydrogen production capacity per annum by 2030, contributing to reduction in dependence on import of fossil fuels.

Secondly, achievement of Mission targets is expected to reduce a cumulative ₹ 1 lakh crore worth of fossil fuel imports by 2030. This is likely to leverage over ₹8 lakh crore in total investments and create over 6 lakh jobs.

Thirdly, nearly 50 MMT per annum of CO₂ emissions are expected to be averted through production and use of the targeted quantum of Green Hydrogen.

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34. [Coastal Aquaculture Authority \(Amendment \) Bill, 2023](#) clear by both Houses of Parliament of India

Source: The post is based on the article “**Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023 cleared by both Houses of Parliament of India**” published in **PIB on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023 has been passed by both Houses of the Parliament of India.

What is the Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill,2023?

The Bill amends the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, 2005.

The bill seeks to expand the scope, remove regulatory gaps and reduce the compliance burden without diluting environmental protection rules in the coastal areas.

What are the key provisions of the bill?

Regulation of allied activities: The Act regulates coastal aquaculture farms. This includes culturing shrimp, prawn fish or other aquatic life in a controlled environment along coastal areas in saline or brackish water.

- The Bill allows regulation of allied activities such as nucleus breeding centres and hatcheries.
- **Note:** Nucleus breeding centres are those where fish/shrimp are cultivated at the larvae stage of their life cycle.

Some Allied activities in protected areas: The Act prohibits coastal aquaculture in certain areas, such as 200 metres within the High Tide Line and in creeks/backwaters within the CRZ.

- The Bill amends this to allow some allied activities in protected areas. For instance: (i) activities like nucleus breeding centers will be permitted to operate in no development zones, and (ii) activities like seaweed culture will be permitted in creeks/backwaters within the CRZ.

Coastal Aquaculture Authority: Under the Act, functions of the Authority include: (i) regulating construction and operation of aquaculture farms, (ii) registering coastal aquaculture farms, and (iii) demolishing polluting farms.

- The Bill adds that the Authority shall: (i) fix standards for inputs and discharge of effluents from aquaculture units, (ii) prohibit the use of certain inputs to prevent harm to the environment, and (iii) monitor and regulate units, inputs, and emissions.

Penalties: The Act penalizes unregistered farms or farms in prohibited areas, with imprisonment up to three years and/or a fine of one lakh rupees.

- The Bill replaces this and specifies that if coastal aquaculture is carried out illegally: (i) the activity may be suspended, (ii) structure may be removed, (iii) crop may be destroyed, (iv) the registration may be canceled, and/or (v) a penalty may be imposed.

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[35. Scientists design first-ever 2D composite quantum material useful for spintronic devices like transistors & diodes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Scientists design first-ever 2D composite quantum material useful for spintronic devices like transistors & diodes**” published on **Department of Science and Technology’s website**.

What is the News?

A group of scientists has used computer simulations to design a new type of quantum material. This material has a unique property called **Rashba splitting**, which is important for spintronic devices.

What is Spintronics?

Spintronics is one of the emerging fields for the next-generation nanoelectronic devices to reduce their power consumption and to increase their memory and processing capabilities.

Such devices take advantage of electron spin, a quantum property of electrons, to achieve higher performance.

Some of the examples of spintronic devices are spin transistors, spin diodes, and spin filters.

What have the researchers developed?

Researchers have created composite 2-D quantum materials showing two different quantum properties, **Rashba effect** (a momentum-dependent splitting of spin bands) and nonlinear **anomalous Hall effect** (arising from anomalous velocity of the electrons) in the same material.

The designed material could help overcome limitations in current spintronic devices and lead to better performance in areas like quantum computing and communication.

[36. Number of elephants in Karnataka goes up by 364 from last count, touches 6,395](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Number of elephants in Karnataka goes up by 364 from last count, touches 6,395**” published in **The Hindu on 10th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Karnataka Minister of Forests has released an interim report on Asian Elephant Population and Demography Estimates, 2023.

The report has been prepared after a synchronized elephant census was conducted by the Forest Department in collaboration with neighboring Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Goa.

What are the key findings of the Asian Elephant Population and Demography Estimates, 2023?

Number of elephants: The number of wild elephants in Karnataka has increased to 6,395 this year from 6,049 in 2017.

– In 2010, the projected number was 5,740. It stood at 6,072 in 2012 before the dip in 2017.

– However, out of the total 6,395 elephants estimated, around 161 were within private lands like coffee estates which pose conservation challenges.

Elephant density: Karnataka has an average elephant density of 0.34 per sq. km.

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– Bandipur Tiger Reserve with 1,116 elephants accounted for the highest density of 0.96 per sq. km followed by Nagarahole Tiger Reserve that has 831 elephants with a density of 0.93.

37. House panel tells govt. to ensure fertilizer availability, increase local production

Source: The post is based on the article “**House panel tells govt. to ensure fertilizer availability, increase local production**” published in **The Hindu on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Standing Committee of Parliament on Chemicals and Fertilizers has posed questions on the availability of fertilizers and a subsidy policy.

What are the suggestions given by the Standing Committee of Parliament on Chemicals and Fertilizers?

Firstly, the committee has highlighted concerns about India’s reliance on imported fertilizers like urea, DAP, MOP, NPK, and others.

– The production of these fertilizers was 281.83 lakh metric tonnes but the consumption was higher at 401.46 LMT resulting in a deficit of 119.63 LMT which is worrisome.

Secondly, the committee wants the Department of Fertilizers to investigate fertilizer shortages in some states and ensure availability across all states.

– They suggest reviewing the nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) policy that currently excludes urea. This means that urea remains under price control whereas technically there is no price control in other fertilisers, causing disincentives for other fertilizers.

Thirdly, the committee also pointed out the discrepancy in GST rates, with fertilizers at 5% and raw materials like sulphuric acid and ammonia at 18%.

– They recommend lowering the GST on raw materials and including natural gas in the GST to avoid double taxation.

Fourthly, to counter international price fluctuations, the committee proposes purchase policy reforms and long-term import contracts for various fertilizers and raw materials.

38. [Launch of Indian Web Browser Development Challenge \(IWBD\)](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Launch of Indian Web Browser Development Challenge (IWBD)**” published in **PIB on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has launched the Indian Web Browser Development Challenge (IWBD).

What is the Indian Web Browser Development Challenge (IWBD)?

IWBD is an open challenge competition that seeks to inspire and empower technology enthusiasts, innovators, and developers from all corners of the country to create an indigenous web browser.

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The competition offers cash prizes totaling ₹3.4 crore to developers who create an indigenous web browser.

However, there is a condition that the browser ideas must trust the Indian government's Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA), which handles digital signatures and SSL certificates.

What are SSL Certificates?

SSL certificates are used to encrypt websites and to make sure that browsers know that a website is not being modified or impersonated by attackers.

Browsers trust these certificates if they are issued by a certifying authority that is in turn trusted by a 'root certifying authority'.

India does not have a root certifying authority trusted by major browsers such as Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox and Microsoft Edge.

This has led to a situation where the government operates a root certifying authority that is legally valid under Indian law — the Root Certifying Authority of India, set up in 2000 under the CCA — but the certificates issued under its purview are largely not recognised by Web browsers.

Due to this, Indian government and private websites need to purchase SSL certificates from foreign certifying authorities.

39. [Plight of the vaquita forces International Whaling Commission to issue first extinction alert](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Plight of the vaquita forces International Whaling Commission to issue first extinction alert**" published in **Down to Earth on 7th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The International Whaling Commission(IWC) has issued its first 'extinction alert' on the **Vaquita Porpoise**.

What is Vaquita Porpoise?

Vaquita Porpoise is the world's smallest cetacean. It is also known as the "**panda of the sea**" for the distinctive black circles around its eyes, along with a proportionally large dorsal fin.

The vaquita is unique among the porpoises as it is the **only species of that family found in warm waters**.

A **dark ring around the eyes** is its most striking feature, along with a proportionally large dorsal fin.

Found in: It is only found in the northern-most part of the Gulf of California, Mexico.

IUCN Status: Critically Endangered

CITES: Appendix I

Declining population: The vaquita population has been declining continuously for decades due to bycatch in gillnet set to catch shrimp and fish including totoaba.

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– Its numbers have fallen from a population of approximately 570 in 1997 to around 10 animals in 2018.

What are Porpoises?

Porpoises are among the smallest members of the cetacean family (whales, porpoises and dolphins).

They are only distant relatives of dolphins (they last had a common ancestor roughly 15 million years ago). There are only seven species of porpoise; the most popular being the widely distributed harbour porpoise.

[40. Centre's new Bill on Election Commission members' appointments: How it plans to amend the process](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Centre's new Bill on Election Commission members' appointments: How it plans to amend the process”** published in **Indian Express on 11th August 2023.**

What is the News?

The Union Government has introduced the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 in Rajya Sabha.

The bill has been brought in after the judgment of the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on the appointment of Election Commissioners.

What is the Supreme Court verdict on the appointment of Election Commissioners?

The constitution bench of the Supreme Court had ruled that election commissioners should be appointed by the President based on advice from a committee comprising the prime minister, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha and the chief justice of India (CJI).

The court said that since there is no parliamentary law in place to lay down the selection procedure for election commissioners, its order was meant to fill this constitutional vacuum.

[Click Here to read more](#)

What is the process mentioned in the bill for the appointment of Election Commissioners?

Currently, the Law Minister suggests a pool of suitable candidates to the Prime Minister for consideration. The President makes the appointment on the advice of the PM.

As per the Bill, a Search Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary and comprising two other members not below the rank of Secretary to the government having knowledge and experience in matters relating to elections shall prepare a panel of five persons who can be considered for appointment.

Then the Selection Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister will appoint the CEC and other ECs.

In case there is no LoP in the Lower House of Parliament, the leader of the single largest Opposition party would be considered the LoP.

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What are the criticisms raised by opposition against this bill?

Firstly, this Bill will override the Supreme Court Constitution Bench's judgment regarding the appointment of the CEC and other Election Commissioners.

Secondly, this will put a question mark on the neutrality of the Election Commission (EC) as the selection panel would effectively have two members of the ruling party – the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Minister.

Can the Parliament undo the decision of the Supreme Court?

Parliament has the power to nullify the effect of a Court ruling by addressing the concerns flagged in the judgment. The law cannot simply be contradictory to the ruling.

In this case, the arrangement prescribed by the Supreme Court was specifically because the Court noted that there was a “legislative vacuum”. Filling that vacuum is well within the purview of the Parliament.

However, the idea of an independent body that conducts elections permeates through the judgment. The Court repeatedly stated that to be the objective of the framers of the Constitution.

[41. House panel wants judges to mandatorily declare asset](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**House panel wants judges to mandatorily declare assets**” published in **Hindustan Times** on **9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice has submitted in the Parliament a report titled “Judicial Processes and their reform”.

What are the recommendations given in the Judicial Processes and their reform report?

Declaration of assets: In 2009, the full bench of the Supreme Court (comprising all judges) had decided to declare their assets on a voluntary basis on the Supreme Court's website. Till date, it contains data with respect to 55 former Chief Justices of India and judges of the Supreme Court. The data was last updated on March 31, 2018.

– As regards high courts, only five high courts share data of assets on their website and that too by only a few judges.

– Hence, that's why the committee has recommended the center to bring in a law making it compulsory for judges of the Supreme Court and high courts to declare their assets on an annual basis.

– Declaration of assets by the judges of the higher judiciary will bring “more trust and credibility” into the system.

Do away with Long vacations of courts: The committee has recommended doing away with long Court vacations.

– The Committee felt that vacations in the judiciary are a ‘colonial legacy’ that causes inconvenience to litigants.

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Social diversity in courts: The Committee has also stressed on social diversity among judges of the higher judiciary. It recommended an adequate number of women and candidates from the marginalized sections of the society including minorities to be considered for appointment to high courts and Supreme Court by the respective Collegiums in the high court and Supreme Court.

– This provision should be clearly mentioned in the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP), which is presently under finalization.

Increase retirement age: The Constitution of India can be amended to increase the retirement age of judges of high court (presently 62) and Supreme Court (presently 65) .

Regional benches: The committee has recommended setting up regional Supreme Court benches. The interpretation of Constitution and Constitutional matters may be dealt at Delhi and the regional benches may decide appellate matters. However, the appellate benches may not be made as another layer of the judiciary by treating their decisions as final.

Annual reports: Currently, the Supreme Court is publishing its Annual Report also depicting the work done by all High Courts of the Country. But only few High Courts are publishing their Annual Report.

– The Committee recommends the Department of Justice to approach the Supreme Court of India requesting them to issue necessary directions to all the High Courts to prepare and publish their Annual Reports regularly, on their respective websites.

42. Flood Management Measures

Source: The post is based on the article “**Flood Management Measures**” published in **PIB on 10th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Minister of State for Jal Shakti in Lok Sabha has informed about the Flood Management measures taken by the government of India.

What are measures taken by the government of India to manage floods?

Jurisdiction over flood management: Flood management including erosion control falls within the purview of the States. Flood management and anti-erosion projects are formulated and implemented by concerned State Governments from their own resources as per their priority.

– The Union Government supplements the efforts of the States by providing technical guidance and also promotional financial assistance for management of floods in critical areas.

Structural measures of flood management: The Ministry of Jal Shakti introduced the Flood Management Programme (FMP) during the XI and XII Plans. This program aimed to provide financial support to states for various flood management, erosion control, drainage development, and anti-sea erosion projects.

This program later became part of the “Flood Management and Border Areas Programme” (FMBAP) from 2017-18 to 2020-21, extended until September 2022 with a limited budget.

Non Structural measures of flood management: The Central Water Commission (CWC) is responsible for predicting and giving early warnings about floods in India. They use a system of

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338 forecasting stations across 20 major river basins in 23 States and 2 Union Territories. This helps local authorities prepare for evacuations and take necessary actions.

– To improve the time available for planning, CWC has created flood forecasting models for each basin. These models use rainfall and runoff data to predict floods up to 5 days in advance and provide advice to the forecasting stations.

Committee to create strategy for Flood management: NITI Aayog has formed a committee under the chairmanship of Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog and members from various government departments, experts and state officials to create strategies for flood management and river activities in border areas.

The committee's key recommendations from their January 2021 report, include:

- Improve collection of hydro-meteorological data and simplify sharing policies, especially for rivers crossing borders between states.
- Focus on scientific research to develop models that predict flash floods earlier, reducing their impact.
- Develop and update reservoir operation rules based on changing rainfall patterns and growing population, urbanization, and industry.
- Construct large storage reservoirs to control floods by managing water release schedules.
- Prevent encroachment on natural flood areas and restore them for flood control.
- Implement river interlinking projects to divert flood waters to water-deficient regions within a set timeframe.
- Stop reclaiming existing wetlands or natural depressions and create plans to use them for flood moderation instead.

[43. Belem Declaration: Amazon countries fail to agree on protection goals](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Belem Declaration: Amazon countries fail to agree on protection goals**” published in **Down To Earth on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

At the Amazon Summit, leaders from the eight countries across the Amazon have adopted the **Belem Declaration**.

The summit was organized by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO).

What is the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization(ACTO)?

Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization(ACTO) is an intergovernmental organization signed in 1978 and created in 1995.

Aim: To promote the harmonious development of the Amazonian territories in such a way that the joint actions of the Amazonian countries produce equitable and mutually beneficial results in achieving the sustainable development of the Amazon Region

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Member countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela.

Secretariat: Brasilia, Brazil

What is the Belem Declaration?

The Belem Declaration was adopted at the Amazon Summit.

The declaration recognises Indigenous knowledge as a condition for biodiversity conservation and calls for ensuring full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making and public policy formulation processes.

The declaration created an alliance for combatting forest destruction, with countries left to pursue their individual deforestation goals.

It also created a science body for annual reports on Amazon rainforest like the UN's Climate Change Panel.

44. [CBI Academy joins Interpol Global Academy Network](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**CBI Academy joins Interpol Global Academy Network**” published in **The Hindu on 9th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Academy has joined the Interpol Global Academy Network.

What is the Interpol Global Academy Network?

INTERPOL Global Academy Network was launched in 2019 by INTERPOL.

Aim: It is a network of trusted law enforcement national or regional education institutions providing a global approach to law enforcement training.

The members of the network help INTERPOL by providing specialized training, ongoing education, creating new programs and collaborating on research. This boosts skill development for law enforcement globally.

What is CBI Academy?

The CBI Academy was established in 1996 by CBI.

It is a premier training institution in the fields of crime investigation, prosecution and vigilance functioning.

CBI which is the nodal body for all matters related to Interpol also conducts several international training programmes through this academy.

Located in: Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

– It has also established three Regional Training Centres (RTCs) at Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai to expand its training infrastructure and outreach.

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45. [Will the Federal fund hike impact developing country debt?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Will the Federal fund hike impact developing country debt?**” published in **The Hindu on 11th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The US Federal Reserve has raised the targeted federal funds rate to 5.25-5.5%, a 25 basis points increase. This puts the rate at a 21-year high, surpassing the levels seen in 2001.

What is the Federal Funds Rate?

The Federal Funds Rate plays a crucial role in the economy as it determines lending rates among banks.

Following the global financial crisis, rates were near zero until 2015. However, since March 2022, there has been a steady increase in the rate, leading to concerns about the world economy's ability to withstand such a sharp rise.

Why is the US Fed increasing interest rates?

Globally economies are in a recession due to high inflationary pressure. To combat this, the Fed, which is the central bank of the US, is taking aggressive steps such as an increase in interest rates (something which was not seen since the 1990s) to reduce the money supply flow in the economy.

How does Federal Funds Rate impact India?

Impact on Foreign capital: US Federal Funds rate strongly influences the foreign capital inflow in India.

When the Fed raises rates, foreign investors pull money away from emerging markets as higher rates give a boost to the dollar which erodes the shine of riskier equities.

Impact on rupee: FPIs pulling money out of the equity and bond markets could weaken the rupee even as the dollar gets stronger with the rate hike.

Highest Cost of Fund Mobilization from Overseas Markets: The rise in rates also means a higher cost of funds, and fund mobilization in overseas markets will be costly. The increase in the cost of funds may not only increase the cost of capital expenditure for India but will also strain the profit margins of companies.

Impact on Inflation: India's inflation rate may accelerate as a result of the Fed rate hike. Depreciation of the rupee will increase the rupee cost of imported goods such as crude oil, chemicals and fertilizers, active pharmaceutical ingredients and electronics.

46. [Malabar 2023 naval exercise to begin in Sydney, Australia](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Malabar 2023 naval exercise to begin in Sydney, Australia**” published in **PIB on 10th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Malabar 2023 Naval exercise will begin at Sydney in Australia.

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What is Malabar Exercise?

Exercise Malabar began in 1992 as a bilateral exercise featuring the maritime forces of the US and India.

In 2014, the entry of the Japan Navy made it a trilateral exercise. In 2020, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) also joined Malabar making it a quadrilateral exercise.

This year marks the 27th edition of MALABAR which is being hosted by Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

Malabar 2023 will happen in two phases: Harbour Phase and Sea Phase. During the Harbour Phase, there will be activities like visits, exchanges, and sports. The Sea Phase involves intense exercises covering warfare areas like surface, air, and submarine combat.

Significance of the exercise: The exercise provides an opportunity to the Indian Navy to enhance and demonstrate interoperability and also gain from the best practices in maritime security operations from its partner nations.

Which Indian ships are participating in the exercise?

Indian Navy's indigenous frontline warships INS Sahyadri and INS Kolkata will participate in the exercise.

INS Sahyadri is the third ship of the indigenously designed and built Project-17 class multi-role stealth frigates.

INS Kolkata is the first ship of the indigenously designed and built Project-15A class destroyers.

Both ships have been built at Mazagon Dock Ltd, Mumbai.

47. New Soil Health Card Scheme

Source: The post is based on the article “**New Soil Health Card Scheme**” published in **PIB on 11th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has informed Lok Sabha about the Soil Health Cards (SHCs) Scheme.

What is a Soil Health Cards (SHCs) Scheme?

The Soil Health Cards (SHCs) Scheme was initiated in the fiscal year 2014-15 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

Aim: To aid State Governments in distributing soil health cards to all farmers across the nation.

– These cards furnish farmers with information about their soil's nutrient composition, along with recommendations for applying the appropriate amount of nutrients to enhance soil health and fertility.

Features: Soil Health Card provides two sets of fertilizer recommendations for six crops including recommendations of organic manures.

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– Farmers can also get recommendations for additional crops on demand. They can also print the card as their own from the SHC portal. SHC portal has a farmers database of both the cycles and is available in 21 languages for the benefit of the farmers.

What are the new changes made to the Soil Health Card Scheme?

Firstly, the scheme has been merged in Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) cafeteria scheme as its one component under name ‘Soil Health & Fertility’ from the year 2022-23.

Secondly, the government has made some technological interventions in the Soil Health Card Scheme. The Soil Health Card portal has been revamped and integrated with a Geographic Information System (GIS) system so that all the test results are captured and seen on a map.

What is the significance of the Soil Health card scheme?

National Productivity Council (NPC) carried out a study on ‘Soil Testing Infrastructure for Faster Delivery of Soil Health Card in India’ in 2017. The study was conducted in 76 districts in 19 States. It was found that: –

- Application of fertilizer and micronutrients based on Soil Health Card (SHC) recommendations resulted in 8-10 % of savings.
- Overall increase in the yield of crops to the tune of 5-6% reported by adopting the SHC recommendations.

48. Steps taken for Promotion of Generic Medicines

Source: The post is based on the article “**Steps taken for Promotion of Generic Medicines**” published in **PIB on 11th August 2023**.

What is the News?

The Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare has informed Lok Sabha about the steps taken by the Government for the promotion of Generic Medicines.

What are the steps taken by the government to promote Generic Medicines?

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP): It is a program implemented by the Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI), which operates under the Department of Pharmaceuticals.

- The program aims to provide affordable and high-quality generic medicines to the public.
- It has established around 9,512 dedicated outlets called Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs). These centers offer quality generic medicines at affordable prices. Prices of medicines sold through these outlets are 50-90% less than that of branded medicine prices in the open market.

Janaushadhi Sugam: It is a mobile application that provides information to the public about the location of kendras, helps them search Janaushadhi medicines and compare the maximum retail price of Generic vs. Branded medicines, etc.

Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002: It prescribes that every physician should prescribe drugs with generic names legibly and preferably in capital letters.

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Directorate General of Health Services has directed all Central Government hospitals to prescribe generic medicines only. Similar instructions also have been issued to 'prescribe drugs with generic name legibly' to all CGHS Doctors and Wellness Centres.

Under the free drug initiative of National Health Mission (NHM), support is provided for provision of essential generic drugs free of cost in public health facilities.

In order to ensure quality of the products, the Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI) procures medicines only from World Health Organization – Good Manufacturing Practices (WHO-GMP) certified suppliers.

– Apart from this, each batch of drug is tested at laboratories accredited by National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL). Only after passing the quality tests, the medicines are dispatched to PMBJP Kendras.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) have taken steps to ensure the quality of generic medicines:

– To make sure medicines work effectively, the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 were changed. Now, when applying for a license to make oral drugs, the applicant must include results from a bioequivalence study.

– The Principal/Health Secretaries of all States/UTs were directed to ensure that licenses for manufacturing drugs are granted or renewed using proper/generic names.

[49. Powerful sun storm knocks out radio transmissions across North America](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Powerful sun storm knocks out radio transmissions across North America**” published on [Space.com](#) on **8th August 2023**.

What is the News?

A powerful solar flare disrupted radio and navigation signals across North America.

What are Solar Flares?

Solar flares are energetic flashes of radiation that explode from magnetically dense, cool regions on the sun's surface known as sunspots.

Traveling at the speed of light, the photons from these flares arrive at our planet in eight minutes.

As the radiation from the flares interacts with particles in Earth's ionosphere, the region of the atmosphere at altitudes between 50 and 400 miles (80 and 650 kilometers), it supercharges them. These changes then affect radio and satellite signals that pass through this region.

What are Geomagnetic Storms?

A geomagnetic storm refers to the disruptions to the Earth's magnetic field caused by solar emissions.

When a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) or a high-speed solar stream reaches our planet, it slams into the magnetosphere. The Earth's magnetosphere is created by our magnetic fields and it usually protects us from the particles emitted by the Sun.

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When a CME or a high-speed stream arrives at Earth, it peels open the planet's magnetosphere, kind of like an onion. This allows energetic solar wind particles to stream down and hit our atmosphere over the poles.

Solar weather events like this can also supercharge auroras, sometimes making them visible in places where they wouldn't have been otherwise.

50. [Kerala govt to launch 'Athidhi Portal' on Monday for registration of migrant workers](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Kerala govt to launch 'Athidhi Portal' on Monday for registration of migrant workers"** published in **Economic Times on 7th August 2023.**

What is the News?

Kerala Government will be launching the Athidhi Portal.

What is Athidhi Portal?

Launched by: Kerala Government

Purpose: It is a user-friendly web portal to expedite the registration for migrant workers in Kerala.

Key Features: Contractors, who bring migrant workers to the state and employers can register the workers in the portal. It also allows workers to register themselves individually as well.

– The enrolling officer will examine the details entered in the portal and issue a unique ID to each worker.

– The portal will also ensure that they have social security,

Significance of the portal: The portal has been launched in the wake of two recent sexual crimes against children, which were allegedly carried out by migrant workers.

51. [Centre to overhaul British-era IPC, CrPC, Evidence Act](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Centre to overhaul British-era IPC, CrPC, Evidence Act"** published in **The Hindu on 11th August 2023.**

What is the News?

The Union Home Minister has introduced three Bills in the Lok Sabha to repeal the British-era Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Background:

The Ministry of Home Affairs in 2020 had constituted a committee to review the three codes of criminal law. It was headed by Prof. (Dr.) Ranbir Singh, former Vice Chancellor of National Law University (NLU), Delhi.

The mandate of the committee was to 'recommend reforms in the criminal laws of the country in a principled, effective and efficient manner.

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What are the three bills introduced to repeal the IPC, CrPC, Evidence Act?

Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita Bill 2023 will replace Code of Criminal Procedure(CRPC), 1898

Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita Bill 2023 will replace the Indian Penal Code(IPC),1860

Bhartiya Sakshya Bill 2023 will replace the Evidence Act 1872

These bills have been brought to provide speedy justice and create a legal system that keeps contemporary needs and aspirations of the people.

What are the key provisions of these bills?

- Separate provision for Mob Lynching, punishable with 7 years or life imprisonment or death penalty;
- Formal provision for 'Zero FIR'- this will enable citizens to lodge a FIR with any police station, no matter their jurisdiction;
- 'Deemed Sanction' to prosecute civil servants, police officer accused of criminal offences in case of authority's failure to respond within 120 days of application;
- Digitization of complete process starting from registration of FIR to maintenance of Case Diary to filing of Charge sheet and delivery of Judgment;
- -Separate provisions penalizing rape of woman under false pretext of marriage, job, etc.
- Complete trial, including Cross-examination, appeal, to be facilitated via Video conferencing;
- Videography while recording statement of victims of sexual crimes mandatory;
- Punishment for all types of Gang Rape- 20 yrs or life imprisonment;
- Charge sheet to be mandatorily filed within 90 days of FIR.Court may extend such time by further 90 days, taking the total maximum period for winding up investigation to 180 days;
- Courts to finish framing of charges within 60 days of receiving charge sheet;
- Judgment to be mandatorily delivered within 30 days after conclusion of hearing.

What will happen now to these bills?

The bills have now been referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee. The committee will discuss the bills, clause by clause.

After it has sufficiently deliberated on the Bills, the Committee will deliver a comprehensive report to the government and provide recommendations. These recommendations are not binding on the government.

After the committee sends in its recommendation, the government will decide whether to incorporate them, and which specific recommendations to incorporate.

If there are not many recommendations to be incorporated, the government simply introduces changes to original bills through amendments. After the bills, in their final form, are back in the Lok Sabha, they will be up for debate and passed in both the houses.

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[52. Chinese military ship docks at Colombo Port for a 'formal' visit](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Chinese military ship docks at Colombo Port for a 'formal' visit**” published in **The Hindu on 12th August 2023**.

What is the News?

A Chinese warship, the Hai Yang 24 Hao, has arrived in Sri Lanka and will be docked at the Colombo Port.

This visit comes after India-Sri Lanka ties had witnessed tensions in the wake of the Chinese warship's visit to Hambantota Port in 2022. India and the U.S had voiced concern over the ship's visit.

Why is India concerned with the Chinese Ship in Sri Lanka?

Firstly, Chinese Ship in Sri Lanka means that several ports in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh could be on China's radar. Reports have claimed that several vital installations in South India could be under threat of being snooped upon.

Secondly, Chinese ship in the Colombo Port fits right into China's 'string of pearls' strategy to surround India in the Indian Ocean through increasing land and maritime footprint.

What has been China's response to India's concerns?

China had reacted strongly following concerns voiced by India. It has said that

Firstly, Sri Lanka is a transportation hub in the Indian Ocean. Scientific research vessels from various countries including China have made port calls in Sri Lanka for replenishment.

Second, Sri Lanka is a sovereign country. It has the right to develop relations with other countries based on its development interests. To have normal cooperation is the independent choice made by our two countries. It serves the shared interests of both sides and does not target any third party.

[53. GI tag to Mushkbudji will transform farmers of Sagam into entrepreneurs](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**GI tag to Mushkbudji will transform farmers of Sagam into entrepreneurs**” published in **Greater Kashmir on 12th August 2023**.

What is the News?

Mushkbudji Rice received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

What is Mushkbudji Rice?

Mushkbudji Rice is short, bold aromatic rice grown in the higher reaches of Kashmir valley.

The cooked rice is unique and possesses a harmonious blend of taste, aroma and rich organoleptic properties.

The consumption of aromatic rice in Kashmir has now been limited to special occasions, marriages, and festivals.

In 2007, the government announced a revival program of the Mushkbudji rice variety in Sagam village of Kokernag. This precious and aromatic variety had fallen out of cultivation in the 1970s due to blast disease.