

WEEKLY UPDATES – (3rd – 9th March)

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ENVIRONMENT

Mating calls indicate endangered Hanguls are on a comeback trail

Context: Kashmir's Hangul, a critically endangered deer species prized for its shyness and sensitivity, witnessed a notably successful mating season last autumn, hinting at a potential population increase.

Key Highlights

- The Hangul population might exceed 300 this spring, marking the first instance in over three decades.
- Presently, there are 19.2 males for every 100 females, a ratio significantly below the optimal level.

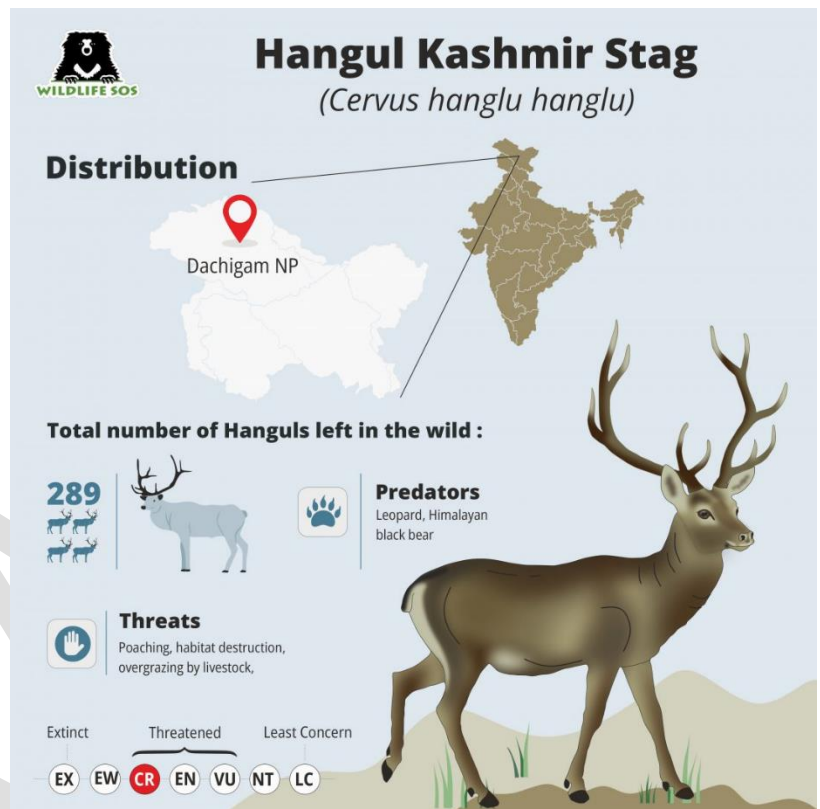
Hangul Overview

- Hangul, also called the **Kashmir stag**, is indigenous to the Jammu and Kashmir region in India.
- Scientifically known as **Cervus hanglu**, it mainly inhabits the dense temperate forests of the Kashmir Valley and adjacent areas, spanning elevations from 1,700 to 3,000 meters above sea level.

Challenges

- Habitat disturbance and human interference have adversely affected Hanguls, although efforts are underway to mitigate these issues.
- The Wildlife Department has identified water scarcity as a significant threat, driving Hanguls into disrupted habitats and elevating predation risks.

Conservation Efforts



Dachigam National Park, the habitat of Hanguls, was temporarily closed during the rutting season in October.

Despite a sharp decline in population since 1947, recent conservation endeavors have resulted in a gradual increase, with the estimated population reaching 261 in 2021.

To bolster Hangul conservation, ten sites have been designated for protection, and a captive-breeding facility has been established at Shikargah Tral.

Over 24,000 birds from 66 species recorded during Tamirabharani Waterbird Count

Context: The recently conducted Tamirabharani Waterbird Count 2024 has reported a sighting of over 24,000 birds in the irrigation tanks supplied by the perennial river.

Key Highlights

- World Wildlife Day was celebrated on March 3, coinciding with the event.
- The citizen-centric bird monitoring program, the Tamirabharani Waterbird Count, was initiated by ATREE's Agasthyamalai Community Conservation Centre (ACCC) in 2011.
- The 14th edition of the count was co-organized by ATREE's ACCC, Pearl City Nature Trust from Thoothukudi, Nellai Nature Club Trust, Tirunelveli, and Pushpalata Educational Centre, Tirunelveli.
- Among the observed birds, 40 out of 100 were identified as migratory species.
- Notable sightings include Black-tailed Godwit, various Egret species, migratory ducks such as Northern Pintail and Bar-headed Geese, Cormorant species, Spot-billed Duck, and Common Coot.
- The Tamirabharani river and its significant tributaries, including Chithar, Pachchaiyar, Gadana, and Ramanathi, play a vital role in providing water to the districts of Tirunelveli, Tenkasi, and Thoothukudi.
- Besides natural calamities, human-induced threats such as sewage water discharge, improper waste disposal, and misuse of tanks for illicit activities, particularly alcohol consumption, were observed in several tanks.
- The Vaenthankulam tank in Tirunelveli city center is undergoing severe degradation due to activities like daytime alcohol consumption on the tank bund and its use for illicit activities during the evenings.
- The Veinthankulam restoration project, initiated under the 'Nellai Neervalam' in June 2021, has been joined by Care Earth.

Thamirabarani River flowing across Tirunelveli	
Country	India
State	Tamil Nadu
Districts	Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi
Tributaries	
- left	Karaiyar, Servalar, Gadananathi, Chittar River
- right	Manimutharu, Pachaiyar
Cities	Tirunelveli, Ambasamudram
Source	
	Pothigai hills
- coordinates	8.601962°N 77.264131°E ^[2]
Mouth	
- location	Gulf of Mannar
- coordinates	8.641316°N 78.127298°E ^[1]
Length	125 km (78 mi)
Discharge	for Sri Vai Kuntum
- average	32 m ³ /s (1,130 cu ft/s)

List of Major tributaries of Thamirabarani

Tributaries	Length of Tributary	Origin	Joins at	Length of course of Thamirabarani
Karaiyar		Mundanthurai reserve forests	Karaiyar Dam	6 km
Servalar River		Mundanthurai reserve forests	Papanasam Reservoir	22 km
Manimuthar River	9 km	Manjolai hills	Aladiyoor	36 km
Gadananathi		Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve	Tiruppudaimaruthur	43 km
Pachaiyar River	32 km	Kalakkadu reserve forests	Tharuvai	61 km
Chittar River	80 km	Kutralam Hills	Sivalaperi	73 km

About the Thamirabarani River

- Thamirabarani is the only perennial river in South India, flowing through the districts of Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu.
- Originating from the Pothigai hills of Western Ghats, it traverses approximately 128 kilometers along the southern edge of the country.
- Remarkably, the river originates and concludes its journey within the state of Tamil Nadu.
- The river holds significant cultural and ecological importance for the people of Tamil Nadu, supporting diverse wildlife including the Nilgiri marten, slender loris, lion-tailed macaque, and various amphibian and avian species like the galaxy frog and great hornbill.

National dam panel to examine Kaleshwaram project

Context: The National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) has initiated an expert committee to investigate concerns regarding the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) due to issues with sinking piers at the Medigadda barrage.

Key Highlights

- This investigation is prompted by problems observed at the Medigadda barrage, Sundilla, and Annaram barrages.
- The NDSA has assembled a five-member committee, led by J. Chandrasekhar Iyer, former chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC), to conduct a thorough assessment.

Medigadda Barrage

- The Lakshmi Barrage, or Medigadda Barrage, serves as the starting point of the Kaleshwaram Project, which involves the construction of three barrages between Yellampally and Medigadda.
- Its purpose is to harness Godavari water for both drinking and irrigation purposes. The Barrage/Project site is situated in Medigadda Village, Mahadevpur Mandal, Jayashankar Bhupalpally district, Telangana State, India.

Kaleshwaram Lift-Irrigation Project

- This project is a multi-purpose irrigation endeavor on the Godavari River in Kaleshwaram, Bhupalpally, Telangana.
- Originating at the confluence point of the Pranahita River and the Godavari River, it was initially known as the Pranahita-Chevella project in former Andhra Pradesh, but underwent redesign and extension, renaming as the Kaleshwaram project in Telangana in 2014.

National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)

- The Dam Safety Act 2021 was enacted in response to dam failures attributed to inadequate surveillance and maintenance.
- It delineates crucial responsibilities and mandates the formation of national and state-level bodies for its execution.
- Key provisions include the establishment of a National Committee on Dam Safety to oversee policies and regulations, the creation of a National Dam Safety Authority to manage state-level disputes, and the appointment of the Chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC) to oversee national dam safety protocols.
- State-level bodies, namely the State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS) and State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO), are also required to be established.

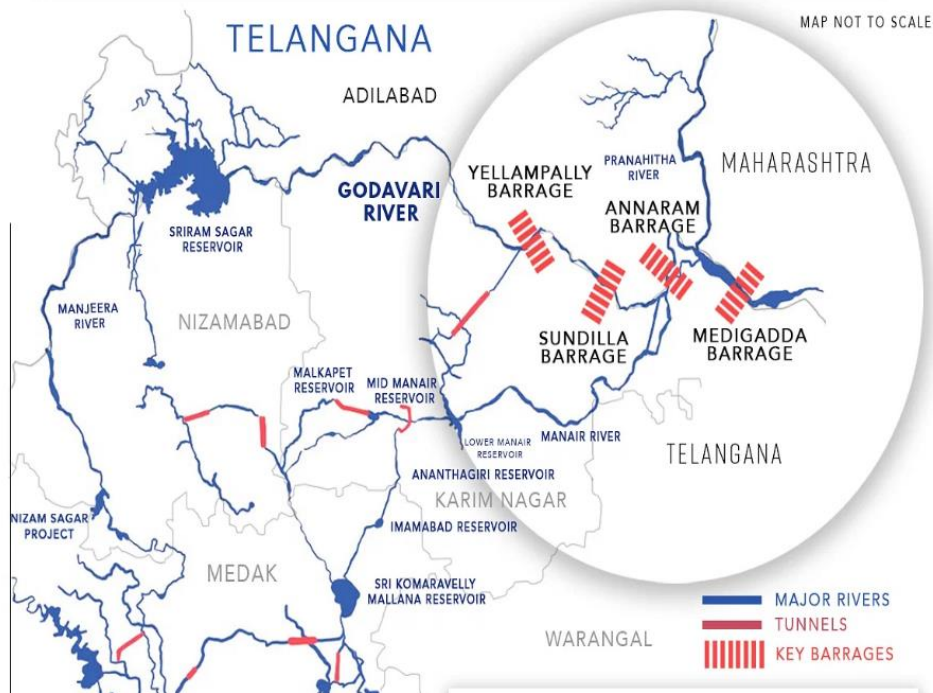
Project Objectives

- It aims to provide drinking water and irrigation to underdeveloped areas of Telangana.
- Additionally, it intends to replenish groundwater levels by transitioning from groundwater usage for irrigation to surface water usage.
- The project will also complement Mission Kakatiya and Mission Bhagiratha schemes, which aim to enhance drinking water accessibility in numerous villages and enhance tank capacities.

KALESHWARAM PROJECT

Commissioned in 2019, the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation project comprises three barrages constructed across Godavari river. The first barrage is at Medigadda near Kaleshwaram (on the confluence of Pranahitha river, a tributary of Godavari). Two more barrages are located at Annaram and Sundilla villages between Medigadda and Sripada Yellampally irrigation project.

ORIGINAL COST	Rs 80,000 crore	TOTAL DIVERSION		AREA THAT WILL BE IRRIGATED
NOW INFLATED TO	Rs 1.05 lakh crore	180 TMC OF WATER	13 BENEFICIARY DISTRICTS	18.25 LAKH ACRES



Trees in Corbett fell prey to greedy nexus, says Supreme Court

Context: The Supreme Court condemned the illegal felling of over 6,000 trees in Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand, under the pretext of “eco-tourism,” citing it as an alarming instance of collusion between politicians and officials for commercial gain at the expense of the environment.

Key Highlights

- The court mandated the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to form a specialized committee to assess and offer recommendations on allowing tiger safaris in the buffer zones of tiger reserves.
- Emphasizing Uttarakhand's responsibility to fully restore the forest, the court stressed the vital link between tigers and their forest habitat, highlighting the crucial role of tigers in maintaining ecosystem health.
- The specialized committee will comprise members from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Wildlife Institute of India, Central Empowered Committee, and a Ministry Joint Secretary, with a focus on safeguarding tigers and their surrounding ecosystems.

Guidelines For Safaris

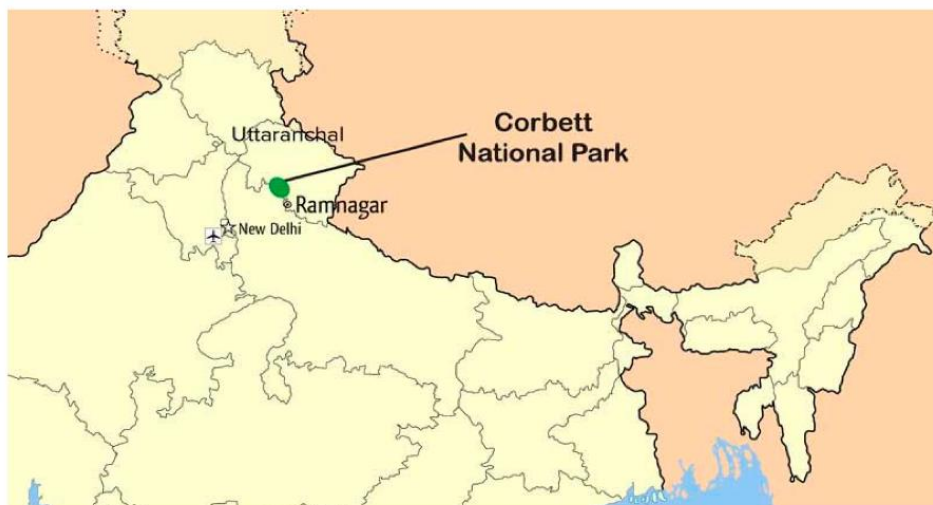
- If the committee recommends allowing tiger safaris in the buffer zones, the court stipulated the need for comprehensive operational guidelines applicable nationwide.
- Criticizing the use of zoo tigers for safaris as per the 2019 NTCA guidelines, the court endorsed the 2016 NTCA guidelines, suggesting the use of injured, conflict, or orphaned tigers unfit for rewilding, sourced from the same landscape.
- Rejecting the idea of selecting safari animals approved by the Central Zoo Authority, the court opposed the creation of a CZA "Master Plan," advocating for minimal environmental impact, blending resorts with the natural environment, controlling noise levels, and locating safaris near animal rescue centers.
- Existing safaris, like the Pakhro zone in Corbett, will remain untouched, but the Uttarakhand government is instructed to establish an animal rescue center nearby.

Panel To Assess Damage

The appointed panel will evaluate the damage to the green cover of Corbett Reserve, estimate restoration costs, and identify those responsible for the damage.

Jim Corbett National Park

- Established in 1936 as Hailey National Park, Jim Corbett National Park is India's oldest national park, named after hunter and naturalist Jim Corbett.
- Located in Nainital and Pauri Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand, it was the first to come under the Project Tiger initiative, covering the Patli Dun valley formed by the Ramganga river.
- Major rivers flowing through the park include Ramganga, Sonanadi, Mandal, Palain, and Kosi, with the park falling under the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature's Terai Arc Landscape Program for protection.



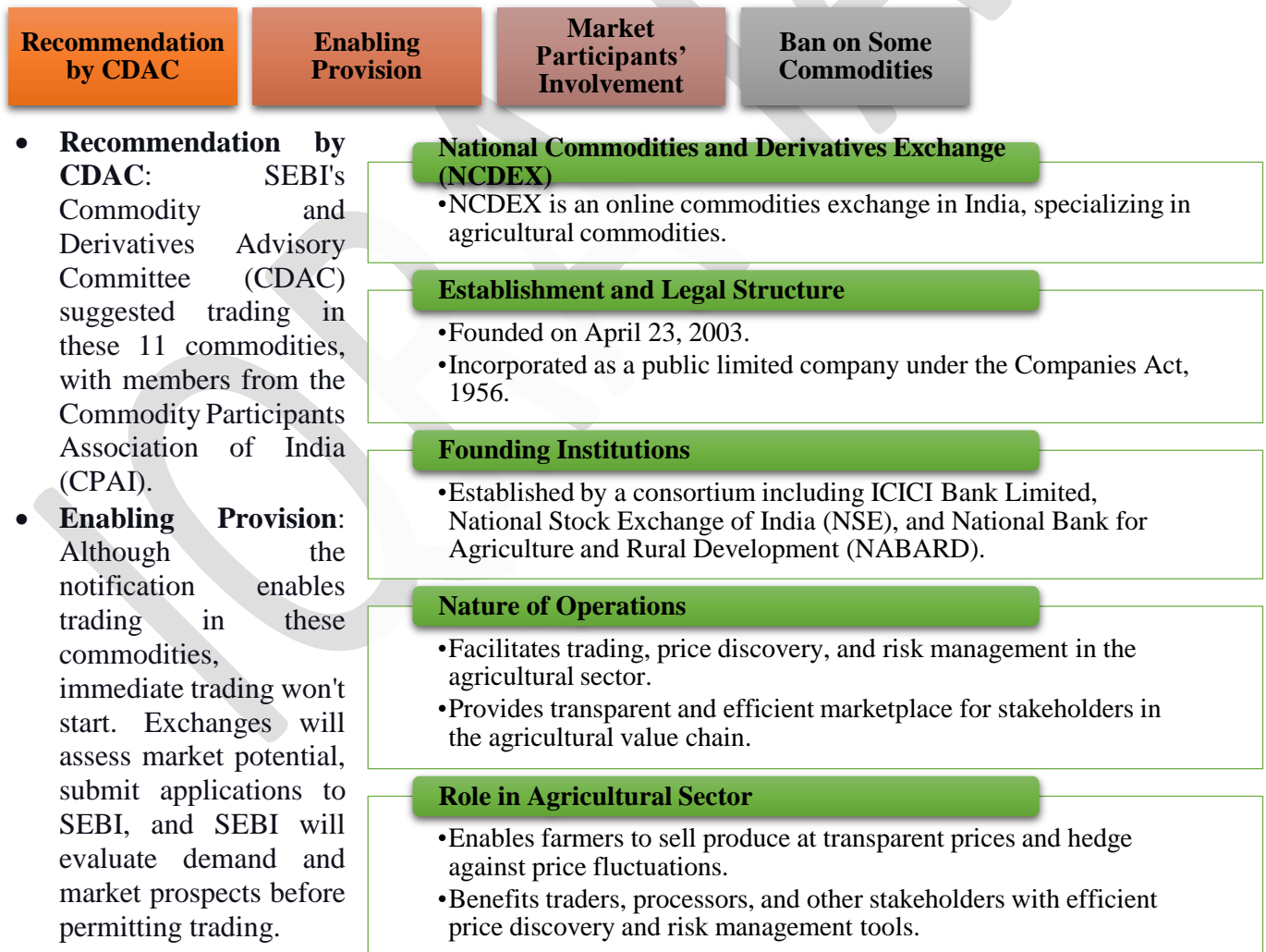
ECONOMY

Derivatives Trading

Context: Recently, the Finance Ministry, upon the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (SEBI) recommendation, permitted derivatives trading in 11 additional commodities. It includes Skimmed Milk Powder, Cement, Apple, Bamboo, Timber, Weather, Freight, White Butter, Cashew, Metal Alloys and Manganese.

Date of Notification	The Finance Ministry issued the notification on March 1.
Legislation	These commodities are added under the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956.
Total Number of Commodities for Derivatives Trading	With these additions, the total count of commodities eligible for derivatives trading now reaches 104.
Immediate Effect	The changes are effective immediately upon the notification's issuance.

Views of Industry Experts



- **Market Participants' Involvement:** Approval for trading a commodity requires agreement from market participant associations. Some physical market participants express concerns about online derivatives trading, fearing price manipulation.
- **Ban on Some Commodities:** Trading in seven key agricultural commodities remains prohibited until December-end to curb inflation.

Expert Opinion

- **Price Discovery:** Derivatives trading in these commodities will aid in price discovery for widely traded items.
- **Inflation Concerns:** Experts express worries about inflation's impact, noting the government's caution regarding derivatives trading's role in price inflation.
- **Policy Certainty:** Hedgers and investors seek clarity and policy certainty concerning derivatives trading in agricultural commodities.

NBBL asked to start interoperable system for net banking in 2024

Context: The RBI has instructed NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd. (NBBL) to implement an interoperable system for Internet Banking to speed up funds settlement for merchants. RBI highlights the advantages of this system for various payment transactions including income tax, insurance premiums, mutual fund payments, and e-commerce.

Current Scenario and Challenges

- **Non-Interoperability:** Transactions via Payment Aggregators (PAs) lack interoperability, requiring each bank to integrate separately with different PAs.
- **Delays and Settlement Risks:** Absence of standardized payment system leads to delays in payments receipt by merchants and poses settlement risks.

RBI's Approval and Implementation Timeline

- **Approval to NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd.:** RBI has sanctioned NBBL to implement the interoperable system for Internet banking transactions.
- **Expected Launch:** Implementation of the system is expected within the current calendar year for a more efficient payment experience.

Objective of the Interoperable System

- **Facilitate Quicker Settlement:** The aim is to expedite funds settlement for merchants, ensuring faster transactions.
- **Simplified Transactions:** By creating an interoperable framework, specific arrangements between merchant's PA and customer's bank become unnecessary.

Benefits for Stakeholders

- **Merchants**
 - Faster and reliable settlement of funds.

NPCI

- An umbrella organization for retail payments and settlement systems in India.
- Develops and operates payment systems like UPI, IMPS, NEFT, etc.

NBBL

- A subsidiary of NPCI, focused on the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS).
- Operates BBPS, a centralized bill payment system in India for utility bills and other services.

BBPS

- A centralized system in India for payment of bills and other services.
- Provides a one-stop solution for utility bill payments through various channels.

- Reduced settlement risks and delays in payments.
- **Banks**
 - Simplified integration process with a standardized system.
 - Enhanced efficiency in handling Internet banking transactions.
- **Customers**
 - Seamless payment experience without multiple arrangements.
 - Quicker processing of transactions for various services.

Conclusion

RBI's directive to implement interoperable Internet banking system through NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd. marks significant progress in streamlining digital payments in India.

Indian app developers meet Ministers to resolve Google delisting issue

Context: The Indian start-up group has lodged a complaint with the Competition Commission of India (CCI) against Google, urging the regulator to enforce the reinstatement of apps removed by Google for alleged policy violations. This escalation highlights the intensifying conflict between Indian start-ups and the U.S. tech giant within a critical market.

Background

- Google removed over 100 Indian apps from its platform, citing violations of its policies, notably regarding in-app payment options.
- The removal follows an antitrust directive from 2022, prohibiting tech giants like Google from penalizing companies using alternative billing systems.

Start-ups' Appeal to CCI

- The Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) has petitioned the CCI, accusing Google of anti-competitive behavior through its app removals and emphasizing potential harm to market competitiveness.
- ADIF urges the CCI to instruct Google to reverse its decision, highlighting concerns over irreparable market damage.

Competition Act, 2002

Enacted to promote competition and fair trade practices, the Act aims to prevent anti-competitive behavior in India.

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- The CCI, established in 2009, enforces the Competition Act, 2002, to promote market competition and protect consumer interests.
- It replaced the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act), following the Raghavan Committee's

Google's Response and Public Criticism

- Google denies wrongdoing and refrains from commenting on the appeal to the CCI.
- Indian companies criticize Google's actions, reflecting longstanding disputes over its practices.

Key Points

- The dispute impacts the competitiveness of the Indian app market and companies' freedom to use alternate billing systems.
- ADIF's appeal underscores the growing demand for regulatory oversight and fair practices in the digital ecosystem.
- Both Google and the CCI are yet to respond, leaving the fate of removed apps and market dynamics uncertain.

Features of Competition Act, 2002

Competition Act, 2002 (Act, for brief) has essential four Features:

• To prohibit Anti -Competition Agreements (Sec-3)

• To prohibit Abuse of dominant position (Sec-4)

• To regulate Combinations (Sec-5 & Sec 6)

• Competition advocacy (Sec-49)

Conclusion

The clash reveals challenges for tech platforms in India's digital landscape, with calls for regulatory scrutiny and fair competition. Stakeholders across the industry await the outcome of this dispute amid escalating tensions.

GI recognition for Narasapur crochet lace craft revives hopes of struggling artisan

Context: The Narasapur crochet lace craft from Andhra Pradesh's Godavari region has received the Geographical Indications (GI) tag, breathing new life into this traditional craft.



Key Highlights

- Bestowed by the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The craft centers around key trading hubs like Narsapur and Palacole in West Godavari district, and Razole and Amalapuram in the Konaseema region.
- It provides livelihoods for approximately 15,000 women artisans who specialize in crafting lace-based garments, home furnishings, and accessories.
- The state government operates the Alankriti Lace Park in Narasapur town.

Origin

- The Narasapur crochet lace craft, dating back to 1844, was introduced to local women in the Godavari region by Macrae and his wife, linked with a Christian missionary in Dummugudem, Scotland.
- They facilitated the sale of these products both domestically and internationally, sustaining the craft despite challenges like the Indian famine of 1899 and the Great Depression of 1929.

History of Narasapur

- Narsapur's history traces back to 1173 AD, with Dutch people arriving in 1626, using it as a port for shipbuilding.
- It became renowned for shipbuilding and was a trading port in the 18th century, exporting teak to other regions, though presently lacking port handling.
- Alexander Hamilton's A New Account of the East Indies (1727) notes Narsapur's significance in trade, but its commerce declined after the abolition of the company's factory in 1827.

POLITY

Immunity won't protect legislators taking bribes to vote in Parliament from criminal prosecution Supreme Court

Context: The Supreme Court of India, led by a seven-judge Bench, unanimously ruled that parliamentary privilege does not shield legislators from criminal prosecution for bribery related to their actions in Parliament or State Legislative Assemblies.

Historical Overruling

This ruling overturns a 1998 Supreme Court decision (the JMM bribery case judgment), which previously granted lawmakers immunity from corruption prosecution for actions undertaken as part of their legislative functions.

Chief Justice of India's Observations

- The Chief Justice emphasized that privileges and immunities should not be used to evade general law, stating that corruption undermines the essence of Indian parliamentary democracy.
- He clarified that accepting bribery is a complete act regardless of subsequent legislative actions, highlighting the gravity of bribery within the legislative process.

Implications for Parliamentary Immunity

- The Court rejected the argument that reducing parliamentary immunity unfairly exposes opposition members to criminal investigation, asserting that bribed lawmakers undermine democratic principles.

Criteria for Immunity

- The judgment specified that parliamentary immunity could only be invoked to uphold the dignity and authority of the legislative body or to protect legislators' rights to free speech and protest.
- Immunity claims failing to meet these criteria would not be accepted, with the Court recognizing concurrent jurisdiction of criminal courts and legislative bodies over bribery allegations.

Background of the Appeal

The ruling stemmed from an appeal by JMM leader Sita Soren, accused of accepting a bribe during the 2012 Rajya Sabha elections, revisiting the controversial JMM bribery scandal of 1993.

Reaffirmation of Rule of Law

Chief Justice Chandrachud concluded that granting MPs immunity from bribery prosecution would undermine parliamentary democracy and violate the rule of law, positioning the judiciary against corruption in legislative bodies.



Parliamentary Privileges

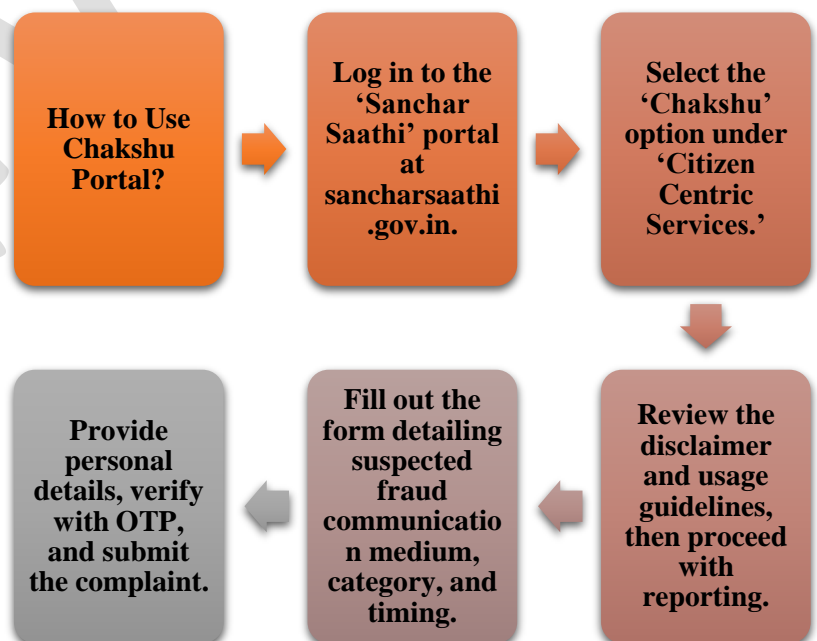
- **Freedom of Speech in Parliament** Article 105(1) grants members of Parliament the freedom of speech and expression within parliamentary proceedings, subject to parliamentary rules.
- **Limitations** This freedom is subject to constitutional provisions and parliamentary rules, with restrictions on discussing judicial conduct under Article 121.
- **Freedom from Arrest** Members enjoy immunity from arrest in civil cases 40 days before and after parliamentary adjournment and during sessions, with arrest outside the parliamentary limits requiring house permission.
- **Right to Prohibit Publication** Article 105(2) protects individuals publishing parliamentary proceedings under a member's authority.
- **Right to Exclude Strangers** Members have the right to exclude non-members from proceedings to ensure fair discussion.

Chakshu, an online platform to report suspected fraud or spam callers

Context: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has rolled out Chakshu, an online platform accessible via sancharsaathi.gov.in/sfc, enabling telecom users to report suspected fraud or spam callers.

Key Highlights

- This initiative aims to empower citizens in reporting fraudulent communications related to various services such as bank accounts, payment wallets, SIM and utility connections, KYC updates, impersonation, and sextortion.
- Concurrently, the DoT launched the Digital Intelligence Platform, a secure data-sharing tool for stakeholders including Telecom Service Providers, law enforcement, financial institutions, and social media platforms to combat fraud.
- Additionally, Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw endorsed the Caller Name Presentation (CNAP) feature, allowing users to see the registered



name of incoming callers, while ensuring thorough review of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India recommendations for implementation, considering privacy concerns.

What's Chakshu Portal?

The Chakshu portal, under the Sanchar Saathi initiative, empowers citizens to report suspected fraud communications targeting telecom service users, encompassing bank accounts, payment wallets, SIM cards, and impersonation as government officials or relatives.

Moreover, the Department of Telecom introduced the DIP to facilitate information sharing with law enforcement agencies, banks, and financial institutions to combat fraud, enhancing detection and prevention efforts in collaboration with Chakshu and the Digital Intelligence Platform.

What you can report on Sanchar Saathi Portal?

- Check and report mobile connections issued in their name.
- Report stolen/lost mobile handsets for blocking and tracing.
- Verify authenticity of mobile handsets when purchasing new or used devices.
- Report incoming international calls displaying Indian telephone numbers as caller ID.
- Check details of licensed wireline Internet Service Providers.

Mask names of those acquitted in criminal cases from digital records, HC tells media

Context: Justice M. Nagaprasanna of the Karnataka High Court advised the media to take proactive steps to remove or anonymize the names of acquitted individuals from their digital archives, aiming to prevent these individuals from resorting to legal remedies for name removal.

Key Highlights

- This advice accompanied a directive to the High Court's registry to anonymize the personal details of a 27-year-old acquitted in a criminal case, emphasizing the individual's right to dignity.
- The court emphasized that continuing to associate acquitted individuals with crimes online after their exoneration contradicts the essence of life protected under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

'Right of Erasure'

- The Karnataka High Court referenced the recently enacted Personal Data Protection Act, effective from August 11, 2023, highlighting its recognition of the "right of erasure" of personal data.
- This action aligns with global legal trends supporting rights to be forgotten, correction, and erasure of personal data.
- The court cited a 2018 UK judgment (NT1 Vs Google LLC) emphasizing the right of individuals, including those acquitted or discharged by competent courts, to live with dignity, challenging Google's resistance to delist such individuals.
- Additionally, the High Court cited a Supreme Court directive to anonymize names in cases involving sexual offenses and a 2023 Delhi High Court order directing media platforms to remove the name of an accused whose criminal case was quashed following a settlement.
- These references illustrate a growing legal consensus on the significance of protecting individuals' dignity and privacy post-acquittal.

- The court's stance seeks to enable a form of digital forgetting, aligning with the right to privacy principles established in the K.S. Puttaswamy case by the Supreme Court.

K S Puttaswamy case and Right to Privacy

- In August 2017, the Supreme Court, in Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd) Vs Union of India, unanimously affirmed that Indians have a constitutionally protected fundamental right to privacy, inherent in life and liberty under Article 21.
- The court held that privacy is a natural right inherent in all individuals, subject to restriction only by state action meeting legislative mandate, pursuing legitimate state purposes, and proportionate to achieving those ends.

Supreme Court asks whether Maharashtra Speaker contradicted verdict

Context: The Supreme Court of India has raised questions regarding Maharashtra Speaker Rahul Narwekar's decision to recognize Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's faction as the authentic Shiv Sena based on 'legislative majority.'

Key Highlights

- Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, leading a three-judge Bench, expressed concerns that this criterion seemed to contradict a previous ruling by the Constitution Bench.
- The Bench had previously emphasized that the Speaker's decision on party disputes should not solely rely on legislative majority but should also consider the structure of leadership outside the Legislative Assembly, indicating support from the party's political wing, not just its legislative members.
- A majority faction of the legislature party cannot be considered a political party for the purposes of the Tenth Schedule.
- This inquiry arose in the context of resolving disqualification petitions against Mr. Shinde by the rival Uddhav Thackeray faction under the anti-defection law.

2018 Constitution of Shiv Sena

- In the ongoing legal dispute over the Shiv Sena party's leadership, Senior advocates Kapil Sibal, A.M. Singhvi, and Devadutt Kamat argued that Maharashtra Speaker Rahul Narwekar erred by not recognizing the 2018 Constitution of Shiv Sena, which designated Mr. Thackeray as president.
- They pointed out that this constitution had been acknowledged by both the High Court and the Supreme Court previously, but the Speaker disregarded it because it wasn't filed with the Election Commission of India, opting instead for a 1999 version of the constitution that had not been previously contested.
- In opposition, Mr. Salve, representing the opposing faction, alleged that the documents presented by the Thackeray camp were fabricated and mentioned an ongoing similar case in the Bombay High Court, arguing against simultaneous petitions in multiple courts over the same matter.
- Despite this, the Supreme Court has decided to continue hearing the case, scheduling further arguments for the week of April 8 and requesting the records of the disqualification proceedings from the Maharashtra Speaker's office.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Indigenous Greenland women sue Denmark over forced contraception

Context: In Greenland, 143 Indigenous Inuit women are suing Denmark, seeking compensation totaling nearly 43 million kroner (\$6.3 million) for being forcibly implanted with intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs) during the 1960s and 70s.

Key Highlights

- These women, some of whom were adolescents at the time, allege that Danish health authorities infringed upon their human rights by inserting IUDs without their knowledge or consent, purportedly to control population growth in Greenland amidst improving living standards and healthcare.
- Despite Greenland's transition from a Danish colony to a province in 1953, the issue has prompted a joint investigation by the Danish and Greenlandic governments, with findings anticipated next year.

Uses, Advantages, and Disadvantages

- When correctly inserted, IUDs are over 99% effective in preventing pregnancy.
- It starts working immediately upon insertion and remains effective for 5 to 10 years, depending on the type.
- It can be inserted at any point in the menstrual cycle, provided the individual is not pregnant, and can be removed by a trained professional at any time, allowing immediate fertility restoration.
- Despite its efficacy, there's a slight risk of infection following insertion, and a possibility of expulsion or displacement within the body.
- Previous pelvic infections may make it unsuitable, and it does not safeguard against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

About Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices (ICD)

- An IUD is a small T-shaped plastic and copper device inserted into the uterus by a healthcare professional.
- It releases copper to prevent pregnancy and offers contraceptive protection for 5 to 10 years, commonly referred to as a "coil" or "copper coil."

About Greenland

- Greenland is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, located in North America.
- It's the larger of two autonomous territories, the other being the Faroe Islands, with citizens of both territories holding full Danish citizenship.
- Greenlandic citizens are also European Union citizens as Greenland is considered one of the Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union.
- Nuuk serves as the capital and largest city, situated between the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.
- As the world's largest island, Greenland is home to the northernmost point of land, with Kaffeklubben Island holding that distinction, while Cape Morris Jesup was once believed to be until the 1960s.

HEALTH

What is 'dry ice' at the centre of the Gurugram restaurant incident?

Context: At a restaurant in Gurugram, patrons were mistakenly served “dry ice” as a mouth freshener, resulting in severe health reactions, including vomiting blood.

Dry Ice

- Dry ice is the solid state of carbon dioxide, identified as a hazardous substance by authoritative bodies such as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Direct contact with skin or ingestion can cause significant harm due to its extremely cold temperatures and the risk of sublimation into carbon dioxide gas, potentially leading to breathlessness.

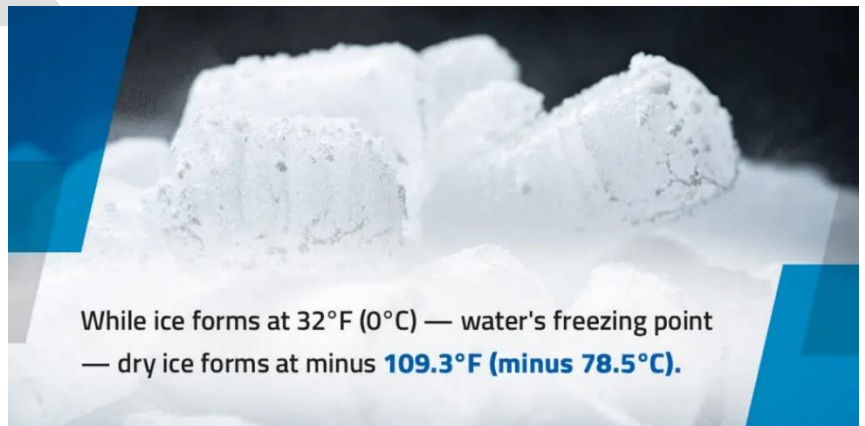
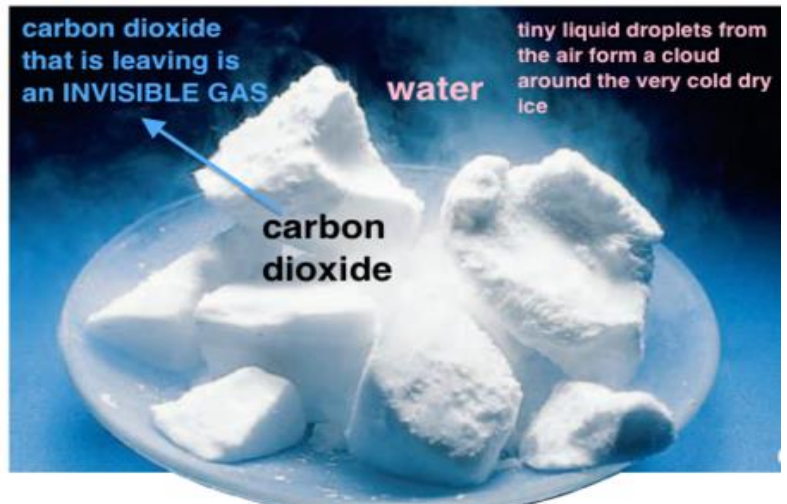
Primary Use

- Primarily used as a cooling agent for food products, dry ice is preferred for its ability to maintain lower temperatures than water ice without leaving any residue other than incidental frost.
- It is employed in preserving frozen foods where traditional mechanical cooling is impractical and in fog machines for theatrical effects and temporary refrigeration needs.

Characteristics

Sublimates at 194.7 K (−78.5 °C; −109.3 °F) under Earth’s atmospheric pressure and can cause hypercapnia if outgassed in confined spaces.

Dry Ice vs Liquid Nitrogen		
	Dry Ice	Liquid Nitrogen
DEFINITION	The solid form of carbon dioxide	Elemental nitrogen in liquid state
COMPONENTS	Has carbon dioxide molecules which consist of a carbon atom bonded to two oxygen atoms via covalent bonds	Consists of nitrogen molecules which has two nitrogen atoms bonded to each other via covalent bonds
CONVERSIONS	Undergoes sublimation at −78.5 °C	Undergoes vaporization at −195.79 °C



Safe Handling Guidelines

- Awareness campaigns are crucial to educate food business operators and citizens on the proper and safe handling of dry ice.
- FSSAI advises against storing dry ice in enclosed spaces and stresses the necessity of well-ventilated areas to minimize health risks.
- The FDA warns against compromising food safety with dry ice, recommending against direct consumption or skin contact.
- Establishments using dry ice should implement safety protocols and train employees to prevent accidental ingestion or contact, according to the FDA.
- The CDC suggests using cold temperature gloves and safety goggles and working in well-ventilated areas when handling dry ice, strictly prohibiting consumption.

A bold step towards a cervical cancer-free future

Context: The interim Union Budget for 2024-25 highlights women’s health, notably by supporting the vaccination of girls aged nine to 14 against cervical cancer, a significant step for women’s health and safety in India.

The ‘90-70-90’ targets, global programs

- Despite medical advancements, cervical cancer remains a major challenge in India, being the second most common cancer among women with over 127,000 cases and around 80,000 deaths annually.
- The human papillomavirus (HPV) is a key factor in cervical cancer, leading to the adoption of HPV vaccination as a crucial preventive measure.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) aims to achieve ‘90-70-90’ targets by 2030 vaccinating 90% of girls by age 15, screening 70% of women by ages 35 and 45, and treating 90% of women with cervical cancer.
- These goals are pivotal in global efforts to eradicate cervical cancer, highlighting the significance of India’s HPV vaccination initiative.

CERVICAL CANCER

MALIGNANT TUMOR
that **ORIGINATES**
in **CERVIX**

TREATMENT

- * LOCAL ABLATION MODALITIES
- * SURGICAL RESECTION
- * CHEMOTHERAPY
- * RADIOTHERAPY

(DEPENDENT on AGGRESSIVENESS & EXTENSION of TUMOR)

SYMPTOMS

- * VAGINAL BLEEDING AFTER INTERCOURSE
- * HEAVY or PROLONGED PERIODS
- * ODOROUS DISCHARGE

DIAGNOSIS

- * PAP SMEAR
- * HPV DNA TESTING
- * COLPOSCOPY

TREATMENT

- * LOCAL ABLATION MODALITIES
- * SURGICAL RESECTION
- * CHEMOTHERAPY
- * RADIOTHERAPY

(DEPENDENT on AGGRESSIVENESS & EXTENSION of TUMOR)

International and regional efforts

- Globally, over 100 countries have introduced HPV vaccination programs, substantially reducing cervical cancer incidence.
- Success stories include Scotland and Australia, with no cervical cancer cases among vaccinated women and Australia on track to eliminate cervical cancer by 2035.
- Rwanda's vaccination campaign significantly reduced HPV prevalence among women, demonstrating the vaccine's effectiveness.
- In the Southeast Asia Region, six countries, including Bhutan, have implemented national HPV vaccination programs, with Bhutan achieving a 95% vaccination rate among targeted girls.

India's initiatives

India's indigenous quadrivalent HPV vaccine, Cervavac, priced at ₹2,000 per dose, is a significant advancement in accessibility and affordability.

The Sikkim Model

- Sikkim's HPV vaccination campaign achieved 97% coverage in 2018, emphasizing comprehensive communication strategies in public health initiatives.
- This approach involved educating various stakeholders about the vaccine's benefits.

The potential inclusion of adolescent boys in the vaccination program, along with evidence supporting single-dose efficacy, suggests a comprehensive strategy against HPV infections.

HPV vaccination aims to reduce the societal and economic burdens of cervical cancer, benefiting women's health and overall well-being.

Challenges

- India faces challenges such as vaccine hesitancy and equitable access to vaccination, requiring community engagement and combating misinformation.
- The introduction of U-WIN aims to maintain an electronic registry of immunizations for real-time responsiveness in vaccination programs, similar to the Co-WIN platform.

DEFENCE

What will Gaganyaan change for India?

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the final roster of candidates set to embark on India's inaugural human spaceflight mission, Gaganyaan, led by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

About Gaganyaan

- Gaganyaan is an ISRO initiative aimed at launching Indian astronauts into low-Earth orbit utilizing indigenous launch vehicles.
- It serves as a testbed for technologies crucial to human spaceflight, showcasing India's prowess in developing and deploying such systems.
- ISRO's future endeavors include establishing a domestic space station by 2035 and landing an Indian on the moon by 2040.

- Plans entail integrating these ambitious projects with forthcoming lunar missions, including collaborative efforts with Japan for lunar rover deployment and sample return missions.

Expansion of Spaceflight Responsibilities

- The Indian government has extended spaceflight and service responsibilities beyond ISRO to entities like New Space India Ltd. (NSIL) for commercialization and the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) for regulating space activities.
- Additionally, ISRO has established the Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC) to oversee the Gaganyaan mission.



Mission Preparation

- The Gaganyaan mission was initiated following the Union Cabinet's approval in 2018, utilizing existing technologies.
- ISRO subsequently human-rated these technologies to meet spaceflight standards.
- Preparatory experiments, including the Space Capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE) and the Crew-module Atmospheric Re-entry Experiment (CARE), were conducted to test crucial systems.
- Despite initial plans, certain components, such as the crew module, needed to be procured internationally due to manufacturing constraints.

Goals of Gaganyaan

- Gaganyaan aims to establish India's self-reliance in human spaceflight, reducing dependence on foreign launch services.
- This aligns with broader space sector reforms in India, fostering investment in domestic space startups and positioning India within the global space arena.
- The Indian Space Policy outlines objectives for the country's space program, emphasizing participation in scientific, commercial, and exploratory missions beyond Earth.
- Gaganyaan's development signifies India's emergence as a key player in space

Components of Gaganyaan

- Gaganyaan comprises the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM-3), the orbital module, and the crew.
- The LVM-3, equipped with solid and liquid-fuel boosters and an indigenous cryogenic engine, serves as the rocket.
- The orbital module, weighing 8.2 tonnes, houses the crew and service modules, equipped with essential systems like parachutes and life-support.
- The crew, consisting of Indian Air Force personnel, underwent rigorous training in India and Russia.
- The mission also features 'Vyommitra,' a gynoid designed to monitor conditions within the capsule.

exploration, highlighting the importance of international collaboration in space exploration endeavors.

The status of India's nuclear programme

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the core-loading process of the indigenous Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at the Madras Atomic Power Station in Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, on March 4.

What is PFBR?

- The Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) is a significant advancement in nuclear technology designed to generate more nuclear fuel than it consumes, marking a crucial phase in India's three-stage nuclear power program.
- Initially, India employed Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) and natural uranium-238 (U-238) in the first stage, producing plutonium-239 (Pu-239) and energy through nuclear fission processes involving U-235 and heavy water.
- In the second stage, the PFBR will utilize Pu-239 along with U-238 to generate energy, U-233, and additional Pu-239, facilitated by Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Ltd. (BHAVINI).
- The final stage involves combining Pu-239 with thorium-232 (Th-232) to produce energy and U-233, leveraging India's substantial thorium reserves for nuclear energy self-sufficiency.

Why was the PFBR delayed?

- The development of the PFBR in India faced setbacks including international sanctions post the 'Smiling Buddha' nuclear test, necessitating a shift from enriched uranium to a mixed carbide fuel.
- Technical issues with the reactor coolant and the transition to mixed oxide fuel contributed to delays, pushing the commercial operation deadline to October 2022.

How does PFBR work?

- The PFBR operates on the principle of a breeder reactor mechanism, generating more fissile material (Pu-239) than it consumes.
- Unlike PHWRs, which produce Pu-239 as a byproduct, the PFBR combines produced Pu-239 with additional U-238 in a mixed oxide form, facilitated by fast neutrons.
- Liquid sodium serves as a coolant in two separate circuits, transferring heat from the reactor core to generate electricity.

Significance and challenges of Phase II

- Stage II of India's nuclear power program aims to enhance output with PFBR expansion, facing challenges including cost competitiveness against renewables, public perception post-Fukushima Daiichi, and technical complexities.
- Recommendations include establishing an independent regulatory body, proposed through the Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority (NSRA) Bill

Challenges in operationalizing the PFBR

Operational challenges include complex system behavior compared to theoretical expectations, such as extended preheating times for the reactor vessel.

What role can SMRs play?

- Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) offer a promising alternative to large-scale reactors, requiring less land and incorporating enhanced safety features.
- SMRs could utilize low-enriched uranium, potentially imported under the 123 Agreement, requiring legislative amendments to enable private sector involvement under regulatory oversight.

INS Jatayu

Context: The Indian Navy will commission the Naval Detachment Minicoy as INS Jatayu on March 6th, upgrading it to a strategic naval base in the Lakshadweep Islands.

Key Highlights

- This development is a significant move to strengthen India's security infrastructure in the region.
- The Minicoy detachment, operational since the 1980s, becomes India's second naval base in Lakshadweep after INS Dweeprakshak in Kavaratti, commissioned in 2012.
- The event follows the joint inauguration of an airstrip and a jetty on Agaléga island in Mauritius, highlighting India's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean.

About INS Jatayu

- INS Jatayu is the second Naval base in Lakshadweep after INS Dweeprakshak in Kavaratti, which was commissioned in 2012.
- The existing Naval Detachment Minicoy, which is under the operational command of the Naval Officer-in-Charge (Lakshadweep), will be commissioned as INS Jatayu.

INS Jatayu Naval Base

- The Naval Detachment Minicoy, currently under the Naval Officer-in-Charge (Lakshadweep), will be commissioned as INS Jatayu, expanding into a comprehensive naval base.
- This upgrade involves augmenting existing administrative, logistics, and medical facilities with infrastructure like an airfield, housing, and personnel, subject to environmental and other clearances.
- Challenges may arise, particularly in constructing a jetty, due to the island's delicate ecology, but plans include developing an airfield supporting military and civil aircraft operations.
- Establishing INS Jatayu aims to enhance the Navy's operational capabilities, supporting anti-piracy and anti-narcotics efforts in the western Arabian Sea and serving as a first responder in the region.



- The base's commissioning and the proposed airfield will expand the Navy's presence on the western seaboard, facilitating the operation of various aircraft, including P8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft and fighter jets.
- This development is significant as India navigates regional dynamics, countering Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean amid strained relations with the Maldives due to recent political shifts.

About Lakshadweep Islands

- Lakshadweep, an archipelago of 36 islands, lies between 220 km and 440 km off the coast of Kochi, India, with strategic importance due to its location in the Indian Ocean.
- The islands, including Minicoy, play a crucial role in Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs), though they are vulnerable to marine pollution risks.
- The archipelago consists of Amindivi Islands, Laccadive Islands, and Minicoy Island, collectively known as Lakshadweep, with Minicoy being the southernmost and largest island.
- Most islands have low elevation and are surrounded by fringing reefs, making them extremely vulnerable to sea level changes, with Minicoy being the largest and most developed.



IMPORTANT DAYS

Rani Chennamma

Context: Social groups across India are organizing a national campaign titled “Naanoo Rani Chennamma” (I am Rani Chennamma too) to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Rani Chennamma's rebellion. The campaign seeks to empower women to combat patriarchal, anti-democratic, and casteist forces in the country, drawing inspiration from Rani Chennamma's legacy of courage and resistance.

About Rani Chennamma

- Rani Chennamma, the Queen of Kittur, led the Kittur revolt of 1824, one of the earliest woman-led anti-colonial uprisings against British rule in India.
- Born in 1778 in present-day Karnataka, she married Raja Mallasarja of Kittur and played a crucial role in defending her kingdom after his demise.
- When the British declined to recognize her adopted son as the legitimate successor under the



KITTUR KI RANI CHENNAMMA

Chennamma was born on 23rd October 1778 in Kakati, a small village in the Belagavi district of Karnataka. She is among the first rulers of India who fought against the British

‘doctrine of lapse’, she initiated a rebellion against them.

- Despite initial victories, the British eventually seized Kittur Fort in December 1824, leading to Rani Chennamma’s imprisonment and subsequent demise in 1829.
- Her valor and leadership in resisting colonial oppression have established her as a symbol of Karnataka’s political consciousness and a prominent figure in Indian history.

REPORT & INDEX

Law Commission’s 287th report

Context: The Law Commission’s 287th report proposes mandatory registration of marriages involving Non-Resident Indians (NRI) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) to address the challenges faced by Indian women deserted by their NRI or OCI spouses.

Key Recommendations

- The report suggests amendments to the pending Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indians Bill, 2019, to encompass OCIs and introduce new provisions.
- These provisions entail penalties for failing to register divorce, maintenance, child support, and non-compliance with legal procedures.
- The recommendation aims to tackle fraudulent marriages and offer legal recourse for women susceptible to abandonment or exploitation.
- Additionally, the report proposes amending the Passport Act, 1967, to mandate marital status declaration in passports and establishing a dedicated division within the Ministry of Home Affairs or External Affairs to maintain a registry for NRI and OCI marriages.