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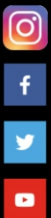
LawEx

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CAA RULES NOTIFIED



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About Magazine

“LawEx” is a carefully curated set of Current Events designed specifically for CLAT aspirants. To take you one step closer to realizing your dream, “LawEx” provides a fortnightly overview of the most significant current events related to politics, economics, science and technology, & sports with a wide range of infographics to ensure a smoother learning experience and enhanced retention of information.

Editor's Note

The Centre on March 11 notified Rules for The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), paving the way for the implementation of the law more than four years after it was passed by Parliament in December 2019. Belgium, the seat of the European Union (EU), has become the first in the European Continent to recognise ‘ecocide’ as a national as well as an international crime. The Madhya Pradesh High Court on March 11, 2024, ordered the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a survey of the Bhojshala temple-cum-Kamal Maula mosque complex in Madhya Pradesh. The French Parliament on March 4 overwhelmingly approved a bill to enshrine abortion as a constitutional right at a historic joint session at the Palace of Versailles. To know more, keep reading.

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VAISHNAV BHATT

Our Top Achiever

AIR - 113th

CLAT 2024

Q. Give us a brief intro about yourself, Vaishnav.

Ans. Hello, I'm Vaishnav and I secured AIR 113 in CLAT 2024. I completed my 10th standard in Delhi and have moved to Bangalore this year.

Q. When did you think about doing law?

Ans. I've had some very unpleasant experiences in life when I was staying in Delhi where my family and I had to suffer emotionally and financially and a major part of it was due to insufficient knowledge of the law and our rights. In this process I had to interact with some lawyers, and visit the court as well. These experiences made me want to pursue law as a profession as I found it interesting and also felt that having this knowledge would keep me safe and I would be able to help others as well who face similar situations due to insufficient knowledge.

Q. When did you seriously start preparing for CLAT?

Ans. I started my preparation in March 2023.

Q. What is the role of LawEx in your preparation?

Ans. LawEx helped me a lot with my preparation for CLAT. Their current affairs magazine and Maths YouTube videos are excellent and have been of great help. I also found their GK topic tests to be very useful.

Q. Do you think LawEx Lectures with sufficient reading and mock practice enough for CLAT?

Ans. I feel LawEx should increase the number of mock tests that they offer. Apart from this I think that they provide sufficient study material.

Q. What did you do for your subject-wise strategy?

Ans. My weak point was GK, so I gave it a bit more attention compared to the other subjects. For this I read The Hindu newspaper everyday for 1.5 hrs and focused on the editorial as that improved my vocabulary and helped improve my English as well. I allocated 4-5 hours for GK everyday. I gave 2 hours for legal reasoning. During this time I had not yet started giving mock tests. I watched LawEx's maths YouTube videos to improve my maths for around 30 minutes. A bulk of my preparation was focused on these 3 subjects. Apart from this I attempted around 60 mock tests, 20 of which were from LawEx and the rest I had to source from other test series.

Q. What was your highest and lowest score in mock tests?

Ans. My lowest score was 72 and my highest score was 96.25. On average my score was around 90 marks out of 120.

Q. How did you keep your confidence up when scoring low in mocks?

Ans. My performance in mocks was more or less pretty consistent throughout my preparation. So I did not face this issue.

Q. How to maintain mock scores?

Ans. In my opinion, analysing the mocks after attempting them is very important as it makes you understand what kind of mistakes you have made and helps you to improve upon them in the next mock. This will also make you understand your own weak points and which subject needs improvement. This will help you maintain and improve your score.

Q. How much GK is sufficient and how to revise it?

Ans. No amount of GK can be considered sufficient in my opinion. So I would suggest to find 2-3 sources which are of good quality like The Hindu newspaper and LawEx magazine which covers most of the topics which you need to know and for static GK you can purchase any book like A P Bharadwaj's Static GK book. I revised for GK by doing the topic tests multiple times.

Q. How many Mocks are sufficient for CLAT Preparation?

Ans. According to me at least 50 mock tests are required so that your speed along with accuracy improves and it doesn't make you feel anxious anymore as a calm mind will help you concentrate better and score more. Clat is a reading based exam and it can be quite draining especially in the last 30-35 minutes so practicing mocks is important here.

Q. What is your advice to CLAT Aspirants?

Ans. I would advise CLAT aspirants to give themselves at least one year for preparation and attempt 1-2 mock tests every week so that it doesn't drain you out. I made this mistake too by attempting around 60 mocks in 2 months. It is not feasible. CLAT is highly competitive and requires consistency and patience. As my English was at a decent level to begin with, I was somehow able to manage the stress. Also don't forget to take short breaks and have good sleep. Some books which I purchased for CLAT are A P Bharadwaj's Legal reasoning and A P Bharadwaj's static GK. Also practice 15-20 mocks on OMR printouts as well and try finishing your mocks in 115 minutes as this is the time you'll get in your actual examination. Best wishes to all of you.

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CAA RULES NOTIFIED

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Centre on March 11 notified Rules for The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), paving the way for the implementation of the law more than four years after it was passed by Parliament in December 2019.

What is the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019?

- The CAA amends the Citizenship Act of 1955 to provide a path to Indian citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis who migrated from neighbouring Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, before December 31, 2014.
 - This group of people has been living in India illegally or on long-term visas (LTV).
- Under the 2019 amendment of the act, migrants who entered India till December 31, 2014, and had suffered “religious persecution or fear or religious persecution” in their country of their origin would be made eligible for accelerated citizenship.
- The 2019 amendment to CAA further relaxed the residence requirement for the naturalisation of these migrants from eleven years to five years.
 - Currently, Indian citizenship is granted to those born in India or who have lived in the country for at least 11 years.
- The proposed amendment also includes a provision for the cancellation of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) registration if the OCI cardholder violates any provision of the Citizenship Act or any other applicable law.
- It exempts the members of the six communities from any criminal case under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport Act, 1920.
- CAA will not apply to regions mentioned under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which include Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram and the area covered under 'The Inner Line' notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.
 - Currently, an Inner Line Permit regime is operational in the four Northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur.

CAA Rules 2024

- The application process for citizenship under CAA has been made under Section 6B of the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Under the CAA Rules, immigrants from these countries are only supposed to prove the country of their origin, their religion, the date of their entry into India, and the knowledge of an Indian language to apply for Indian citizenship.
- According to the CAA Rules, a birth or educational institution certificate, “Identity Document of any kind”, “Any License or Certificate”, “Land or tenancy records”, or “Any other document” issued by these countries, which proves the applicant was their citizen, would serve as proof of citizenship of these countries.
- Any document that shows that “either of the parents or grandparents or great grandparents of the applicant is or had been a citizen of one of the three countries” is also acceptable.
- The Rules list 20 documents (visas, residential permits, census slips, driving licenses, Aadhaar cards, ration cards, government or court letters, birth certificates, and more.) any of which would be admissible as proof of date of entry into India.
- The new Rules provide for an Empowered Committee and a District Level Committee (DLC), to be instituted by the Centre, to receive and process the applications, which are to be submitted electronically.
- Applications will be made to the DLC, and the final decision will be taken by the Empowered Committee.

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Historical Background

- In 2002, Rajasthan requested then Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani to help resolve the difficulties faced by Pakistani Hindus trying to procure Indian visas and citizenship.
- As a result, in February 2004, the government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee amended The Citizenship Rules to give district magistrates of certain border districts in Rajasthan and Gujarat the power to grant LTVs and citizenship to such migrants.
- In June 2010, the Ministry of Home Affairs asked states and Union Territories to consider cases for extension of LTVs of certain categories of Pakistani nationals without insisting on the validity of passports.
- In December 2014, the government issued a notification allowing grant of citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Christian and Buddhist migrants from Pakistan. Jains and Parsis were not included in this relaxation.
- In 2015 and 2016, the government amended The Passport (Entry into India) Rules and The Foreigners Order exempting Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh from the process of law in case they entered India without a passport or visa.
- Finally, in 2018, a year before Parliament passed the CAA, the government issued a notification that made these communities eligible for LTVs if they sought Indian citizenship.

Citizenship in India

- The Constitution deals with the citizenship from Articles 5 to 11 under Part II.
- Citizenship in India is listed in the Union List under the Constitution and thus is under the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament.
- It granted Parliament the authority to regulate additional aspects of citizenship, such as granting and renunciation.
 - Under this authority, Parliament enacted the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Indian citizenship can be acquired by birth, by descent, by registration, by naturalisation, and by incorporation of territory as per the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Indian citizenship can be lost by renunciation, termination, and deprivation as per the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The Indian Constitution has established a single Citizenship for the whole of the country.

What the rules state

Centre has implemented CAA, 4yrs after the law was passed, as it notified rules ahead of expected announcement of LS polls

THE 39-PAGE NOTIFICATION... of the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024

...STATES THAT AN APPLICANT WILL HAVE TO SUBMIT

- Form VIII A, with affidavits verifying statements and character of applicant
- Declaration that they have adequate knowledge of a language specified in 8th schedule of Constitution
- Supporting papers like a passport, or identity document to show someone in lineage was a citizen of one of the three countries

APPLICANT MUST ALSO PROVE

- 1 They entered India before December 31, 2014
- 2 The applicant or either of his parents was a citizen of Independent India

WHAT IS THE 2019 ACT?

CAA made people from Hindu, Sikh, Jain Buddhist, Christian and Parsi faiths who entered India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan eligible for citizenship

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INDIA'S FIRST INDIGENOUSLY BUILT HYDROGEN FUEL CELL FERRY BOAT

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India flagged off India's first indigenously built hydrogen fuel cell ferry boat in virtual mode.

Key Highlights

- Built at a cost of Rs 18 crore under the Harit Nauka initiative, the ferry will be handed over to the Inland Waterways Authority of India after trials.
- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways met 75 per cent of the project cost.
- The Hydrogen fuel cell vessel is a 24-meter-long catamaran, which can carry 50 people in its air-conditioned passenger area.
- The accommodation area has been constructed with high-quality fiberglass reinforced plastic, similar to metro train coaches.
- Hydrogen fuel cell vessels do not use conventional batteries as the primary storage house of electrical energy. The vessels run on hydrogen fuel, which is stored in cylinders.
- This boat has five hydrogen cylinders that can carry 40kg of hydrogen and support eight hours of operations. The vessel is also fitted with a 3-kW solar panel.

- A hydrogen fuel cell generates electricity by utilising the chemical energy contained in hydrogen. It releases only pure water, not discharging pollutants.
- Hydrogen is loaded into cells. The energy within the hydrogen is converted into electricity and heat, which is then used to power the vessel's propulsion mechanism.
- In the fuel cell, the hydrogen reacts with the oxygen in the air to produce electricity.
- Unlike batteries, hydrogen fuel cells do not require recharging. Provided an uninterrupted supply of fuel and oxygen, these cells would work continuously.

What is the Harit Nauka Initiative?

- The 'Harit Nauka'(green boat) initiative of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways envisages a green transition of inland vessels.
- In line with this, the ferry can be replicated in other parts of the country for urban mobility. It is also a boost to the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- In January 2024, the shipping ministry unveiled the Harit Nauka guidelines for inland vessels.
- As per the guidelines, all states have to make efforts to use green fuels for 50 per cent of inland waterways-based passenger fleets in the next decade, and 100 per cent by 2045.
- This is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as per the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Green hydrogen is when hydrogen is produced via electrolysis, the splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen with electricity generated from renewable energy sources such as solar or wind.
- The V.O. Chidambaranar Port is India's first Green Hydrogen Hub Port.
- India's first green hydrogen fuel cell bus was launched in Delhi in September 2023.
- Germany launched the world's first fleet of hydrogen-powered passenger trains in 2022.
- China became the second nation to launch hydrogen trains.
- In January 2023, the government approved the National Green Hydrogen mission that aims to make India a 'global hub' for using, producing and exporting green hydrogen.
- The mission has laid out a target to develop a green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) per annum.
- Moreover, about 50 MMT per annum of CO2 emissions are expected to be averted by 2030.
- As per its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement-
- India committed to reduce carbon emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030, from 2005 levels.
- India also committed to cut its emissions to net zero by 2070.

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BELGIUM RECOGNISED 'ECOCIDE' AS CRIME

WHY IN NEWS?

- Belgium, the seat of the European Union (EU), has become the first in the European Continent to recognise 'ecocide' as a national as well as an international crime.

What is Ecocide?

- There is no accepted legal definition of ecocide, but a panel of lawyers in June 2021 for Stop Ecocide Foundation prepared a 'historic' 165-word articulation that, if accepted, would locate environmental destruction in the same category as crimes against humanity.
- Ecocide, they proposed, is the “unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.”
- Biologist Arthur Galston in 1970 is credited by the first to link environmental destruction with genocide, which is recognised as an international crime, when referring to the U.S. military's use of Agent Orange (a herbicide) during the Vietnam War.
- Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, two years later, used the term in a speech at the United Nations, warning that unchecked industrialisation could cause irreversible damage to the environment.
- British lawyer Polly Higgins became the linchpin when in 2010, she urged the United Nations' International Criminal Court (ICC) to recognise ecocide as an international crime.
- At present, the Rome Statute of the ICC deals with four atrocities: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
 - The provision on war crimes is the only statute that can hold a perpetrator responsible for environmental damage, albeit if it is intentionally caused and during wartime situations.

India's Stance

- Some Indian judgments have used the term 'ecocide' in passing, but the concept hasn't fully materialised in law.
 - In Chandra CFS and Terminal Operators Pvt. Ltd. v. The Commissioner of Customs and Ors (2015), the Madras High Court noted, “... the prohibitory activities of ecocide has been continuing unbridledly by a certain section of people by removing the valuable and precious timbers...”
 - The ongoing T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union Of India & Ors case (1997) in the Supreme Court called attention to an “anthropogenic bias” and argued that “environmental justice could be achieved only if we drift away from the principle of anthropocentric to ecocentric.”
- Despite having a legal framework which is related to the environment, India needs to first bring its environmental laws in tune with the idea of ecocide.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Belgium has already recognised genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
- Belgium is a federal and constitutional monarchy.
- It is divided into two main linguistic and cultural regions: Flemish (Dutch) speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia.
- Belgium is called the 'Cockpit of Europe' because it is where the largest number of European battles have taken place in history.

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2022 STATUS OF LEOPARDS IN INDIA

WHY IN NEWS?

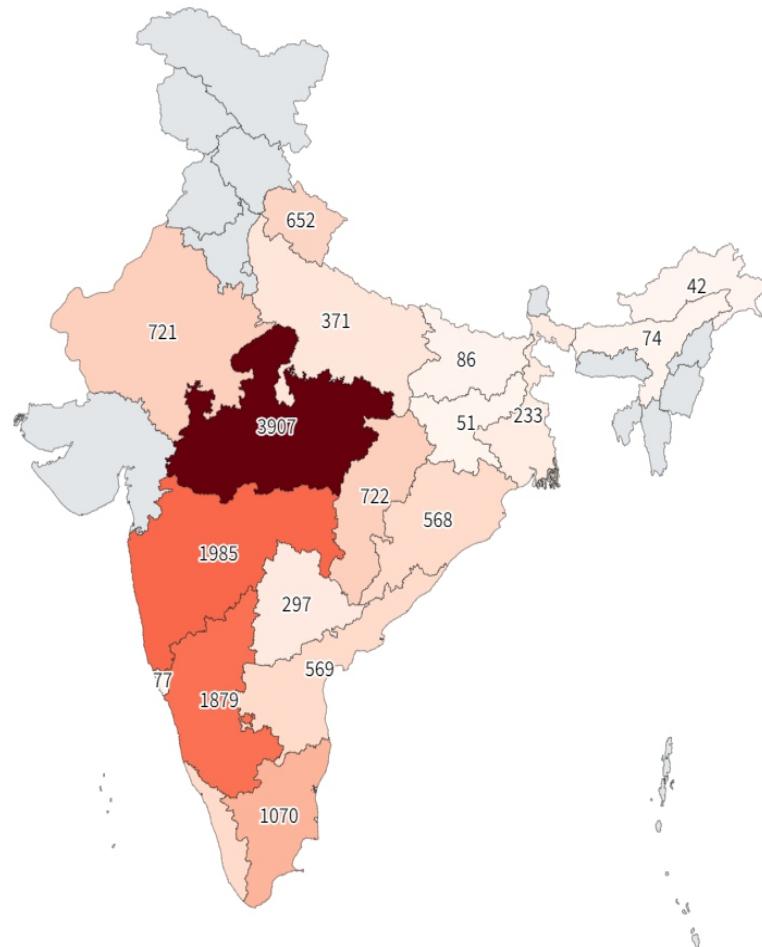
- According to the recently released 'Status of Leopards in India, 2022' report, there are an estimated 13,874 leopards in India, up from 12,852 in 2018.

Key Points

- Indian leopards (*Panthera pardus fusca*) are distributed across a variety of forested habitats in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and parts of Pakistan.
- According to the recently released report, Central India and Eastern Ghats has the highest population of leopards (8,820), followed by the Western Ghats (3,596), and the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains (1,109).
- Statewise, Madhya Pradesh boasts of the largest population of leopards (3,907), followed by Maharashtra (1,985), Karnataka (1,879) and Tamil Nadu (1,070).
- The report showed that the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains recorded a worrying 3.4% per annum decline, going down from 1,253 in 2018 to 1,109 in 2022.
- Several states too reported a decline in leopard population.
 - In Odisha, the number of leopards dropped from 760 in 2018 to 562 in 2022, and in Uttarakhand, the population declined from 839 in 2018 to 652 in 2022.
 - Kerala, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Goa too reported population declines.
- Poaching, habitat loss and road accidents are some significant causes of leopard fatalities.

International Big Cat Alliance

- On 9 April 2023, at Mysuru, Karnataka, to commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger, the Prime Minister of India launched the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) for the conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma.
- The alliance aims to reach out to 97 range countries covering the natural habitats of Tiger, Lion, Snow Leopard, Puma, Jaguar, and Cheetah.
- IBCA would further strengthen global cooperation and efforts to conserve the wild denizens, especially the big cats.
- The IBCA, which will be headquartered in India and to which India has already committed ₹150 crore for five years.
- Globally, the 'big cats' include the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah.
- Barring the puma and jaguar, the rest are found in India, with the latest – the cheetah – having been translocated under an experimental programme from Africa to Kuno in Madhya Pradesh.
- IBCA will advocate for policy initiatives that align biodiversity conservation efforts with local needs and contribute towards the attainment of United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals within member countries.



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RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS 2024

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, the Election Commission of India (ECI) held polls to fill 56 Rajya Sabha seats from 14 states.

Key Points

- Of 56 Rajya Sabha seats that fell vacant in April, BJP won 30 — 20 unopposed and 10 in elections.
 - This took the party's tally in Rajya Sabha to 97 and that of BJP-led NDA to 117 — just four short of the majority mark of 121 in the 240-member House.
- Rajya Sabha, or the Council of States, has 245 seats. Out of the 245 members, 12 are nominated by the President and 233 are representatives of the States and Union territories of Delhi and Puducherry.
 - However, the current strength is 240.
- BJP remains the single largest party in RS with 97 members (including five nominated MPs who joined the party), followed by Congress with 29 members.

Rajya Sabha Elections

- Rajya Sabha is a permanent House and cannot be dissolved.
- To ensure continuity, one-third of its members retire after every second year, under Article 83(1) of the Constitution, and “biennial elections” are held to fill these vacancies.
 - The term of a member is six years.
- As per Article 80 of the Constitution, representatives of each State to the Rajya Sabha are elected indirectly by the elected members of their Legislative Assembly.
 - The polls for Rajya Sabha will be required only if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies.
 - The candidates nominated by various parties, according to their strength in the Assembly, used to be elected unopposed.
- The MLAs of political parties are required to show their ballot paper to the authorised agent of their Party.
 - Not showing the ballot paper to the authorised agent or showing it to anyone else will disqualify the vote.
 - Independent MLAs are barred from showing their ballots to anyone.

Why are Rajya Sabha Elections Important?

- For both the ruling party and the Opposition, every Rajya Sabha seat counts as any Bill, barring those designated as Money Bills by the Lok Sabha Speaker, needs the assent of the second chamber to become law.
 - Rajya Sabha has a limited role in the case of Money Bills.
 - It cannot amend a Money Bill but can recommend amendments within a stipulated time, and Lok Sabha may either accept or reject all or any of these.
- Rajya Sabha enjoys some special powers.
 - If it passes a resolution by a majority of not less than two-thirds of members present and voting, saying that it is “necessary or expedient in the national interest” that Parliament should make a law on a matter enumerated in the State List, Parliament becomes empowered to make a law on the subject.
 - Such a resolution remains in force for a maximum of one year but this period can be extended by one year at a time by passing a similar resolution.
- A similar route can be adopted for recommending the creation of one or more All India Services common to the Union and the states. Parliament becomes empowered to create such services.
- Also, Rajya Sabha has a role to play if the President, as empowered by the Constitution, issues proclamations in the event of national emergency, in the event of failure of constitutional machinery in a State, or in the case of financial emergency”.
 - Every such proclamation has to be approved by both Houses of Parliament within a stipulated period.
- Under certain circumstances, however, Rajya Sabha enjoys special powers.
 - If a proclamation is issued at a time when Lok Sabha has been dissolved or the dissolution of Lok Sabha takes place within the period allowed for its approval, then the proclamation remains effective, if the resolution approving it is passed by Rajya Sabha within the period specified under Articles 352, 356 and 360 of the Constitution.

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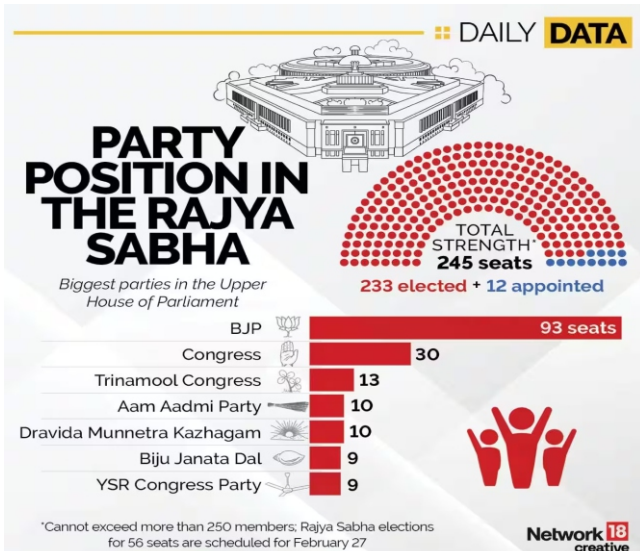
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- Till 1998, the outcome of Rajya Sabha elections were usually a foregone conclusion. The candidates nominated by various parties, according to their strength in the Assembly, used to be elected unopposed.
- However, the June 1998 Rajya Sabha elections in Maharashtra witnessed cross-voting that resulted in the loss of a Congress party candidate.
- In order to rein in the MLAs from such cross-voting, an amendment to the Representation of the People Act, 1951 was carried out in 2003.
- Section 59 of the Act was amended to provide that the voting in elections to Rajya Sabha shall be through an open ballot.
- The Supreme Court in *Kuldip Nayar versus Union of India* (2006), upheld the system of open ballot for Rajya Sabha elections. It reasoned that if secrecy becomes a source for corruption, then transparency has the capacity to remove it.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) issued two circulars, on January 24, 2014, and November 12, 2015, giving Rajya Sabha members the option to press the NOTA button in the Upper House polls.
 - However, in 2018, the Supreme Court of India struck down the provision, holding that the 'none of the above' option is only for general elections held on the basis of universal adult suffrage, and cannot be applied to indirect elections based on proportional representation.
- During the recent Rajya Sabha elections, the six Congress MLAs, who cross-voted in Himachal Pradesh, were disqualified under the Tenth Schedule for defying the party whip and being absent during the passage of the Budget in the Assembly.
 - The 52nd constitutional amendment introduced the 'anti-defection' law through the Tenth Schedule in 1985.
- However, the Supreme Court in *Kuldip Nayar versus Union of India* (2006) held that an elected MLA of a political party would not face disqualification under the Tenth Schedule for voting against their party candidate.
 - He/she may at the most attract disciplinary action from their political party.
- The Supreme Court has also held in *Ravi S. Naik and Sanjay Bandekar versus Union of India* (1994), that voluntarily giving up membership under the Tenth Schedule is not synonymous with only formally resigning from the party to which the member belongs.
 - The conduct of a member both inside and outside the house can be looked into to infer if it qualifies as voluntarily giving up membership.
- The Supreme Court recently refused to stay the Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker's decision to disqualify six rebel Congress MLAs who had cross-voted during the recently held Rajya Sabha elections.
 - They were not disqualified for cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha election, which does not attract provisions of the anti-defection law, but for defying the party whip as per which they were supposed to be present on the floor of the House at the time of voting on cut-off motions on demands and the Finance Bill.



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WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2024

WHY IN NEWS?

- The 10th edition of the World Bank's report titled 'Women, Business and Law 2024' was released recently.

Key Highlights

- Notably, no country, including the most affluent economies, ensures equal opportunities for women.
- When considering legal distinctions related to violence and childcare, women are found to have less than two-thirds or 64 per cent of the rights enjoyed by men.
 - Earlier estimates projected women had 77 per cent of the rights.
- Eliminating discriminatory laws and practices hindering women from working or initiating businesses could result in a more than 20 per cent increase in global gross domestic product.
 - This, in turn, has the potential to double the rate of global growth in the upcoming decade.
- Globally, the practical gender gap is very wide, the report found, on assessing the disparity between legal reforms and actual outcomes for women.
 - Shockingly, there is a substantial implementation gap, with countries, on average, establishing less than 40 per cent of the required systems for full implementation.
 - For instance, while 98 economies have enacted laws mandating equal pay for women, fewer than one in five have adopted measures or mechanisms addressing the pay gap.
- The report shed light on the challenges ahead, even for countries implementing equal-opportunity laws.
 - Despite Togo's standout status in Sub-Saharan African countries, enacting laws that provide women with 77 per cent of men's rights, the country has only established 27 per cent of the necessary systems for full implementation.
- In 2023, governments made strides in advancing legal equal-opportunity reforms in three categories—pay, parental rights and workplace protections.
 - However, the report revealed poor performance in the two new categories being tracked—access to childcare and women's safety.
- The first of the new indicators included in this report—women's safety—pegs the global average score at just 36.
 - This means that women have a third of the legal protection they need from domestic violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, and femicide.
- Childcare laws also receive low scores, with only 78 economies providing financial or tax support for parents and just 62 having quality standards for childcare services.

India's Performance

- India's rank has marginally improved to 113, with a score of 74.4 per cent.
 - While the country's score has remained constant since 2021, its ranking witnessed a decline from 122 in 2021 to 125 in 2022 and further to 126 in the 2023 index.
- Indian women have just 60 per cent of the legal rights compared to men, slightly below the global average of 64.2 per cent
 - However, India outperformed its South Asian counterparts, where women have only 45.9 per cent of the legal protections enjoyed by men.
- When it comes to constraints on freedom of movement and constraints related to marriage, the country got a full score.
- India receives one of its lowest scores in the indicator evaluating laws impacting women's pay.
 - To enhance this aspect, the country could explore measures such as mandating equal pay for equivalent work, permitting women to work at night on par with men and enabling women to engage in industrial jobs on an equal footing with men.
- When it comes to supportive frameworks, India scored higher than both the global and South Asian averages.

About Report

- Its indexes align areas of the law and public policy instruments with the economic decisions that women make throughout their lives and careers, identifying where and in what areas women continue to face hurdles.
- The new index measured performance on legal frameworks across 10 indicators: Safety, mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, childcare, entrepreneurship, assets and pension.
 - Two of these indicators were crucial, the World Bank pointed out — safety from violence and access to childcare services.

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INS JATAYU

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Indian Navy recently commissioned Naval Detachment Minicoy as an upgraded naval base INS Jatayu in the Lakshadweep Islands.

Key Highlights

- While India has had a naval detachment in Minicoy, the southernmost atoll of the Lakshwadeep archipelago, since the 1980s, INS Jatayu will effectively be the country's second naval base in Lakshadweep.
 - The Navy's first base on the islands, INS Dweepprakshak in Kavaratti, was commissioned in 2012.
 - A naval detachment has administrative, logistics, and medical facilities.
 - INS Jatayu will be upgraded to a naval base with additional infrastructure such as an airfield, housing, and personnel, after obtaining the requisite environmental and other clearances.
- INS Jatayu will operate under the operational control of the Naval Officer in Charge (Lakshadweep), Southern Naval Command.
- The base will enhance the operational reach of the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean, bolstering its capabilities for anti-piracy, anti-narcotics, and surveillance operations.
- It will also overlook vital Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs), strengthening India's maritime presence in the region.
- Minicoy Island, where INS Jatayu is located, sits at the intersection of crucial Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) like the Eight Degree Channel (between Minicoy

The Lakshadweep Islands

- Lakshadweep, 'a hundred thousand islands' in Sanskrit and Malayalam, is an archipelago of 36 islands located between 220 km and 440 km from Kochi.
 - The islands, only 11 of which are inhabited, have a total area of only 32 sq km.
- The Lakshadweep are part of a chain of coralline islands in the Indian Ocean that includes Maldives to the south, and the Chagos archipelago farther beyond, to the south of the equator.
- Given their location in the Indian Ocean, the Lakshadweep are of huge strategic importance to India.

DID YOU KNOW?

- INS Jatayu was commissioned days after Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Pravind Jugnauth of Mauritius jointly inaugurated an airstrip and a jetty that India has built on the Mauritian island of Agaléga off the coast of Africa in the western Indian Ocean.
- The Indian Navy has three operational and one theatre command. Each command is headed by a Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief holding the rank of Vice Admiral.
 - Western Naval Command (Mumbai), Eastern Naval Command (Visakhapatnam) and Southern Naval Command (Kochi).
 - Andaman and Nicobar Command is a unified tri-services theatre command based at Port Blair.
 - It includes the Indian Navy, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard.
- The Navy commissioned its first MH-60R multi-role helicopter squadron INAS 334 'Seahawks' at Kochi, a major capability boost for its rotary fleet and its anti-submarine warfare capabilities.
- Exercise MILAN 2024 recently concluded with a grand ceremony onboard INS Vikrant.



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MISSION DIVYASTRA

WHY IN NEWS?

- India on March 11, announced that it had successfully tested a new Agni-5 ballistic missile with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) technology by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under 'Mission Divyastra'.

What is MRV?

- A MIRV is a ballistic missile payload designed for exoatmospheric deployment, housing multiple warheads, each capable of targeting distinct objectives.
 - While primarily associated with intercontinental ballistic missiles equipped with thermonuclear warheads, the concept extends beyond strict limitations.
 - An intermediate variant, the Multiple Reentry Vehicle (MRV) missile, disperses multiple warheads without individual targeting.
- While India is now a part of the elite club, the countries which boast to possess MIRV include -
 - The USA, UK and France- have MIRV technology on their Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM).
 - China- has MIRVed on Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)
 - Russia- has both MIRVed ICBMs and SLBMs.
 - Pakistan is also believed to be experimenting with MIRV technology.
- According to the Center for Arms Control and Non-proliferation, "In contrast to a traditional missile, which carries one warhead, MIRVs can carry multiple warheads. Warheads on MIRVed missiles can be released from the missile at different speeds and in different directions."

What are Agni Missiles?

- Agni is a long-range missile developed indigenously by DRDO. The family of Agni missiles has been in the arsenal of the Indian armed forces since the early 1990s.
- Agni V, capable of carrying nuclear warheads, has a range of more than 5,000 km, making it a long-range missile, and is aimed mainly at thwarting the challenge from China.
 - This means it can reach most of China, especially with a smaller warhead, which would increase the range further. MIRV technology gives better leverage in this regard.
- Medium to Intercontinental versions of Agni missile systems 1 to 5 have varying ranges — starting from 700 km for Agni-1 to 5000 km and above for Agni-5.
 - Agni I - Short-range ballistic missile (Range more than 700 km).
 - Agni II - Medium-range ballistic missile (Range more than 2000 to 3500 km).
 - Agni III - Intermediate-range ballistic missile (Range more than 3000 km).
 - Agni IV - Intermediate-range ballistic missile (Range more than 3500 km).
 - Agni-P (Agni Prime) - A nuclear-capable, two-stage canisterised solid propellant ballistic missile (Range 1,000 to 2,000 km).
 - The next upgrade of the Agni missile, Agni-6, is expected to be a full-fledged intercontinental ballistic missile with a range well over 7,000 km.

DID YOU KNOW?

- India completed the nuclear triad in November 2018 when the country's first nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine INS Arihant finished its first deterrence patrol.
- China, which is fast expanding its nuclear arsenal, has already deployed MIRV technology — first deployed by the U.S. in 1970.
- In 1998, India conducted nuclear tests under Phokran-II and in 2003 declared its nuclear doctrine based on credible minimum deterrence and a No-First-Use (NFU) policy and massive retaliation forming its core tenets.
- The concept of maintaining a minimum credible deterrence and a nuclear triad for the delivery of nuclear weapons based on aircraft, missiles and nuclear submarines flow from that.
- In March 2019, DRDO demonstrated Anti-Satellite (ASAT) capability under Mission Shakti by destroying a live orbiting satellite in low earth orbit of around 300 km with a new three-stage interceptor missile in a "Hit to Kill" mode.
- According to Yearbook 2023 of the Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the size of China's nuclear arsenal increased from 350 warheads in January 2022 to 410 in January 2023.

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SUPREME COURT INTERPRETED PRIVILEGE FOR LAWMAKERS

WHY IN NEWS?

- In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court on 4 March 2024 ruled that Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) cannot claim any immunity from prosecution for accepting bribes to cast a vote or make a speech in the House in a particular fashion.

Court's Observation

- A seven-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud unanimously overruled its 1998 judgment in P.V. Narasimha Rao v. State and opened the doors for law enforcement agencies to initiate prosecution against legislators in bribery cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (Act).
 - In 1998, a five-judge bench in P.V. Narasimha Rao v. State (CBI/SPE) interpreted two Articles of the Indian Constitution - Article 105(2) and Article 194(2) - literally and held that legislators enjoy immunity from criminal prosecution for bribery in matters connected to their speech and votes in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies.
 - Article 105(2) of the Indian Constitution confers on MPs immunity from prosecution in respect of anything said or any vote given in Parliament or on any parliamentary committee.
 - Similarly, Article 194(2) grants protection to MLAs.
- The SC emphasised the detrimental impact of bribery on democratic principles and governance.
- The court highlighted that accepting a bribe is a separate criminal act, unrelated to the core duties of lawmakers within the Parliament or legislative assembly.
 - Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, deals with 'offence relating to public servant being bribed'.
- Therefore, the immunity provided under Articles 105 and 194 of the Constitution does not extend to cases of bribery.
 - This decision signifies a shift towards prioritising accountability and integrity in governance over stability alone, aiming to uphold the ideals of a responsible, responsive, and representative democracy in India.
- The top court declared that legislators cannot claim immunity in cases of corruption and bribery since they are not fundamentally related to their ability to perform their duties.
- The court highlighted that the freedom of speech and the right to vote as an extension of it is a privilege essential to every legislative body because such privileges are not only essential to the ability of Parliament and its members to carry out their duties, but it is also at the core of the function of a democratic legislative institution.

- The Supreme Court in the State of Kerala Vs. K. Ajith Case, 2021, observed, that “privileges and immunities are not gateways to claim exemptions from the general law of the land, particularly as case of, the criminal law which governs the action of every citizen.”
- In July 2021, the Supreme Court rejected the Kerala government's plea to withdraw criminal cases against its MLAs who were charged in the assembly.

What are Parliamentary Privileges?

- Parliamentary privileges are special rights, immunities and exemptions enjoyed by the two Houses of Parliament, their committees and their members.
- They are necessary in order to secure the independence and effectiveness of their actions.
- Parliamentary privileges can be classified into two broad categories:
 - those that are enjoyed by each House of Parliament collectively, and
 - those that are enjoyed by the members individually.
- Originally, the Constitution (Article 105) expressly mentioned two privileges, that is, freedom of speech in Parliament and the right of publication of its proceedings.
- Article 194 guarantees the same privileges to the Members of Legislative Assemblies of the states.





ASI SURVEY OF BHOJSHALA TEMPLE - KAMAL MAULA MOSQUE COMPLEX

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Madhya Pradesh High Court on March 11, 2024 ordered the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a survey of the Bhojshala temple-cum-Kamal Maula mosque complex in Dhar district, observing that its nature and character need to be “demystified and freed from the shackles of confusion”.

Background

- The 11th-century building, protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, is claimed by both Hindus and Muslims.
 - While the Hindus consider the Bhojshala to be a temple dedicated to the deity Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), for the Muslim community, it is a Kamal Maula mosque.
- As per an arrangement made by the ASI on April 7, 2003, Hindus perform puja in the Bhojshala premises on Tuesdays, while Muslims offer namaz in the complex on Fridays.
- On May 2, 2022, a PIL was filed by the Hindu Front for Justice challenging the ASI order which restricted daily worship at the Bhojshala for Hindus.
 - The plea cited that the former rulers of Dhar had installed the statue of Saraswati there in 1034 AD and it was taken to London in 1857 by the British.
 - The statue of Goddess Saraswati is currently in the Museum of London.

History

- At the centre of Dhar city is the tomb of Kamal al-Din, a Chishti saint and follower of Farid-al Din Ganj-i-Shakar and Nizam al-Din Auliya.
 - His tomb was built adjacent to a spacious hypostyle mosque “built primarily of reused temple parts”.
- This led to demands by the right-wing groups that the complex is a temple dedicated to the Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati).
 - The Hindu Front for Justice argued that the mosque was constructed during the reign of Alauddin Khilji between the 13th and 14th centuries after “destroying and dismantling ancient structures of previously constructed Hindu temples”.
- According to a 2012 research paper by Micheal Willis published in the Royal Asiatic Society, the Bhojshala or 'Hall of Bhoja' is a term used to describe the centre for Sanskrit studies associated with King Bhoja, the most celebrated ruler of the Paramara dynasty.
 - The Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque complex was originally a temple of goddess Saraswati built by Parawara King Bhoja in 11th Century AD.
- According to the Dhar district website, Raja Bhoj founded a college at Dhar, which subsequently came to be known as Bhojshala.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Bhoja, grandson of Nagabhata II, was the Pratihara dynasty's greatest emperor and the actual founder of the empire.
 - The Pratiharas who ruled over Kannauj for a long time are also called Gurjara-Pratiharas.
 - They were in the tripartite struggle with the Palas and Rashtrakutas over dominance in the Kannauj, Malwa, and upper Ganga valley regions.
- Bhoja defeated the Pala king Devapala and the Rashtrakuta king Amoghavarsha, establishing the Gurjara-Pratiharas as the dominant power in northern India during his reign.
 - He was a great follower of Vaishnavism and assumed the title of “Adivaraha”.
 - Al-Masudi, an Arab traveller, gave him the title "King Baura."

Current Status of Survey

- The excavation process, which starts on March 22, is currently going on at the Bhojshala/Kamal Maula mosque complex as part of its court-mandated survey being conducted by the ASI.
- Soil and stones collected during the digging process are being preserved by the ASI.
- The survey is being conducted without any break using new scientific methods, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Global Positioning System (GPS), and carbon dating in addition to excavation at the site.
 - Videography and photography are also being carried out on the premises.
- The HC has given six weeks' time to the ASI for the survey and directed it to get back to it with an up-to-date report.

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INDIA'S INDIGENOUS FIFTH-GEN FIGHTER JET AMCA

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) recently cleared a Rs 15,000 crore project to design and develop the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), India's fifth-generation fighter multirole fighter jet.
- The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will be the nodal agency for executing the programme and designing the aircraft.
- It will be manufactured by state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

Key Features

- The AMCA is envisaged as a 25-tonne twin-engine stealth aircraft with an internal weapons bay and Diverterless Supersonic Intake which has been developed in India for the first time.
- The 25-tonne twin-engine aircraft, which will be bigger than other fighters in the Indian Air Force inventory, will have advanced stealth features to avoid detection by enemy radar.
- The AMCA Mk1 will feature the US-built GE414 engine (90 kilo Newton class), while the more advanced AMCA Mk2 will use a more powerful 110 kN engine developed by DRDO's-Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE) in collaboration with a foreign defence major.

Development Timeline

- Discussions for developing the AMCA started in 2007.
- The initial plan was to jointly develop the aircraft with Russia under a Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) programme.
 - However, India withdrew from the FGFA project in 2018.
- Following the CCS approval, the ADA hopes to have the first flight of the aircraft in four and a half to five years.
 - The full development of the aircraft is expected to take around 10 years from now.
 - Five prototypes will be built before HAL begins manufacturing the aircraft.
 - The private industry is also expected to be involved in the manufacturing of the aircraft.

Need

- The IAF currently has around 30 fighter squadrons against the sanctioned strength of 42.
- This number is expected to go down further as squadrons of MiG-21s, MiG-29s, Jaguars, and Mirage 2000s are scheduled to be phased out by the middle of the next decade.
- India aims to enhance its self-sufficiency in defence, focusing on strengthening its air force and replacing ageing aircraft.
- India is developing the AMCA building on the success of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas.

Other Fifth-Generation Fighters

- Only a few countries have built a fifth-generation stealth fighter aircraft.
- The list of aircraft currently in service includes the F-22 Raptor and F-35A Lightning II of the US, the Chinese J-20 Mighty Dragon, and the Russian Sukhoi Su-57.
- Even South Korea and Turkey have taken the lead in the race for fifth-generation fighter aircraft.
- In February 2024, Turkey's next-generation fighter, known as the TF KAAN, took off for its first flight. Turkish Aerospace Industries claims that KAAN is a fifth-generation multirole fighter aircraft.
 - The Turkish government had announced that Pakistan could officially join the Turkish Aerospace KAAN aircraft programme.
- In July of 2022, the prototype of South Korea's KF-21 Boramae next-generation fighter jet conducted its first flight.
 - Indonesia is a 20 per cent partner in the Boramae programme.





LCA Tejas

- The LCA Tejas, a 4.5-generation multi-role fighter aircraft, is a domestically developed supersonic aircraft used by the Indian military.
- The programme was initiated by the Government of India in 1984, leading to the establishment of the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA).
- Developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), the Tejas succeeded the ageing Mig 21 fighter jets.
- Named 'Tejas,' which translates to 'radiance' in Sanskrit, by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2003, the aircraft is the second supersonic fighter jet developed by HAL after the HAL HF-24 Marut.
- It is the lightest and smallest multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its category, designed to accommodate various types of weaponry.
- In 2016, The first Indian Air Force (IAF) Squadron to induct the Tejas was the No 45 Squadron, the 'Flying Daggers'.
- The Defence Acquisition Council, headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, recently gave its go-ahead for the procurement of 97 more Tejas MK-1A fighter jets for the Indian Air Force.
 - The IAF is planning to replace the ageing MiG-21 aircraft with the LCA Tejas Mark 1A aircraft by 2025.
 - The LCA program was envisioned in the late 1980s to replace the MiG-21s that have been serving the Air Force since 1963.
- In September 2022, the CCS gave sanction for the development of the LCA-Mk2 at a total cost of ₹9,000 crore, a bigger and more capable fighter than the present LCA, and is currently under development.
 - The LCA-Mk2 will also be powered by the GE F-414 engine which produces 98kN thrust compared to the 84kN thrust of the GE-404 engine powering the LCA Mk1 and MK1A.
- Variants of Tejas -
 - Tejas Trainer - Two-seater operational conversion trainer for training Air Force pilots.
 - LCA Navy - Twin- and single-seat carrier-capable for the Indian Navy.
 - LCA Tejas Navy MK2 - This is phase 2 of the LCA Navy variant.
 - LCA Tejas Mk-1A - This is an improvement over the LCA Tejas Mk1 with a higher thrust engine.

The present and future of India's fighter jets

India has laid out an ambitious plan for the acquisition of fighter jets, with an added emphasis on indigenously made aircraft. This table shows the current make-up of its fleet and its future projections and procurements

The sanctioned strength of fighter squadrons:
42

The current strength:
31



The projected strength by 2030:
29-31
Sqn

The projected strength by 2035:
35-36
Sqn

Future aircraft procurements for IAF

LCA MK-1A	LCA MK2	MRFA	AMCA
83	>120	114	>126

Future aircraft procurements for Indian Navy

Rafale-M or F/A-18	TEDBF
26	>45

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FRANCE INSCRIBED THE RIGHT TO ABORTION IN ITS CONSTITUTION

WHY IN NEWS?

- The French Parliament on March 4 overwhelmingly approved a bill to enshrine abortion as a constitutional right at a historic joint session at the Palace of Versailles.
- With this, it has become the only country to explicitly guarantee a woman's right to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy.
- The measure was promised by President Emmanuel Macron following a rollback of abortion rights in the United States in recent times, especially the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn the 50-year-old ruling in *Roe v. Wade* in 2022.

Key Features

- The approved bill amends Article 34 of the French Constitution, explicitly stating that "the law determines the conditions by which the freedom of women to have recourse to an abortion, which is guaranteed."
- Abortion, although legal in France since 1975, will now be a "guaranteed freedom" for women.
 - The French Constitution has been modified nearly 25 times since adopted in 1958.
 - The last instance was in 2008 when the Parliament was awarded more powers and presidential tenure was limited to a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms in office.
- The French measure is seen as going a step further in its guarantee of abortion rights than was the case in the former Yugoslavia, whose 1974 constitution said that "a person is free to decide on having children."
 - After its disintegration in the early 1990s, several Balkan states adopted similar measures without an explicit constitutional guarantee.
 - For instance, Serbia's constitution in less specific terms states that "everyone has the right to decide on childbirth."

Status of Abortion in Other European Countries

- Abortion is currently accessible in more than 40 European nations, but some countries are seeing increased efforts to limit access to the procedure.
- In September 2022, Hungary's far-right government made it obligatory for women to listen to the pulse of the fetus, sometimes called the "foetal heartbeat," before they can access a safe abortion.
- Poland, which has some of the most stringent abortion laws in Europe, allows termination only in the event of rape, incest or a threat to the mother's health or life.
 - Restrictions were further tightened in 2020 when the country's top court ruled that abortions on the grounds of foetal defects were unconstitutional.
- The United Kingdom permits abortion to 24 weeks of pregnancy if it is approved by two doctors.
 - Delayed abortions are allowed only if there exists a danger to the mother's life.
 - However, women who undergo abortions after 24 weeks can be prosecuted under the Offences Against the Person Act, 1861.
- Italy resisted Vatican pressure and legalised abortion in 1978 by allowing women to terminate pregnancies up to 12 weeks or later if their health or life was endangered.
 - However, the law allows medical practitioners to register as "conscientious objectors," thereby making access to the procedure extremely difficult.
- The French initiative could however embolden efforts to add abortion to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

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Status in India

- Until the 1960s, abortion was illegal in India under Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- In the mid-1960s, the government set up the Shantilal Shah Committee to look into the issue of abortions and ascertain if the country needed a law in this regard.
- Based on the report of the Shantilal Shah Committee, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 was enacted.
- The MTP Act allowed the termination of pregnancy by a medical practitioner in two stages.
 - For termination of pregnancy up to 12 weeks from conception, the opinion of one doctor was required.
 - For pregnancies between 12 and 20 weeks old, the opinion of two doctors was required.
- In 2021, Parliament amended the law and allowed for termination under the opinion of one doctor for pregnancies up to 20 weeks.
 - For pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks, the amended law requires the opinion of two doctors.
 - It sets up state-level Medical Boards to decide if a pregnancy may be terminated after 24 weeks in cases of substantial fetal abnormalities.
 - Significantly, the 2021 amendment replaced the word “by any married woman or her husband” with the words “any woman or her partner”, bringing within the fold of the law pregnancies outside marriage institutions.
 - The Amendment Act also included unwanted pregnancies due to the failure of contraceptives as a ground for abortion up to 20 weeks.

- In Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. the Union Of India Case, 2017, the Supreme Court recognized the constitutional right of women to make reproductive choices, as a part of personal liberty under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
- The Constitution of India, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty to all citizens under Article 21.
- The Supreme Court recognized marital rape as a ground for abortion, even though marital rape itself is not recognized, in a progressive move for women's reproductive rights.



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THE 94th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DANDI MARCH

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Prime Minister of India inaugurated the redeveloped Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on March 12 to mark the 94th anniversary of the Dandi March.
- The Prime Minister also revealed the master plan for the Rs 1,200 crore Gandhi Ashram Memorial and Precinct Development Project.

Historical Significance of Kocharab Ashram and Sabarmati Ashram

- Kochrab Ashram holds significant historical importance as the first ashram established by Mahatma Gandhi upon his return to India from South Africa in 1915.
 - On 20 May 1915, Gandhi took residence in a dwelling located in the Kochrab hamlet, near Paldi, situated on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.
 - The bungalow, generously provided by Jeevanlal Desai, a fellow lawyer and colleague, later became the Satyagraha Ashram under Gandhi.
 - It is still preserved as a memorial and tourist place by the deemed university Gujarat Vidyapith.
 - The ashram also served as the starting point for Gandhi's advocacy of khadi, equality for the poor, Hindi as the national language, self-reliance, and independence.
- Founded in 1917 by Mahatma Gandhi, the Sabarmati Ashram is situated on the western bank of the Sabarmati River, near the village of Juna Vadaj in Ahmedabad.
 - Gandhi set up five settlements during his lifetime — two in South Africa (Phoenix Settlement in Natal, and Tolstoy Farm outside Johannesburg), where he lived from 1893 to 1914, and three in India, where he arrived in January 1915.
 - Gandhi's first Ashram in India was established in the Kochrab area of Ahmedabad in 1915, and the others are Sabarmati Ashram (Ahmedabad), and Sevagram Ashram (in Wardha).
 - The ashram at Sabarmati is seen to be the most important in Gandhi's life and work.
 - It was a space that Gandhi designed himself, and was built using local material.
 - He spent the most time here, and it was the cradle of eight major movements related to India's struggle for independence.
 - Apart from the Dandi March that Gandhi began from here on March 12, 1930, he also launched the Champaran Satyagraha (1917), the Ahmedabad mills strike and Kheda Satyagraha (1918), the Khadi movement (1918), the Rowlatt Act and Khilafat Movements (1919), and the Non-Cooperation movement (1920) while living in Sabarmati.

About Dandi March

- The 1882 Salt Act gave the British a monopoly in the manufacture and sale of salt.
- Even though salt was freely available on the coasts of India, Indians were forced to buy it from the colonisers.
- Gandhi decided that if there was any one product through which the civil disobedience could be inaugurated, then it was salt.
- On March 2, 1930, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a letter to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, informing him of his intention to break the salt law as an act of civil disobedience.
- The Dandi March, also known as the Salt Satyagraha or Salt March, marked a pivotal moment in the country's fight for independence from British colonial rule.
- The historic march, marking the launch of the Civil Disobedience Movement, began on March 12, and Gandhi broke the salt law by picking up a lump of salt at Dandi on April 6.





IndiaAI MISSION

WHY IN NEWS?

- The government of India on March 7, 2024, launched a national-level AI mission 'IndiaAI Mission' that 'aims to bolster the country's AI system'.

Key Highlights

- The Cabinet has approved an allocation of over Rs 10,300 crore for the IndiaAI Mission, marking a significant step towards bolstering India's AI ecosystem.
 - The financial outlay on the IndiaAI Mission will be made over the next five years.
 - Also, the outlay will ensure a structured implementation of the IndiaAI Mission through a public-private partnership model.
- The Mission will help to develop foundational models with a capacity of more than 100 billion parameters trained on datasets covering major Indian languages for priority sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and governance.
- AI Curation Units (ACUs) will also be developed in 50-line ministries.
- The proposal also includes the establishment of an AI marketplace designed to offer AI as a service and pre-trained models to those working on AI applications.
- The government will also finance deep tech start-ups at various levels of growth, as per the Cabinet approval.

Components of the Mission

- The IndiaAI Mission has various components, namely IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), IndiaAI Datasets Platform, IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, IndiaAI FutureSkills, IndiaAI Startup Financing, and Safe & Trusted AI.
- **IndiaAI Compute Capacity** - A cornerstone of this effort is the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, envisioned to erect a cutting-edge, scalable AI computing infrastructure by deploying over 10,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) through strategic public-private collaborations.
 - Computing capacity, or compute, is among the most important elements of building a large AI system apart from algorithmic innovation and datasets.
 - It is also one of the most difficult elements to procure for smaller businesses looking to train and build such AI systems.
- **IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC)** will be a leading academic institution for streamlined implementation and retention of top research talent.
 - IAIC will undertake the development and deployment of indigenous Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) and domain-specific foundational models in critical sectors.
- **IndiaAI Datasets Platform** - The Platform will streamline access to quality non-personal datasets for AI Innovation.
 - A unified data platform will be developed to provide a one-stop solution for seamless access to non-personal datasets to Indian startups and researchers.
- **IndiaAI Application Development Initiative** – It will promote AI applications in critical sectors for the problem statements sourced from Central Ministries, State Departments, and other institutions.
 - 0 The initiative will focus on developing/ scaling /promoting the adoption of impactful AI solutions with the potential for catalysing large-scale socio-economic transformation.
- **IndiaAI FutureSkills** – The pillar is conceptualised to mitigate barriers to entry into AI programmes and will increase AI courses in undergraduate, Masters level, and Ph.D. programmes.
 - Further, Data and AI Labs will be set up in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities across India to impart foundational-level courses.
- **IndiaAI Startup Financing** – This pillar is conceptualised to support and accelerate deep-tech AI startups and provide them with streamlined access to funding to enable futuristic AI projects.
- **Safe & Trusted AI** - This pillar will enable the implementation of responsible AI projects including the development of indigenous tools and frameworks, self-assessment checklists for innovators, and other guidelines and governance frameworks.
 - It will also recognise the need for adequate guardrails to advance the responsible development, deployment, and adoption of AI.

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96th ACADEMY AWARDS

WHY IN NEWS?

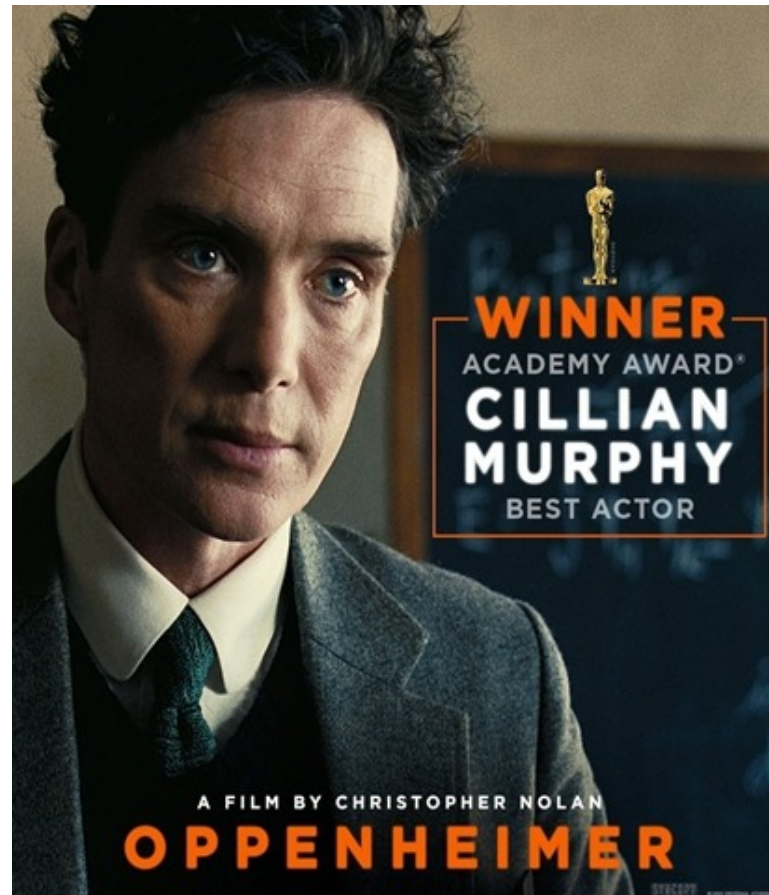
- The 96th Academy Awards, more popularly known as the Oscars, were held on March 11.
- 'Oppenheimer' led the nominations with an impressive 13 nods, followed by 'Poor Things' with 11, 'Killers of the Flower Moon' with 10, and 'Barbie' with eight.

Key Winners

- Among the highlights, 'Oppenheimer' emerged as a powerhouse, clinching a total of seven awards, including the prestigious Best Picture title.
 - Christopher Nolan's adept direction earned him the Best Director accolade.
 - Cillian Murphy's captivating portrayal secured him the Best Actor award.
 - Robert Downey Jr. also contributed to the film's success, receiving the Best Supporting Actor honour.
- Emma Stone claimed the Best Actress award for her role in 'Poor Things'.
- Da'Vine Joy Randolph's portrayal in 'The Holdovers' earned her the Best Supporting Actress award.
- Hayao Miyazaki and Toshio Suzuki's animated feature 'The Boy and the Heron' clinched the Best Animated Feature title.
- Jonathan Glazer's 'The Zone of Interest' was honoured as the Best International Feature.
- The documentary '20 Days in Mariupol' was recognized as the Best Documentary.
- The musical talents of Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell were acknowledged with the Best Original Song award for "What Was I Made For?" from 'Barbie.'
- Justine Triet and Arthur Harari secured the Best Original Screenplay award for 'Anatomy of a Fall'.
- Cord Jefferson was honoured with the Best Adapted Screenplay award for "American Fiction."

Why are the Academy Awards called Oscars?

- The statuette given to winners is technically called the Academy Award of Merit. It's based on a design by Cedric Gibbons, who was MGM art director at the time of the award's creation.
- No one is quite sure exactly when or why the Academy Award of Merit began to be known as an Oscar.
 - One popular theory, according to the Academy Awards, is that Margaret Herrick — former Academy librarian in the 1930s and 40s and later executive director — thought that the statuette looked like her Uncle Oscar. After hearing that, Academy staff started referring to the award as Oscar.
 - Foster Hirsch, author of "Hollywood and the Movies of the Fifties," said there's another theory that he finds more plausible. He said some believe the term Oscar originated from Hollywood columnist Sidney Skolsky, who attended the Academy Awards in 1934.
 - Another popular theory — though the least likely — is that Bette Davis came up with the Oscar name. When she won the award for "Dangerous," in 1936, she apparently remarked that "the back of the Oscar reminded her of her husband" as he left the shower. Her husband's middle name was Oscar.



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QUICK FACTS

**CONTEMPORARY EVENTS OF
SIGNIFICANCE FROM INDIA
AND THE WORLD**



1. The Defence Research and Development Organization (**DRDO**) conducted two successful flight tests of Very Short-Range Air Defence System (**VSHORADS**) missiles from a ground-based portable launcher off the coast of Odisha from the integrated test range, Chandipur. VSHORADS is a man-portable air-defence system designed and developed indigenously by Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian industry partners. The missile incorporates many novel technologies, including a miniaturised reaction control system (RCS) and integrated avionics.
2. **Bharat Tex 2024**, the largest global textile event in India, concluded at Bharat Mandapam, **New Delhi**, inspired by the **5F Vision** of the Prime Minister of India - **farm to fibre; fibre to factory; factory to fashion; and fashion to foreign**. Bharat Tex served as a launchpad for initiatives like the 'Innovative Business Practices and Economic Models in the Textile Value Chain in India' (IndiaTex) and the Textile Grand Innovation Challenge, aiming to drive innovation and sustainability in the textile industry. IndiaTex is a four-year UN Environment Programme project that aims to accelerate the transition of the Indian textile sector towards circularity.
3. India's first centre for research on conserving the endangered Gangetic River Dolphin, the **National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC)**, was inaugurated on March 4, 2024. It is located close to the Ganga River in Patna. The Gangetic River Dolphin is India's national aquatic animal. It is a Schedule I animal under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. It has been declared an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The Gangetic River dolphin is one of four freshwater dolphin species in the world. The other three are found in the Yangtze River in China (now extinct), the Indus River in Pakistan and the Amazon River in South America.
4. The **traditional crochet lace craft of Narasapur in Andhra Pradesh** and **Majuli masks and manuscript paintings in Assam** receive a Geographical Indications (GI) tag to preserve their unique identity.
5. The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** introduced two initiatives, **Chakshu** and the **Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP)**, to combat spam and fraud calls through the Sanchar Saathi portal. The primary objective of Chakshu is to enable proactive reporting of suspicious activities, contributing to the prevention and mitigation of telecom-related fraud and spam calls. The platform allows users to report various types of fraud, including those related to bank accounts, payment wallets, SIM cards, gas and electricity connections, KYC updates, impersonation, and sextortion.
6. The Prime Minister of India inaugurated **India's first under-river metro tunnel built in Kolkata**. The tunnel, constructed beneath Kolkata's Hooghly River, will establish a connection between Howrah Maidan and Esplanade. Howrah metro station, part of the section, will be the deepest metro station in India. Kolkata Metro, India's first metro system and the fifth in Asia, began partial commercial service on October 24, 1984.
7. The **Genome India Project**, a project funded and coordinated by the Department of Biotechnology, announced that it had finished sequencing 10,000 Indian genomes. This means that the complete genomes — the DNA blueprint that constitutes and maintains human bodies — from 10,000 individuals were analysed to create a 'reference' Indian human genome. India first sequenced a human genome in 2006.
8. **India** has managed to bring down '**extreme poverty**' below **3 per cent of its population**, the latest data on the **World Poverty Clock showed**. This could mean achieving significant milestones in the direction of the first of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as prescribed by the United Nations with a timeline of 2030. The World Poverty Clock provides real-time poverty estimates through 2030 for nearly every country in the world. It monitors progress against Ending Extreme Poverty, which is the UN's first SDG.
9. The **Supreme Court** in the case **Shailesh Kumar v. State of UP (now State of Uttarakhand) 2024** has clarified the legal position regarding the registration of First Information Reports (**FIRs**) and **General Diary** entries by the police. The apex court has held that information disclosing the commission of a cognisable offence needs to be recorded as an FIR in the designated FIR book, rather than being documented in the General Diary maintained by the Police under the Police Act, 1861. The court emphasised that a General Diary entry cannot precede the registration of an FIR unless a preliminary inquiry is deemed necessary.
10. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Ministry of Power, pays tribute to the nation's power sector frontline workers on the **fourth edition of Lineman Diwas (4th March 2024)** in New Delhi. The theme for Lineman Diwas 'Seva, Suraksha, Swabhiman' underscores the linemen's commitment, sacrifice, and contribution to society.





11. A school in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala** has unveiled **India's first Generative Artificial Intelligence(AI) teacher robot named 'Iris'**. Iris can speak three languages and also answer difficult questions, along with features including voice assistant, interactive learning, manipulation capabilities, and mobilities.
12. The Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone of the **second rocket launchport of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) at Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu**. It will be extensively and exclusively used for commercial, on-demand, and small satellite launches in the future. To ensure that ISRO's first launch port, the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR in Sriharikota, is not overburdened with a high number of launches, the space agency has decided to build another facility.
13. **Kerala** launched the **first government-owned OTT platform 'CSpace'** with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan describing it as a decisive step in the onward journey of Malayalam Cinema. The platform will only stream films already released in theatres to avoid harming the interests of producers and exhibitors. CSpace will be managed by the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC), with transparency in profit-sharing and viewer statistics.
14. The Centre has tweaked the new ₹75,000-crore **PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojna (Prime Minister's Rooftop Solar: Free Electricity Scheme)**. PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana is a Central Scheme that aims to provide free electricity to one crore households in India, who opt to install rooftop solar electricity units. Each month, homeowners will be able to receive 300 units of free power.
15. **Karnataka** became the **third State in South India** to ban the use of certain colouring agents in cotton candy and gobi manchurian that are found to be harmful. The decision follows similar steps taken in **Tamil Nadu and Goa** and came after a survey by the Public Health Department that showed the presence of harmful chemicals present in the food samples, making them unsafe for consumption.
16. Union Minister of Science & Technology inaugurated the **first-of-its-kind "National Speed Breeding Crop Facility"** at the premier **National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI)** in Mohali. The facility will be used to develop new varieties such as wheat, rice, soybean, pea, tomato, etc., by using a precisely controlled environment to achieve more than four generations of a crop per year. The facility will cater to all the States of India but it will especially be useful for the North Indian States like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and the UT of J&K.
17. On March 6, the Supreme Court said it was "inclined to approve the establishment of the **Tiger Safari at Pakhrau in the buffer area of Corbett Tiger Reserve**. The court gave the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) a three-month deadline to conclude its investigation into alleged irregularities within CTR.
18. Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said in Parliament in February that the government plans to implement a **new highway toll collection system based on the global navigation satellite system** before the model code of conduct for the 2024 election kicks in. The proposed highway tolling system utilises the GNSS, including the Indian satellite navigation system GAGAN (GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation) for accurate location tracking.
19. The renowned **Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi** (Silver Filigree) has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, marking its distinct heritage and craftsmanship. Filigree is ornamental work, especially of fine wire of gold, silver, or copper applied chiefly to gold and silver surfaces. Alongside Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi, other crafts like **Banglar muslin (West Bengal), Narasapur crochet lace (Andhra Pradesh), and Kutch rogan craft (Gujarat)** have also earned **GI status**, emphasising the diversity and excellence of India's traditional crafts.
20. The Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone of **three semiconductor projects** worth about ₹1.25 lakh crore - the **Semiconductor fabrication facility at the Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR), Gujarat; Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facilities at Morigaon in Assam, and Sanand in Gujarat**. These initiatives will fortify the semiconductor ecosystem in India, providing a solid foundation for its growth.
21. **FLY91, India's newest airline**, launched commercial services with an inaugural flight from Goa to Bengaluru. The regional carrier plans to connect tier 2 and tier 3 towns, including routes to Sindhudurg, Jalgaon, and Nanded under the government's UDAN scheme. FLY91 is a regional carrier and it seeks to enhance air connectivity from tier 2 and tier 3 towns across India.
22. Ahead of Lok Sabha polls, public broadcaster **Prasar Bharati** launched a news-wire-like service - **PB-SHABD (Prasar**

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Bharati-Shared Audio Visuals for Broadcast and Dissemination) - to offer free content across mediums, which will be free of copyright or credit obligations. The PB-SHABD service is being offered free of cost for the first year as an introductory offer and will provide news stories in all major Indian languages across 50 categories.

23. **India**, which was downgraded to the status of an “**electoral autocracy**” in 2018, has declined even further on multiple metrics to emerge as “one of the worst autocracies”, according to the '**Democracy Report 2024**' released by the Gothenburg-based **V-Dem Institute** that tracks democratic freedoms worldwide. In an electoral autocracy — the category India falls into — multiparty elections coexist with insufficient levels of basic requisites such as freedom of expression and free and fair elections. The V-Dem report categorises countries into four regime types based on their score in the Liberal Democratic Index (LDI): Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Electoral Autocracy, and Closed Autocracy.
24. PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the all-weather **Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh**. The tunnel provides an all-weather connection to Tawang via Sela Pass on the Balipara-Chariduar-Tawang Road. The tunnel overcomes the treacherous bends, allowing heavy vehicles and container trucks to reach the vital Tawang area. The tunnel becomes operational amid heightened tensions along the Line of Actual Control.
25. **No Smoking Day** is observed on the **second Wednesday of March**. The day is observed to spread awareness about the harmful impact of smoking. No Smoking Day originated in the United Kingdom in 1984 as a campaign to raise awareness about the health risks associated with smoking and to encourage smokers to quit. This year, 2024, the day falls on 13th March.
26. **Five women officers** of the Indian Naval Air Squadron 314 (INAS 314) based at Naval Air Enclave, Porbandar in Gujarat created history by **completing the first all-women independent maritime reconnaissance and surveillance mission over the north Arabian Sea** onboard a Dornier 228 aircraft.
27. **India** has been bestowed with the prestigious **Measles and Rubella Champion Award** in recognition of the country's tireless efforts to combat these infectious diseases. The award was given by the Measles and Rubella Partnership at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington D.C., US on March 6. Measles and rubella are vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) and the MR vaccine is part of the UIP since 2017. The Indian government is working towards eliminating measles and rubella from the country.
28. Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually laid the foundation stone for **Sikkim's first railway station, Rangpo Station**. Historically, Sikkim has lacked an Indian Railways network. The government has undertaken this project in three phases: initially from Sevoke to Rangpo in the first phase, then from Rangpo to Gangtok in the second phase, and finally from Gangtok to Nathula in the third phase.
29. The government recently notified the amended **FDI norms in the space sector**, clearing the deck for 100 per cent overseas investment in making components for satellites, 74 per cent in satellite manufacturing and operations, and 49 per cent in launch vehicles. Anything beyond the limit will need government approval.
30. The **first edition of the Biannual Naval Commanders' Conference 2024** was conducted from 05 to 08 March 2024. The Conference is an institutional forum that enables deliberations on important maritime security issues at the Military-Strategic level. The inaugural session of the Conference was held onboard the aircraft carrier **INS Vikramaditya**.
31. South Eastern Coalfield Limited's (SECL) **Gevra mine in Chhattisgarh**, operated by Coal India, has received environmental clearance to expand its production capacity to 70 million tonnes annually, making it set to become **Asia's largest coal mine**. The current capacity of the mine is 52.5 million tonnes per annum.
32. On March 1, 2024, India's Environment Ministry secured Cabinet approval to institute an **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** headquartered in New Delhi. Globally, the 'big cats' include the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah. Barring the puma and jaguar, the rest are found in India. So far, 16 countries have given their written consent to be part of the IBCA. 96 countries that harbour 'big cats'.





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QUICK FACTS

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



1. The **United Arab Emirates**, home to the financial hub of Dubai, has been dropped from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s 'grey list'. The Gulf country, a magnet for millionaires, bankers and hedge funds, was placed under closer scrutiny in 2022, when the FATF highlighted the risk of money laundering and terrorist financing involving banks, precious metals and stones as well as property. The European Union lists the UAE as a high-risk country for money laundering and terrorist financing, alongside more than two dozen other states such as South Africa, North Korea and Afghanistan.
2. In a landmark initiative, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) have announced the launch of a USD 50 million global fund aimed at enabling women to harness opportunities in international trade and the digital economy. The **WEIDE Fund** is designed to assist women-led businesses and entrepreneurs in developing economies and least-developed countries in adopting digital technologies and expanding their online presence.
3. **World Wildlife Day** is celebrated annually on **March 3**. Each year a special theme is chosen to celebrate the occasion and this year's theme, "**Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation**," highlights the potential of technology to advance conservation efforts. World Wildlife Day was first proposed by Thailand to the UN General Assembly in 2013. The General Assembly adopted a resolution on 20 December 2013, designating March 3 as World Wildlife Day in 2014.
4. The **Samudra Laksamana (Bilateral Maritime Exercise)** between **India and Malaysia** was recently concluded off the coast of Visakhapatnam. It involved the participation of the Indian Naval Ship Kiltan and Royal Malaysian Ship KD Lekir aimed to reinforce ties and promote interoperability between the two navies. The other exercises between India and Malaysia are – Exercise Udarashakti (Air Force) and Exercise Harimau Shakti (Army).
5. **World Hearing Day** is observed annually on **March 3**. The **theme** for 2024, designated by the World Health Organization (WHO), is "**Changing mindsets: Let's make ear and hearing care a reality for all.**" World Hearing Day was first recognised by WHO in 2007. Previously, the day was recognised as International Ear Care Day. After 2016, WHO changed the name to World Hearing Day.
6. Recently, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) released a report titled- **The Unjust Climate**. It highlighted that every year, agricultural income losses due to climate stressors are higher in households headed by women than those where men are the primary breadwinners in the low-and-middle-income countries (LMIC), including India. Women-headed households experience losses 8 per cent higher due to heat stress and 3 per cent higher due to floods, compared to men-headed households.
7. Artificial Intelligence start-up **Anthropic** announced its latest family of AI models called **Claude 3**. The family includes three state-of-the-art AI models in the ascending order of capabilities – Claude 3 Haiku, Claude 3 Sonnet, and Claude 3 Opus. The company claims that each model offers an increasingly powerful performance, offering a balance between intelligence, speed, and cost based on their specific use case. Anthropic was founded by former members of OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT.
8. The **first-ever Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Forum** was held in **Cartagena de Indias, Colombia** to mobilise governments, donors, civil society, and various stakeholders to pledge their commitment to the elimination of cervical cancer and energise the global community. The World Bank, the American Charitable organisation Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Nations children's agency UNICEF donated \$600 million fund. The funds will be utilised to enhance global access to vaccination, screening and treatment for cervical cancer.
9. **International Women's Day** is celebrated annually on **March 8** to acknowledge the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The United Nations has designated the year 2024's theme as '**Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress**', while the **campaign theme** for this year is '**Inspire Inclusion.**' The celebration's origin lies in the labour movements of Europe and North America. The first International Women's Day was held in March 1911. It was celebrated for the first time by the United Nations in 1975.
10. In a historic gathering in Cameroon's capital Yaoundé, the **Yaoundé Declaration** marked a significant milestone in the fight against malaria, as health ministers from 11 African countries pledged to end malaria deaths. Globally, the number of malaria cases in 2022 surged significantly compared to the pre-COVID-19 era.
11. **Pi**, the **world's 'friendliest' chatbot**, powered by the new Inflection-2.5 large language model (LLM), has emerged as a breakthrough in conversational AI technology, offering deep





- and meaningful interactions. Pi, developed by Inflection AI, a California-based company, offers empathetic, helpful, and safe conversations, setting it apart from other chatbots. Inflection 2.5 is an upgrade to a large language model (LLM) created by Inflection AI.
12. The comprehensive maritime security exercise '**Sea Defenders-2024**' between the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG) & United States Coast Guard (USCG)** culminated at Port Blair on March 9, 2024. The exercise was aimed at enhancing maritime cooperation and interoperability between the two forces.
 13. **Japanese architect Riken Yamamoto** was recently declared winner of the **2024 Pritzker Architecture Prize**, the highest international award in the field, which is sometimes referred to as the "Architecture Nobel". The prize has been awarded every year since its founding in 1979, and Yamamoto is the ninth laureate from Japan. The prize was established by Jay A Pritzker and his wife Cindy in 1979 to honour living architects whose work demonstrates talent, vision, and commitment to humanity and the built environment. Balkrishna Doshi, is the first Indian architect to win a Pritzker Prize (2018). His renowned work is the Aranya Low-Cost Housing Complex, located in the city of Indore.
 14. **Iran, Russia, and China** began a joint naval drill in the Gulf of Oman. The drill is called "**Marine Security Belt 2024**". The drill, which includes warships and aviation, is their fourth joint military exercise since 2019. Naval representatives from Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Oman, India, and South Africa are acting as observers during the exercise.
 15. After adding abortion as a right in its Constitution, **France is now considering legalising a form of assisted dying called "aid in dying"**. The bill, which will have strict conditions, will be for people with incurable illnesses that will kill them in the "short- or middle-term". They can be prescribed a lethal medication which they can administer on their own or appoint a person of their choice or a medical professional to do it. It will help stop end-of-life suffering for such patients. The medical option will only be provided to adults, except those with psychiatric conditions and disorders like Alzheimer's.
 16. The **U.S. House of Representatives** on March 13 passed a bill that would lead to a nationwide ban of the popular video app **TikTok** if its China-based owner doesn't sell, as lawmakers acted on concerns that the company's current ownership structure is a national security threat. TikTok, which has more than 150 million American users, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Chinese technology firm ByteDance Ltd.
 17. **India** was the **world's top arms importer for the period 2019-23** with imports having gone up by 4.7% compared to the period 2014-18, according to the Swedish think tank, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). India's position as the top arms importer is followed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine, Pakistan, Japan, Egypt, Australia, South Korea, and China. Conversely, the top arms exporters include the United States (42%), France (11%), Russia (11%), China (5.8%), Germany (5.6%), Italy (4.3%), UK (3.7%), Spain (2.7%), Israel (2.4%), and South Korea (2%).
 18. Every year, **World Consumer Rights Day** is observed on **March 15** to remind us of the importance of consumer rights in our global marketplace. Consumers International, the global voice for consumers, has chosen the **theme 'Fair and responsible AI for consumers'** for this year's World Consumer Rights Day. The origins of World Consumer Rights Day can be traced back to March 15, 1962, when former US President John F. Kennedy addressed consumer rights issues in a historic speech to the US Congress.
 19. **Saudi Arabia** recently celebrated the unveiling of the **world's first-ever mosque** crafted through the revolutionary technique of **3D printing in Jeddah**. Nestled in the Al-Jawhara suburb, this mosque is named after the late Abdulaziz Abdullah Sharbatly, as a heartfelt tribute from his wife, the prominent Saudi entrepreneur Wajnat Abdulwahed.
 20. **India and the four - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland - European bloc EFTA** signed a free trade agreement to help promote investments and exports of key domestic services sectors such as IT, audio-visual, and movement of skilled professionals. The signing of the pact, officially dubbed as Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), follows approval from the Union Cabinet on March 7. The agreement has 14 chapters, including trade in goods, rules of origin, intellectual property rights (IPRs), trade in services, investment promotion and cooperation, government procurement, technical barriers to trade, and trade facilitation.
 21. **Alexander Stubb** was sworn in on March 1 as **Finland's new president** Mr. Stubb took his oath in Finnish and Swedish, Finland's two official languages, becoming the country's 13th president since it gained independence from the Russian Empire in 1917. Finland joined NATO in April following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

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QUICK FACTS

**ARTS & CULTURE AND HISTORICAL
EVENTS OF CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE**



1. Archaeologists from the Public Research Institute of History, Archaeology, and Heritage (PRIHAH) have unearthed **two ancient temples** dating back to the **Badami Chalukyan period**, along with a rare inscription, in Mudimaniyam village of Nalgonda district, **Telangana**.
2. **Writer Kannaiyan Dakshnamurthy's book 'Karunkundram'** has been selected for the **Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize 2023**. Kannaiyan Dakshnamurthy has translated Mamang Dai's English novel 'The Black Hill' into Tamil.
3. **Eminent writer Amitav Ghosh** has been awarded the prestigious **Erasmus Prize 2024**. "He receives the prize for his passionate contribution to the theme 'imagining the unthinkable', in which an unprecedented global crisis, climate change, takes shape through the written word. Launched in 1958 and awarded annually to a person or institution that has made an exceptional contribution to the humanities, social sciences or arts in Europe and beyond.
4. On March 8, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented the **first-ever National Creators Awards at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi**. The awards were given to recognize young talent across 20 categories, including storytelling, social change advocacy, environmental sustainability, education, gaming, and more.
5. **President Droupadi Murmu** awarded the **prestigious President's Standard** to No. 45 Squadron and No. 221 Squadron, and the **President's Colours** to 11 Base Repair Depot (BRD) and 509 Signal Unit (SU) of the IAF in a ceremony at IAF station, Hindan. President's Standard and Colours are the highest honour awarded to any military unit. This is the first time in the history of the IAF that four units have been awarded the President's Standard and Colours together in a single ceremony.
6. **Dubai** inaugurated the **first-ever "India by the Creek" festival** on March 8th, bringing the vibrant culture of India to Al Seef Park. "India by the Creek" offers a diverse array of programmes, featuring musical performances, literary discussions, poetry readings, and interactive workshops. This immersive experience promises to solidify the deeply entrenched cultural ties between India and Dubai, paving the way for a future enriched by artistic expression. The festival's location itself is steeped in history. Al Seef Park, on Dubai Creek, has been a bustling centre of trade for centuries, a vital link between the two regions.
7. The **National Horticulture Fair (NHF) 2024** was inaugurated on March 5 at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) — Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), **Bengaluru, Karnataka**. The theme of the fair, "Nextgen technology-led horticulture for sustainable development," highlights the integration of cutting-edge technologies in horticultural practices to promote sustainability and boost farmers' income.
8. President Droupadi Murmu conferred the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for the years 2022 and 2023** to eminent artists in the field of performing arts, including music, dance, drama, folk and tribal arts. Besides the Akademi Awards, the President of India also bestowed the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship to 6 eminent artists. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship or "Akademi Ratna" is the highest honour given to eminent artists in the field of performing arts for his or her exceptional contribution to performing art form. It is restricted to 40 at any given time.



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TEST ZONE



PASSAGE - 1

The Home Ministry on March 11 notified the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act's (CAA) rules.

The law paves the way for Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christian and Parsi refugees, who came to India before December 31 2014, from Afghanistan, [1] and Pakistan to acquire Indian citizenship without having a valid passport from these countries or an Indian visa.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 was passed in Parliament in December 2019. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill on December 9 while the Rajya Sabha passed it on December 11.

Before the new rules were implemented, citizenship in India was regulated by the Citizenship Act, 1955. The Bill specifies that citizenship may be acquired in India through five criteria – by birth in India, by descent, through registration, by naturalisation (extended residence in India), and by incorporation of territory into India. The new law, however, introduces religion as the sixth criteria to acquire citizenship in India, while excluding Muslims.

The amendments on citizenship for illegal migrants will not apply to certain areas. These include the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura, as included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The exceptions also include the states regulated by the "Inner Line" permit under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations 1873.

The law also made amendments to provisions related to Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cardholders. A foreigner may register as an OCI under the 1955 Act if they are of Indian origin or the spouse of a person of Indian origin. This will entitle them to benefits such as the right to travel to India, and to work and study in the country.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "CAA rules notified: Here is what the 2019 Bill on Citizenship Amendment Act proposed", by Gulam Jeelani, livemint]

Q.1 Which country's name has been replaced with '[1]' in the passage above?

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| A Myanmar | C Sri Lanka |
| B Bangladesh | D Bhutan |

Q.2 Which of the following is competent to prescribe conditions for the acquisition of citizenship in India?

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A Parliament | C President |
| B Prime Minister | D Ministry of Home Affairs |

Q.3 The Indian Constitution deals with citizenship from -

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| A Articles 1 to 4 | C Articles 5 to 11 |
| B Articles 6 to 12 | D Articles 4 to 10 |

Q.4 The CAA will not apply to regions mentioned under the Sixth Schedule and the area covered under the 'Inner Line'. Which of the following states does not come under 'The Inner Line'?

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| A Arunachal Pradesh | C Mizoram |
| B Nagaland | D Tripura |

Q.5 What is India's ranking in the Henley Passport Index for 2024?

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 85th | C 80th |
| B 90th | D 83rd |

Q.1 (B) Q.2 (A) Q.3 (C) Q.4 (D) Q.5 (A)

Answers

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PASSAGE - 2

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday virtually launched India's first indigenously developed hydrogen fuel cell ferry. The vessel, manufactured by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), will be deployed for service at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.

Built at a cost of Rs 18 crore, the ferry will be handed over to the Inland Waterways Authority of India by the CSL after rigorous trials. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways met 75 per cent of the project cost.

The Hydrogen fuel cell vessel is a 24-meter-long catamaran, which can carry 50 people in its air-conditioned passenger area. The accommodation area has been constructed with high-quality fiberglass reinforced plastic, similar to metro train coaches.

Hydrogen fuel cell vessels do not use conventional batteries as the primary storage house of electrical energy. The vessels run on hydrogen fuel, which is stored in cylinders. This boat has five hydrogen cylinders that can carry 40kg of hydrogen and support eight hours of operations. The vessel is also fitted with a 3-kW solar panel.

The hydrogen fuel cell-powered vessel has zero emission, zero noise and is energy-efficient, which makes it more environment-friendly. Since there are no moving parts, the ferry requires less maintenance than combustion vessels.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "PM Modi launches hydrogen-powered ferry: features, significance", by Shaju Phillip, The Indian Express]

Q.1 As per the Harit Nauka guidelines for inland vessels, all states have to make efforts to use green fuels for 50% of inland waterways-based passenger fleets in the next decade, and 100% by –

A 2035

B 2036

C 2045

D 2046

Q.2 The V.O. Chidambaranar Port is India's first Green Hydrogen Hub Port. It is located in -

A Tamil Nadu

B Andhra Pradesh

C Telangana

D Kerala

Q.3 As per its Nationally Determined Contributions, India is committed to reducing the carbon emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by –

A 2035

B 2030

C 2028

D 2032

Q.4 In September 2023, the Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas flagged off the country's first Green Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus in –

A Chandigarh

B Noida

C New Delhi

D Varanasi

Q.5 World Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Day is annually observed on –

A October 8

B August 10

C January 26

D May 3

Q.1 (A) Q.2 (A) Q.3 (B) Q.4 (C) Q.5 (A)

Answers

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PASSAGE - 3

India's leopard numbers rose by 8% from 12,852 in 2018 to 13,874 in 2022, according to a report made public by the Environment Ministry on Thursday.

The survey covered 20 States of India, and focussed on about 70% of the animals' expected habitat, which are India's tiger reserves and protected forest areas. Unlike tigers, which are largely confined to forest reserves, leopards are far more adaptable and tend to be found in significant numbers, in villages and, sometimes, even in cities. They are also known to prey on cattle and thus be involved in conflict, resulting in higher mortality.

The analysis – coordinated by the Wildlife Institute of India – only looked at forest areas where a similar survey was done in 2018. The Shivalik hills and the Gangetic plains recorded 3.4% yearly decline, while Central India and the Eastern Ghats, the Western Ghats and the hills of the northeast, and the Brahmaputra flood plains recorded

growth of 1.5%, 1% and 1.3% per annum respectively. "The population in the last four years is stable, which also indicates the growth is minimal and in comparison to tigers, leopard population is likely getting impacted by people in multiple use areas," the report added.

Leopard numbers have declined in Ramnagar forest division (Uttarakhand), where tiger numbers have shown a very steep growth in the past four years. About 65% of the leopard population is present outside protected areas in the Shivalik landscape. In Uttar Pradesh, both leopard and tiger numbers have increased, the report noted.

Forest surveyors travel 6,41,449 km for carnivore signs and prey abundance estimation. Camera traps were deployed at 32,803 locations, resulting in 4,70,81,881 photographs.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "Leopard numbers show 8% rise from 2018 to 2022", by Jacob Koshy, The Hindu]

Q.1 As per the 'Status of Leopards in India 2022', which state reported the highest number of leopards?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| A Maharashtra | C Tamil Nadu |
| B Karnataka | D Madhya Pradesh |

Q.2 International Leopard Day is observed every year on –

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| A May 3 | C October 23 |
| B February 10 | D July 29 |

Q.3 Which state/UT has the maximum number of snow leopards as per the first-ever snow leopard population assessment report released in January 2024?

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| A Arunachal Pradesh | C Himachal Pradesh |
| B Ladakh | D Jammu and Kashmir |

Q.4 The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is a global alliance launched in 2023 to ensure cooperation for the conservation of seven big cats. The IBCA will be headquartered in –

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| A France | C India |
| B Thailand | D Tanzania |

Q.5 The Government of India has been conserving the snow leopards and their habitats through Project Snow Leopard (PSL). The PSL was launched in –

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 2009 | C 2017 |
| B 1973 | D 1993 |

Q.1 (D) Q.2 (A) Q.3 (B) Q.4 (C) Q.5 (A)

Answers

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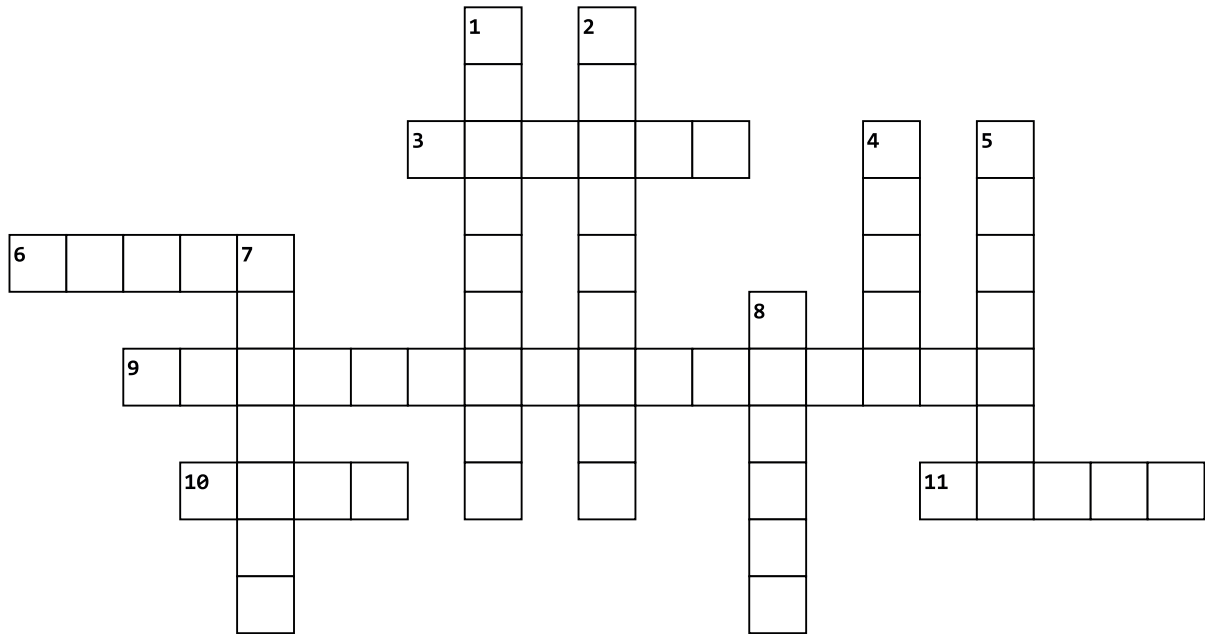
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The Question Bank



CROSSWORD CORNER



CROSSWORD - 1



Across

3. World Wildlife Day
6. India's newest airline
9. Maritime exercise between India and Malaysia
10. India's first Generative AI teacher robot
11. India's first National Dolphin Research Centre inaugurated

Down

1. ISRO's second rocket launchport
2. Third State in South India to ban the use of colouring agents
4. Winner of Measles and Rubella Champion Award
5. India's first under-river metro tunnel
7. No Smoking Day 2024
8. Sikkim's first railway station

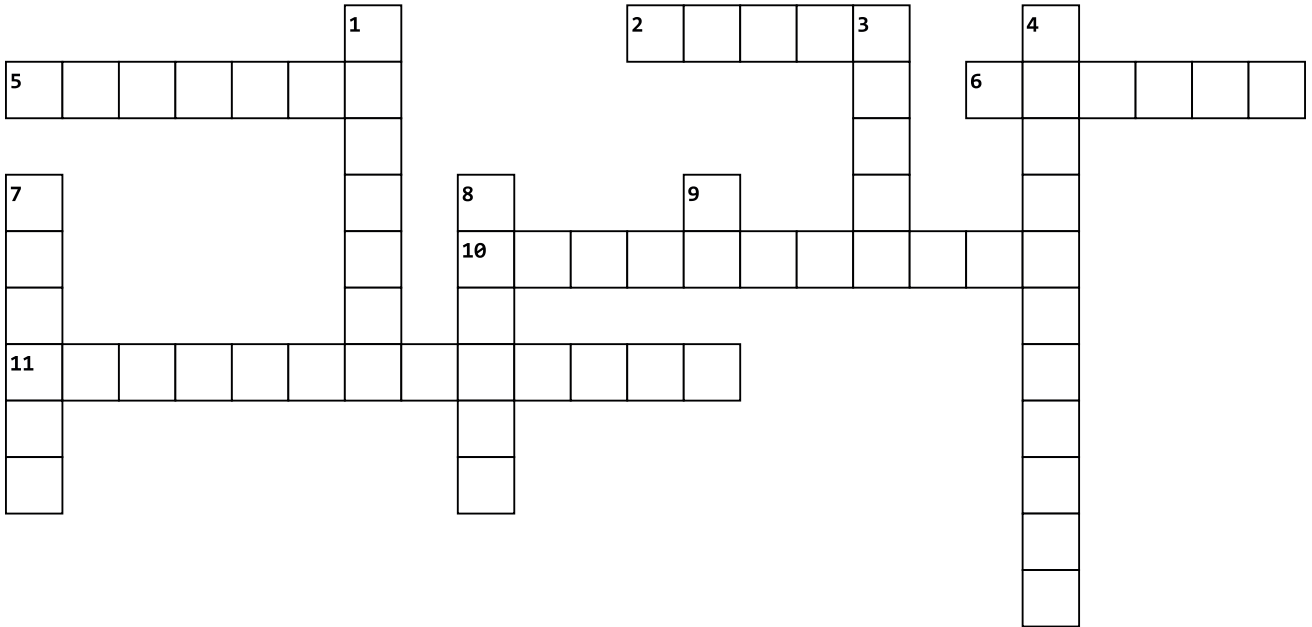
Answers

6	FLY91
5	Kolkata
4	India
3	3March
2	Karnataka
1	TamilNadu
11	Patna
10	Iris
9	Samudralaksamana
8	Rangpo
7	13March





CROSSWORD - 2



Across

- 2.** Inaugurated the first-ever "India by the Creek" festival
- 5.** World Consumer Rights Day
- 6.** World Hearing Day
- 10.** World's first-ever mosque crafted through 3D printing
- 11.** Winner of the 2024 Pritzker Architecture Prize

Down

- 1.** India's first commercial semiconductor fabrication facility
- 3.** World's top arms importer for the period 2019-23
- 4.** Winner of Erasmus Prize 2024
- 7.** International Women's Day
- 8.** Kerala launched the first government-owned OTT platform
- 9.** World's 'friendliest' chatbot

Answers

1	Dholera	6	3March
2	Dubai	5	15March
3	India	4	AmitavGhosh
4	Dubai	3	India
5	15March	2	Dubai
6	3March	1	Dholera
7	8March	6	3March
8	Cspace	5	15March
9	PI	4	AmitavGhosh
10	SaudiArabia	3	India
11	RikenYamamoto	2	Dubai

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