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LawEx

16-31 OCT, 2023

ISSUE - 17



Justice
Hima
Kohli



Justice
Sanjay
Krishan
Kaul



CJI DY
Chandrachud



Justice S
Ravindra
Bhat



Justice P S
Narsimha

**SUPREME COURT'S
VERDICT ON**

**SAME-SEX
MARRIAGES**



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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

Recently, a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court (SC) declined to legalise same-sex marriage, placing it upon the Parliament and State governments to decide if non-heterosexual unions can be legally recognised. The demand to open the Ratna Bhandar (treasure room) of the Puri Jagannath Temple is growing louder again. The treasure room at the temple has not been unlocked for three decades. Prime Minister Narendra Modi publicly declared India’s intention to host the Olympic Games, preferably in 2036, during the opening ceremony of the 141st International Olympic Committee (IOC) session in Mumbai on October 14. For more updates, keep reading.

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The Question Bank



QUICK BOOSTERS



SUPREME COURT'S VERDICT ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court (SC) announced a 3:2 verdict on petitions seeking the rights for members of the LGBTQ community to marry and choose family.
- The Bench comprised Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Ravindra Bhat, Hima Kohli and PS Narasimha.
- The Court declined to legalise same-sex marriage, placing it upon the Parliament and State governments to decide if non-heterosexual unions can be legally recognised.

Key Highlights of the Judgement

A 3:2 verdict

All 'aye'

- Same sex couples do not have a 'right to marry' ("The answer must be an emphatic no," Justice Kaul said).
- Transgender persons have a right to marry under the current framework.
- Same-sex couples have a right to choose their partners and cohabit with one another.

Majority vs. minority opinions

- Queer couples do not have the right to adopt (3:2)
- Couples do not enjoy a right to a civil union (3:2)

- In his opinion, the CJ concluded that the SC cannot strike down the provisions of the Special Marriage Act (SMA) or read words differently.
 - The focus of the petitions filed is the gender-neutral interpretation of the SMA. It is a secular legislation designed to facilitate inter-caste and inter-faith marriages. The petitioners have sought a broader interpretation of the SMA to include same-sex marriages too.
- The CJ and Justice Kaul batted for civil unions for non-heterosexual couples.
 - The right to enter a union cannot be restricted on the basis of sexual orientation (which violates Article 15 of the Constitution).
 - SC holds that queer persons have an equal right and freedom to enter into a "union".
 - A 'civil union' refers to the legal status that allows same-sex couples specific rights and responsibilities that are normally conferred upon married couples. Although a civil union resembles a marriage, it does not have the same recognition in personal law as marriage.
- But all five judges agreed that there is no fundamental right to marry and in a majority verdict, the court has ruled against same-sex marriage.
- The majority view is that the legislature or Parliament must decide on bringing in same-sex marriage.

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The CJJ accepted Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's proposal on behalf of the Centre for setting up of an expert panel headed by the Cabinet Secretary to consider granting LGBTQ couples a bouquet of rights and privileges, except the right to marriage, that are available to heterosexual couples. The committee will consider all the other rights such as those related to government services and goods, banking, etc.

- The CJJ said that without the right to marry which can be given by legislature, the LGBTQ community members have the right to choose a partner and the right to intimate association and the state must recognise a bouquet of their rights to ensure such couples enjoy rights of association unhindered.
 - It has issued directions to the Centre and state governments as well as the Union Territories to enforce those rights.
- The SC has told the government to ensure the LGBTQ community is not discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation.
 - It has directed the government to sensitise the public about queer rights and not to discriminate in access to goods and services.
- The SC also said that homosexuality or queerness is not an urban concept or restricted to the upper class of society.
 - Queerness can be regardless of one's caste or class or socio-economic status.
- The SC said the circular of the Central Adoption Resources Authority (CARA) prohibiting LGBTQ couples from adopting a child is discriminatory and hence, unconstitutional.
 - The bench differed on certain aspects, especially on the applicability of adoption rules for queer couples.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 32 countries, same-sex marriage is legal.
- The SC observed marriage as a Fundamental Right in *Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K.M. and others* 2018.
- LGBTQ community is entitled to all Constitutional Rights (*Navjet Singh Johar and others v. Union of India* 2018).
- Marriages in India can be registered under the respective personal laws Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Muslim Personal Law Application Act, 1937, or under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 has provisions for civil marriage for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party.
- When a person solemnises marriage under this law, then the marriage is not governed by personal laws but by the Special Marriage Act.



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SC REJECTS MARRIED WOMAN'S PLEA TO ABORT 27-WEEK PREGNANCY

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Supreme Court recently turned down the plea of a married woman seeking immediate termination of her 27-week pregnancy, relying on her latest medical report which indicated that there were no foetal abnormalities, nor was the health of the 27-year-old mother of two at risk, to let her end her pregnancy beyond the cut-off period fixed under law.

Background

- The woman approached the court earlier this month, saying she was unaware of her third pregnancy due to a disorder called lactational amenorrhea, which prevents a patient from menstruating and suffered from postpartum depression and poor financial conditions.
- The woman sought recourse to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act of 1971 to plead her case.

The 2021 Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act permits abortion beyond 24 weeks only in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities, or when there are serious threats to the pregnant woman's life or well-being.

Key Points of the Judgement

- A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud made it clear that the woman cannot claim an "absolute, overriding right" to abort, especially when multiple reports from the AIIMS medical board have confirmed that the pregnancy was neither a cause of immediate danger to her life or that of the foetus.
- Section 5 of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act prescribes medical termination if the pregnancy was "immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman".
- Chief Justice Chandrachud said the term 'life' used in this provision cannot be equated to the broader meaning in which 'life' is used in Article 21 of the Constitution.
 - Article 21 upholds an individual's fundamental right to a dignified, meaningful life.
- The Chief Justice said Section 5, on the other hand, uses 'life' in the context of a life-and-death situation when medical opinion confirms that a woman's very existence hangs in balance if she attempts to carry her pregnancy to full term.
 - In fact, Section 5 allows abortion only if the pregnancy poses an actual, physical and immediate danger to a woman's life and health according to medical experts.

Cannot Undo the Law: SC

SC bench held that medical termination of pregnancy could not be permitted as it had crossed outer limit of 24 weeks

Cannot undo the law disallowing medical termination of pregnancy once it crosses 24 weeks: **SC**

MTP after this period is permissible only in case of foetal abnormalities or to save the life of the pregnant woman

The case did not fall under either of the

"Permitting termination of pregnancy would violate sections 3 and 5 of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act since there is no immediate threat to the mother in the matter and this is not a case of foetal abnormality"

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Government's Stand

- The government argued that the woman has no “absolute right of autonomy to exercise her reproductive rights in a way that would take away the rights of her unborn child”.
- Refers to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act of 2021, which extended the abortion deadline to 24 weeks in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities.
- Believes that once a viable baby is present, the relief should not be one-sided, and the woman's right to bodily autonomy should not go beyond the Act.

Global Trend on Abortion Laws

- Globally, there has been a trend towards liberalisation of abortion laws and increased access to abortion services.
- Since the early 1990s, nearly 60 countries across the world have eased abortion laws to expand the grounds under which abortion is legal.
- Only four countries, namely the U.S., El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Poland have removed legal grounds for abortion during this time period.
- Most notably, the U.S. Supreme Court eliminated the constitutional right to abortion in 2022.
 - In June 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that institutionalised the right to abortion nationwide.
 - The 6-3 ruling of the US Supreme Court eliminated the constitutional right to choose abortion that existed for almost 50 years, clearing the deck for the states to severely restrict or completely ban the practice.
- Mexico's supreme court has decriminalised abortion nationwide in September 2023. Latin America has seen a trend towards loosening abortion restrictions that have been referred to as a "green wave".

DID YOU KNOW?

- The 2021 Act increased the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women, including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women like differently abled and minors.
- According to the 2021 Act, the opinion of only one registered medical practitioner will be required for the abortion of a foetus up to 20 weeks of gestation and of two for the termination of pregnancy from 20 to 24 weeks of gestation.
- The opinion of a state-level medical board is required for abortions over 24 weeks, in case of suspected foetal abnormalities.
- A confidentiality clause was added which said that the name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated cannot be revealed except to a person authorised by law.
- It also extended MTP services, under the clause of failure of contraceptive, to unmarried women to provide access to safe abortion based on a woman's choice, irrespective of marital status.



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10 YEARS OF CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was convened in Beijing, China on October 17-18.
- The conference also marked the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) championed by President Xi Jinping.

About BRI

- President Xi Jinping announced the Silk Road Economic Belt' during his visits to Kazakhstan in 2013.
- The BRI, often referred to as the New Silk Road, is a colossal network of infrastructure projects designed to facilitate trade, economic development, and cultural exchange.
- The BRI is a two-pronged plan: the overland Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road.
 - The overland Silk Road Economic Belt includes a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, highways, and streamlined border crossings, both westward—through the mountainous former Soviet republics—and southward, to Pakistan, and the rest of Southeast Asia.
 - The Maritime Silk Road is a sea route that connects China's coastal regions to Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Global Alternatives

- In the Donald Trump era, the United States and Japan initiated the “United States-Japan infrastructure investment alternatives in the Indo-Pacific region” to counter the BRI.
- The Joe Biden administration announced the 'Build Back Better World' (B3W) initiative that seems to have been reorganised as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, which aims to channelise private capital into climate change and energy security, health care and health security, digital technology, and gender equity.
- The G20 Delhi Summit posited yet another alternative in the form of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) that seeks to link India, West Asia, and Europe through railways and shipping lines.
- In addition to the trade connectivity, electricity and digital infrastructure as well as a pipeline for clean hydrogen export have been envisioned.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The project was first named the 'One Belt, One Road' but renamed as the BRI to convey a more open and inclusive initiative as opposed to a Chinese-dominated one.
- The Chinese government's white paper on BRI released this month (“The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future”) revealed that over 200 BRI cooperation pacts had been inked with over 150 nations. The document also stated that total two-way investment between China and partner countries from 2013 to 2022 touched \$380 billion.
- A Pakistani legislative report unearthed that while China cornered 91% of Gwadar port's revenue, Pakistan pocketed just 9%.
- China's Foreign Ministry said the country had signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations.
- Italy, the only Group of Seven nation in Belt and Road, has publicly criticised joining the initiative.

The Belt and Road Initiative



151 partner countries

5.1
billion

Combined population of all countries involved in BRI

\$41
trillion

Combined GDP of all countries involved in BRI

\$2.8
trillion

Trade between China and BRI countries in 2021

\$1
trillion

Total value of investments and construction projects in BRI countries

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RAFAH CROSSING

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt has opened recently for the first time since the Israel-Hamas war broke out in early October.

About Crossing

- The Rafah crossing is the southernmost exit point from the Gaza Strip, and it shares a border with Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.
 - The crossing is controlled by Egypt.
 - It is the only exit that does not lead to Israeli territory.
- There are only two other border crossings in and out of Gaza:
 - Erez is located in the north and is used by people in Israel.
 - Kerem Shalom, in the south, which is exclusively for commercial goods.
- Both Erez and Kerem Shalom controlled by Israel are currently closed.

Importance

- In response to the cross-border infiltration by Hamas fighters on October 7 that killed more than 1,400 Israelis, Israel imposed a total blockade of Gaza.
- The Jewish state shut down Erez and Kerem Shalom until further notice, leaving the Rafah border as the only way into and out of the Strip for people seeking to flee.
- It is also the only crossing point for humanitarian aid..



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INDIA'S SPACE ENDEAVOURS

WHY IN NEWS?

- In a significant development for India's space endeavours, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of the Gaganyaan and charted the future course of the country's space exploration ambitions.

Key Ambitions

- The Gaganyaan project envisages a demonstration of ISRO's human spaceflight capability by launching a human crew to an orbit of 400 km and bringing them safely back to earth by landing in Indian sea waters.
 - The Department of Space presented a comprehensive overview of the Gaganyaan Mission, including various technologies developed so far such as human-rated launch vehicles and system qualification.
 - Around 20 major tests, including 3 uncrewed missions of the Human Rated Launch Vehicle (HLVM3) are planned.
 - The first demonstration flight of the Crew Escape System Test Vehicle was successfully executed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on October 21, 2023.
- The establishment of an Indian-crafted, indigenous space station, known as the "Bharatiya Antariksha Station" (Indian Space Station) by 2035.
- Landing an Indian astronaut on the Moon by the year 2040.
 - In order to send the first manned mission to the satellite, the department is set to develop a roadmap which will encompass a series of Chandrayaan missions, the development of a Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), the construction of a new launch pad, setting up human-centric laboratories and associated technologies.
- Prime Minister also called upon Indian scientists to work towards interplanetary missions that would include a Venus Orbiter Mission and a Mars Lander.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The International Space Station (ISS), jointly developed and maintained by the United States, Russia, Canada, Japan, and European agencies, is the largest space station but is expected to be decommissioned by 2030 due to escalating costs and disagreement among partner countries on finances.
- China's Tiangong is the only other space station, with three astronauts on board, though it is only about 40% of the size of the ISS.
 - The Chinese space station has three modules—the Tianhe core module ("heavenly river" crew module and the laboratory cabin modules Wentian ("quest for heavens") and Mengtian ("dreaming of heaven"). It has been operational since late 2022.
- India became the 27th country to sign the nonbinding Artemis Accords.
- Artemis Accords were established by the U.S. State Department and NASA with seven other founding members: Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom in 2020 for setting common principles to govern civil exploration and use of outer space, the moon, Mars, comets, and asteroids, for peaceful purposes.
- Since India signed the Artemis Accords, the United States' endeavour to return to the moon, there are plans to send an Indian to the ISS in 2024.



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WHITE PHOSPHORUS MUNITIONS

WHY IN NEWS?

- Human Rights Watch (HRW) recently accused Israel of using white phosphorus munitions in Gaza and said that such weapons put civilians at risk of serious and long-term injury.

In the 2008-2009 Gaza War too, there were allegations that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck the Gaza Strip with sub-munitions containing white phosphorus. The Israeli government, which initially denied this, later acknowledged that it did use white phosphorus in 2009, but only in uninhabitable areas, for the purpose of signalling and marking.

What is White Phosphorus?

- White phosphorus is a pyrophoric that ignites when exposed to oxygen, producing thick, light smoke as well as intense 815-degree Celsius heat.
- Pyrophoric substances are those which ignite spontaneously or very quickly (under five minutes) when in contact with air.
- White phosphorus emits a distinct garlic-like odour.
- Under the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, the internationally agreed-upon system to standardize chemical hazard classification and communication, white phosphorus falls under "Pyrophoric solids, category 1", which includes chemicals that catch fire "spontaneously" when exposed to air. It is among the most unstable of pyrophoric substances.

Military Uses of White Phosphorus

- White phosphorus is dispersed in artillery shells, bombs, and rockets. It can also be delivered via felt (textile) wedges soaked in the chemical.
- Its primary military use is as a smokescreen — used to hide troop movement on the ground. The smoke acts as a visual obscurant.
- White phosphorus is also known to mess with infrared optics and weapons tracking systems, thus protecting forces from guided missiles.
- Munitions can either be ground-burst for more concentrated smoke, or air-burst in order to cover a larger area.
- White phosphorus can also be used as an incendiary weapon. According to HRW, US forces used white phosphorus munitions during the second battle of Fallujah in Iraq in 2004, to force concealed combatants to abandon their positions.

Legal Status

- White phosphorus munitions are not under a blanket ban, though their use is regulated under the International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
- It is not considered a chemical weapon because its operational utility is primarily due to heat and smoke, rather than toxicity. Thus, its use is governed by the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), specifically Protocol III, which deals with incendiary weapons. Palestine and Lebanon have joined Protocol III, while Israel has not ratified the protocol.
- While Protocol III prohibits the use of airdropped incendiary weapons in "concentrations of civilians", as per HRW, it has two significant loopholes.
 - First, it restricts some but not all use of ground-launched incendiary weapons where there are concentrations of civilians.
 - Second, the protocol's definition of incendiary weapons covers weapons that are "primarily designed" to set fire to and burn people, and thus arguably excludes multipurpose munitions such as those containing white phosphorus, which are considered to primarily be "smoking" agents.

Previous Uses

- Irish nationalists in the late 19th century first used white phosphorus munitions, in a formulation that became known as "Fenian fire" (Fenian was an umbrella term for the Irish nationalists).
- World War I saw extensive use of the chemical by the British and Commonwealth forces in phosphorus grenades, bombs, shells and rockets.
- These munitions have since been used in conflicts around the world, from the Normandy invasion in World War II to the US invasion of Iraq in 2004 and the long-drawn Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.
- Most recently, Russia was accused of using white phosphorus bombs during the invasion of Ukraine last year.





ROW OVER JAGANNATH TEMPLE'S TREASURE ROOM

WHY IN NEWS?

- As Assembly and General elections draw closer in Odisha, the demand to open the Ratna Bhandar (treasure room) of the Puri Jagannath Temple is growing louder again.
- The treasure room at the temple has not been unlocked for three decades.

About Ratna Bhandar

- The precious ornaments of sibling deities — Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra — given by devotees and erstwhile kings over centuries, are stored in the Ratna Bhandar of the 12th-century shrine.
- It is located within the temple and has two chambers—Bhitar Bhandar (inner chamber) and Bahara Bhandar (outer chamber).
- The outer chamber is opened regularly to fetch ornaments for the deities during the Suna Besha (golden attire), a key ritual during the annual Rath Yatra, and also during major festivals throughout the year.
- The inner chamber has not opened in the past 38 years.
- According to official sources, the last inventory of the Ratna Bhandar was made between May 13 and July 23, 1978. Though it was opened again on July 14, 1985, the inventory was not updated.

Jagannath Temple

- The Jagannath temple located in Puri, Odisha is a sacred temple devoted to Lord Jagannath along with his brother Lord Balabhadra and sister Devi Subhadra.
- It was constructed by a famous king of Ganga Dynasty Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva dating back to 12th century.
- It is known as the “White Pagoda” and one of the four pilgrimage sites of Char Dham Pilgrimage.
- It is an outstanding example of Kalinga architecture, featuring distinctive curvilinear towers, intricate carvings, and ornate sculptures.
- It is also called as 'Yamanika Tirtha' where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of 'Yama', the god of death, has been nullified in Puri due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.

Demands for Opening the Ratna Bhandar

Demands to open the Ratna Bhandar gained strength after the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the custodian of the 12th-century shrine, gave a requisition for repair/conservation of the chamber.

The Puri royal scion is also in favour of opening the Ratna Bhandar.

In August 2022, the ASI once again wrote to the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, seeking its permission to inspect the inner chamber of the Ratna Bhandar. It is yet to get the permission.

In the face of the growing demand, the temple managing committee in August 2023 recommended to the government that the Ratna Bhandar be opened during the annual Rath Yatra of 2024.



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MAHUA MOITRA CASH-FOR-QUERY CASE

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra appeared before the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee that has been probing the allegations of cash-for-query against her.

History of Ethics Committee

- A Presiding Officers' Conference held in Delhi in 1996 first mooted the idea of ethics panels for the two Houses.
- Then Vice President (and Rajya Sabha Chairman) K R Narayanan constituted the Ethics Committee of the Upper House on March 4, 1997, and it was inaugurated that May to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of members and examine cases of misconduct referred to it.
 - The Rules applicable to the Committee of Privileges also apply to the ethics panel.
- In the case of Lok Sabha, a study group of the House Committee of Privileges, after visiting Australia, the UK, and the US in 1997 to look into practices pertaining to the conduct and ethics of legislators, recommended the constitution of an Ethics Committee, but it could not be taken up by Lok Sabha.
- The Committee of Privileges finally recommended the constitution of an Ethics Committee during the 13th Lok Sabha.
- The late Speaker, G M C Balayogi, constituted an ad hoc Ethics Committee in 2000, which became a permanent part of the House only in 2015.

The Lok Sabha Ethics Committee, which hearing Nishikant Dubey's complaint against Mahua Moitra, last met on July 27, 2021, according to information on the Parliament website.

Since being established as an ad hoc entity more than two decades ago, the panel has heard several complaints, most of which have been for relatively light offences.

The members of the Ethics Committee are appointed by the Speaker for a period of one year.

Procedure for Complaints

- Any person can complain against a Member through another Lok Sabha MP, along with evidence of the alleged misconduct, and an affidavit stating that the complaint is not "false, frivolous, or vexatious".
 - If the Member himself complains, the affidavit is not needed.
- The Speaker can refer to the Committee any complaint against an MP.
- The Committee does not entertain complaints based only on media reports or on matters that are sub judice.
- The Committee makes a prima facie inquiry before deciding to examine a complaint. It makes its recommendations after evaluating the complaint.
- The Committee presents its report to the Speaker, who asks the House if the report should be taken up for consideration. There is also a provision for a half-hour discussion on the report.

Overlap with Privileges Committee

- The work of the Ethics Committee and the Privileges Committee often overlap.
- An allegation of corruption against an MP can be sent to either body, but usually, more serious accusations go to the Privileges Committee.
- The mandate of the Privileges Committee is to safeguard the "freedom, authority, and dignity of Parliament". These privileges are enjoyed by individual Members as well as the House as a whole.
- An MP can be examined for breach of privilege; a non-MP too can be accused of breach of privilege for actions that attack the authority and dignity of the House.
- The Ethics Committee can take up only cases of misconduct that involve MPs.





SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE (SBSTTA-25)

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, the 25th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-25) was held in Nairobi, Kenya to guide the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Key Points

- The meeting primarily focused on creating a progress monitoring mechanism, while also addressing the implications of assessments conducted by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC AR6), among other matters.
- The group finalized 15 key points for presentation at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- This approach aligns with the goals of the Convention, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and other global initiatives such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.
- Moreover, the meeting also emphasized the importance of utilizing the work of other multilateral agencies, including the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, to enhance scientific and technical guidance in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Article 25 of the Convention on Biological Diversity establishes an open-ended intergovernmental scientific advisory body known as the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to provide the Conference of the Parties (COP) and, as appropriate, its other subsidiary bodies, with timely advice relating to the implementation of the Convention.

About Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

- The Framework was adopted in December 2022 at the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- The framework consists of four goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030.
- The declaration made a reference to the '30 by 30' target which is a key proposal being debated at the COP15, that would afford 30% of the Earth's land and oceans protected status by 2030.
- The next Conference of the Parties will be held in 2024 and will serve as a platform to assess the targets and commitments that have been set for the Framework.





MARSQUAKE

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, scientists have revealed the causes of the largest recorded marsquake that happened in 2022 and detected by NASA's InSight lander.

Key Highlights

- The study ruled out the possibility that the marsquake was caused by a meteor impact.
- The quake had a magnitude of 4.7 and since its seismic signal was similar to previous quakes that were caused by meteoroid impacts, scientists initially believed that it might have been caused by an impact as well. This launched an international search for a fresh crater at the time.
- Space agencies like the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the European Space Agency, China National Space Administration, and the UAE Space Agency collaborated on a groundbreaking project to search for a crater on Mars.
- The search found no impact crater, leading to the conclusion that the marsquake resulted from internal tectonic forces, indicating increased seismic activity.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mars, the fourth planet from the Sun, takes its name from the Roman God of war.
- It is often referred to as the "Red Planet" due to its distinctive reddish appearance. This reddish colouration is primarily attributed to the presence of a significant amount of iron oxide, commonly known as rust, in its surface rocks and soil.
- Mars is the second smallest planet in our solar system after Mercury. It possesses two moons, known as Phobos and Deimos.
- The planet experiences extreme cold, with equatorial temperatures reaching 20°C and polar regions plunging as low as -140°C due to its greater distance from the sun.
- Mars is home to Olympus Mons, the tallest volcano in our solar system, roughly three times the height of Mount Everest.
- Mars is smaller than Earth but it has around the same land surface area as our planet because it has no oceans.
- NASA retired InSight in 2022 after four years of operations. In all, InSight's seismometer instrument detected 1,319 marsquakes.
- Earth's crust - its outermost layer - is divided into immense plates that continually shift, triggering quakes. The Martian crust is a single solid plate.
- The planet is still slowly shrinking and cooling, and there is still motion within the crust even though there are no active plate tectonic processes going on anymore. These faults can trigger quakes.

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Various Mars Missions

- India's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) or Mangalyaan (2013)
- ExoMars rover (2021) (European Space Agency)
- Tianwen-1: China's Mars Mission (2021)
- UAE's Hope Mars Mission (UAE's first-ever interplanetary mission) (2021)
- Mars 2 and Mars 3 (1971) (Soviet Union)

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CANADA RECALLS 41 DIPLOMATS FROM INDIA

WHY IN NEWS?

- Amid the ongoing standoff between India and Canada, the Canadian government announced it has recalled 41 diplomats posted in India, and their family members, on October 20.
- However, hours after Canada labelled India's call for diplomatic parity "contrary to international law", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) rejected Ottawa's characterisation of the move and insisted that New Delhi's action was fully consistent with the Vienna convention.

Background

- The move followed a row over Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's remarks in Canadian Parliament in September 2023. He had then claimed a potential Indian government link to the killing of pro-Khalistan separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada earlier this year — which India rejected, terming the claims to be "absurd" and "motivated".

Key Provisions

- One prominent example of such principles is that of diplomatic immunity. It's the privilege of exemption from certain laws and taxes granted to diplomats by the country in which they are posted.
 - It was framed so that diplomats can function without fear, threat or intimidation from the host country.
 - Diplomatic immunity flows from two conventions, popularly called the Vienna Conventions — the 1961 Convention and the Convention on Consular Relations, 1963.
- According to Article 29 of the Convention, diplomats are not subject to arrest or detention. The host country must accord the diplomatic agent the appropriate level of respect and is responsible for undertaking all necessary measures to prevent any form of harm or violation to the diplomat's person, liberty, or dignity.
- Article 11.1 of the Convention empowers the host country to establish reasonable and appropriate limits on the size of a foreign diplomatic mission, taking into consideration the prevailing conditions and circumstances in the host nation, as well as the unique requirements of the particular diplomatic mission.
- Article 9 of the Convention allows the receiving State to declare the head of the mission or any member of the diplomatic staff persona non grata or unwelcome without the need for an explanation, and this

What is the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations?

- The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), a United Nations treaty, was established to set some common principles and terms on how countries must treat each other's diplomatic representatives.
- It was adopted on 14 April 1961 by the United Nations Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities held at the Neue Hofburg in Vienna, Austria.

Today, 193 countries have ratified the convention, meaning they agree it should be legally binding on them. Ratification means that a country should seek approval for the treaty on the domestic level and enact a law in their country to give effect to it. India ratified it through the Diplomatic Relations (Vienna Convention) Act of 1972.



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THE NEW MADE-IN-INDIA EV CHARGING STANDARD

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has approved an indigenously developed AC and DC combined charging connector standard for light electric vehicles (LEVs) such as scooters, bikes, and rickshaws.
- Electric vehicle (EV) charging connector standards are conceptually similar to charging connector standards for mobile phones, such as the USB Type-C charger or Apple's lightning charger.

Key Points

- The new standard, ISI7017 (Part 2 / Sec 7): 2023 has been developed through collaboration among NITI Aayog, the Department of Science and Technology, electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy, and various other government and industry stakeholders.
- The indigenously developed charging standard is the first in the world that combines alternating current (AC) and direct current (DC) for LEVs.
- Combined AC and DC charging standards for electric four-wheelers are already in use around the world, like the Combined Charging System (CCS) standard that is widely used in Europe.
- A combined charging standard is attractive because of its interoperability — which means that it can be used by different kinds of EV models and charging infrastructure providers.

Global Experience

- China, the world's largest electric car market in terms of both sales and vehicles on the road, uses a national standard for EV charging connectors that is called GB/T.
- The US does not have a national standard, but EV makers have been collaborating to push for some degree of standardisation. For instance, Ford and General Motors (GM) are adopting the North American Charging Standard (NACS) developed by Tesla, so that their EVs can access Tesla's network of fast chargers across North America.
- In Europe, CCS is the predominant charging connector standard and is also a European Union (EU) requirement for EV charging networks.
- Japan's predominant charging standard is called CHAdeMO, a charging standard developed in 2010.
 - CHAdeMO is being phased out in North America, where the Nissan Leaf and Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV are among the few EVs that are only compatible with CHAdeMO charging stations.

Need

- In India, EV makers are not mandated to follow a specific standard for charging connectors.
- Thus, electric two-wheeler makers such as Ola Electric, Ather Energy, and Ultraviolette Automotive, all use different charging standards for their EVs, much like how Apple phones until recently used a lightning port and Android phones use a USB Type-C port.
- Unlike with phones, however, too many charging standards for EVs make it difficult for public charging stations to cater to each individual type, thus adding to range anxiety — the fear that the vehicle would run out of charge, and there will be nowhere to recharge it.
- Even now, although the new approved standard fixes the problem of different standards for AC and DC charging by creating a combined standard, it does not mandate EV makers to use a uniform standard that can help address range anxiety and promote faster adoption of EVs.





INDIA'S INTENTION TO HOST THE OLYMPIC GAMES 2036

WHY IN NEWS?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi publicly declared India's intention to host the Olympic Games, preferably in 2036, during the opening ceremony of the 141st International Olympic Committee (IOC) session in Mumbai on October 14.
- He also mentioned India's ambition to host the Youth Olympics in 2029 although the quadrennial event is currently scheduled for 2030.

Procedure of Selection

Old System

- Cities submit a letter of interest to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to start a multi-year and multi-step evaluation process.
- The bidding cities would complete a series of questionnaires, evaluated by the IOC.
- Hosts were selected seven years in advance after scrutiny from the IOC Evaluation Commission and a series of inspections of all venues.

New Approach

- In 2013, Thomas Bach took over as the IOC president and inducted the Olympic Agenda 2020, as a roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement, approved by the 2014 IOC session.
- One part of the agenda dealt with a new process for host city selection, called the 'new norm', that was officially adopted during the 2019 IOC session in Lausanne.
- The new process placed emphasis on three main aspects — flexibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness — with the motto being 'The Games adapt to the region, the region does not adapt to the Games'.
- With respect to flexibility, the seven-year rule was done away with and there has been greater flexibility in deciding the

Paris and Los Angeles were selected through a tripartite agreement in 2017 that assured both countries hosting rights in 2024 and 2028 respectively, giving Los Angeles 11 years to prepare. Brisbane too was named host for the 2032 edition in 2021, 11 years ahead.

- There is now a two-stage process — a continuous dialogue and a targeted dialogue — without any fixed deadlines, to assess, discuss and guide potential hosts.

Sustainability and Cost-effectiveness

- In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the infrastructure and to avoid any public backlash, hosts are encouraged as far as possible to use existing and temporary venues.
- Any new venues built must be in line with existing developmental plans and have a long-term justification irrespective of the Games.
- All editions of the summer/winter/youth Olympic Games from 2030 onwards must also adhere to the IOC's climate-positive commitment.

Other Potential Bidders

- Besides India, the other confirmed nations interested are Mexico (spread across the four cities of Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey and Tijuana), Indonesia (at the new capital of Nusantara which is still under construction), Turkey (Istanbul) and Poland (Warsaw).
- India is yet to decide the city/cities where the Games will be organised.
- Of these, Mexico is the only one to have previously hosted the Games in 1968.
- Other potential bidders include Egypt, Seoul, China, Qatar, Hungary, Italy, Denmark, Canada and Germany.

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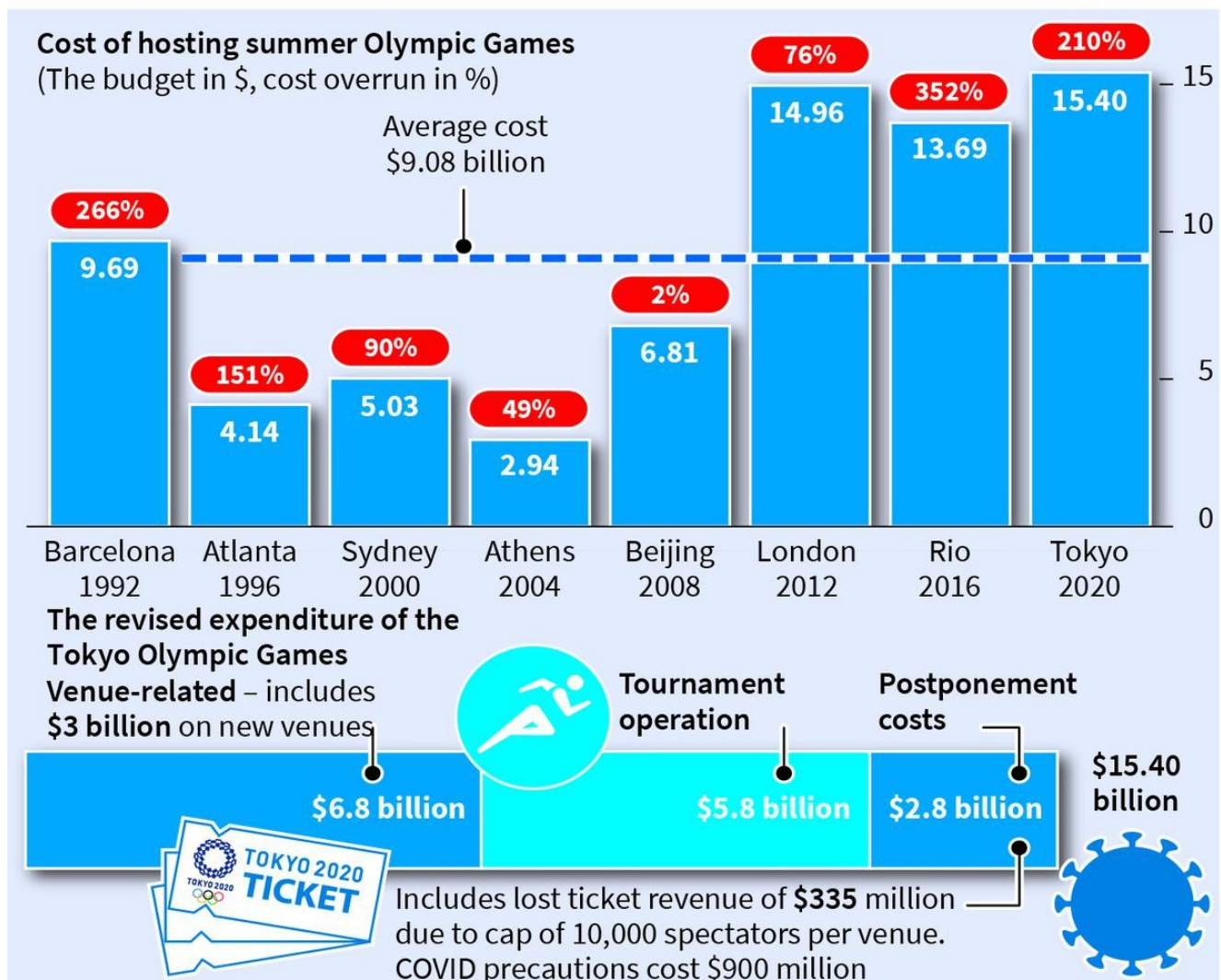


DID YOU KNOW?

- Only three Asian countries have ever hosted the Olympics — China, South Korea and Japan, with Japan hosting the games twice in 1964 and 2020.
- The Olympics include: Summer Games, Winter Games, Youth Olympics Games.
- The first modern Olympics were held in Athens, Greece in 1896 based on the plan of Pierre de Coubertin.
- The Olympic rings of different colors (blue, yellow, black, green, and red) represent the five continents of the world.
- Summer Olympics 2024 will be held in Paris, France.
- Winter Olympics 2026 will be held in Milan-Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.
- Summer Olympics 2028 will be held in Los Angeles, USA.
- Summer Olympics 2032 will be held in Brisbane, Australia.
- India hosted the Asian Games in 1951 and 1982.
- India hosted the Commonwealth Games in 2010.
- Aichi-Nagoya (Japan) will host the 20th Asian Games in 2026.
- Doha and Riyadh will host the next two Games in 2030 and 2034 as part of a dual host-city solution.

The price of the Olympics

With India openly declaring its willingness to host the 2036 edition of the Olympic Games, a look at the cost of the Games as they become bigger and better each year



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ONE NATION, ONE STUDENT ID INITIATIVE

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, several state governments requested schools to seek parental consent for the creation of a new student identity card known as the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR).
- This is part of the 'One nation, One Student ID' initiative of the Union government, stemming from the new National Education Policy of 2020.

About

- APAAR, which stands for Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry, is envisioned as a special APAAR ID system for all students in India, starting from childhood.
- Under the initiative, each student would get a lifelong APAAR ID, making it easy for learners, schools, and governments to track academic progress from pre-primary education to higher education.
- APAAR would also serve as a gateway to Digilocker, a digital system where students can store their important documents and achievements.

How does APAAR ID Work?

- The goal behind introducing APAAR is to make education hassle-free and reduce the need for students to carry physical documents.
- Every individual will have a unique APAAR ID, which will be linked to the Academic Bank Credit (ABC), which is a digital storehouse that contains information of the credits earned by students throughout their learning journey.
- If the student changes schools, whether within the state or to another state, all her data in the ABC gets transferred to her new school just by sharing the APAAR ID.
- To sign up for APAAR, students will have to provide basic information such as name, age, date of birth, gender, and a photograph. This information will be verified using their Aadhar number.
- Students will need to sign a consent form, and they can choose to either accept or decline sharing their Aadhar number and demographic information with the Ministry of Education for creating the APAAR ID.
- For minors, parents will have to sign the consent form, allowing the Ministry to use the student's Aadhar number for authentication with UIDAI.
- Registration for creating an APAAR ID is voluntary, not mandatory.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020



Universalization of Education from pre-school to secondary level with **100% GER in school education by 2030**



GER in higher education to be raised to **50% by 2035**; **3.5 crore seats** to be added in higher education

No rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools

NEP 2020 will bring **2 crore** out of school children back into the main stream

Vocational Education to start from **Class 6 with Internships**

New 5+3+3+4 school curriculum with **12 years of schooling** and **3 years of Anganwadi/Pre-schooling**

Teaching upto at least **Grade 5** to be in **mother tongue/regional language**

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WORLD'S LARGEST 'GHOST PARTICLE' DETECTOR

WHY IN NEWS?

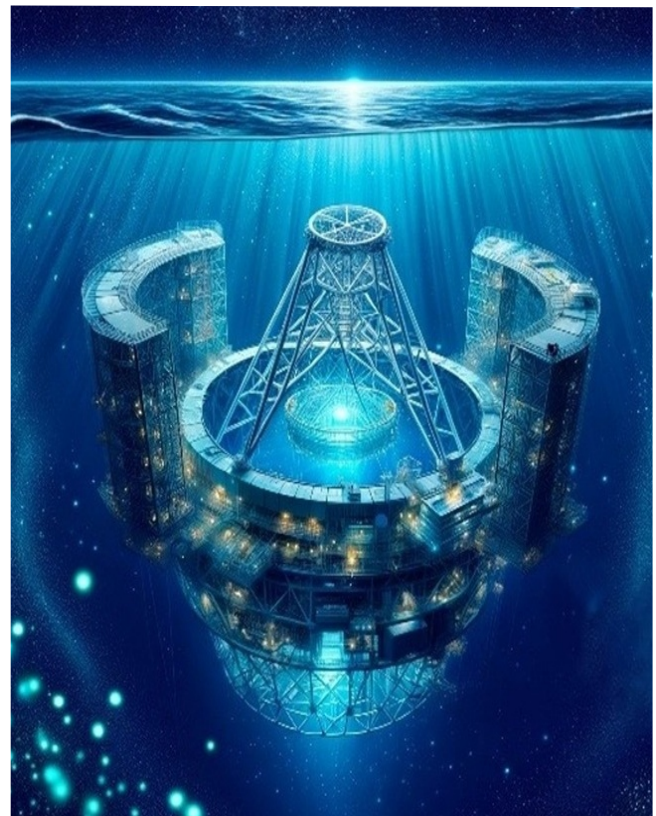
- China is building an enormous, largest-of-its-kind telescope in the western Pacific Ocean. Its job will be to detect “ghost particles”, also known as neutrinos.

What is a Ghost Particle?

- Atoms make up our universe. Anything that has mass — you, me, the book on the shelf next to you and the cup of coffee you're drinking from — is made up of atoms.
- For a long time, scientists thought atoms were the smallest particle in existence — before discovering that they are themselves comprised of even tinier “subatomic” particles: protons (which have a positive charge), electrons (negative charge) and neutrons (no charge).
- Neutrinos are a type of electron but, like neutrons, they do not have any charge.
- They are among the most abundant particles in our universe — with trillions of neutrinos passing through you at any given second — and also among the tiniest.
- Neutrinos were long believed to be massless until scientists found evidence that they do have a very small mass.
- Neutrinos' weak charge and almost nonexistent mass have made them notoriously difficult for scientists to observe. They can only be “seen” when they interact with other particles.
- The rarity of interactions with other particles makes them almost impossible to track. That's why they're called ghost particles — the vast majority skirt around undetected.

Detection of Ghost Particles

- Ghost particles rarely interact with other particles. Sometimes they interact with water molecules, which is why China is building its ghost molecule telescope underwater.
- Scientists have observed ghost particles in fleeting instances when the particles create byproducts after travelling through water or ice.
- These “muons” create flashes of light that can be detected by sophisticated underwater telescopes and offer one of the few ways to study the energy and source of neutrinos.
- Right now, the largest neutrino-detecting telescope is the University of Madison-Wisconsin's “IceCube” telescope.
- Situated deep in the Antarctic, the telescope's sensors span around 1 cubic kilometre.
- China says its new telescope, called “Trident”, will span 7.5 cubic kilometres in the South China Sea.
- Scientists say that its size will allow it to detect more neutrinos and make it “10,000 times more sensitive” than existing underwater telescopes.



Significance

- Scientists think they might have played a role in the early universe, right after the big bang. But this is just a hypothesis, nothing they've been capable of proving yet.
- It's thought that a sound understanding of neutrinos will help solve a number of scientific mysteries — like the origin of the mysterious cosmic rays, which are known to contain neutrinos.

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

QUICK FACTS

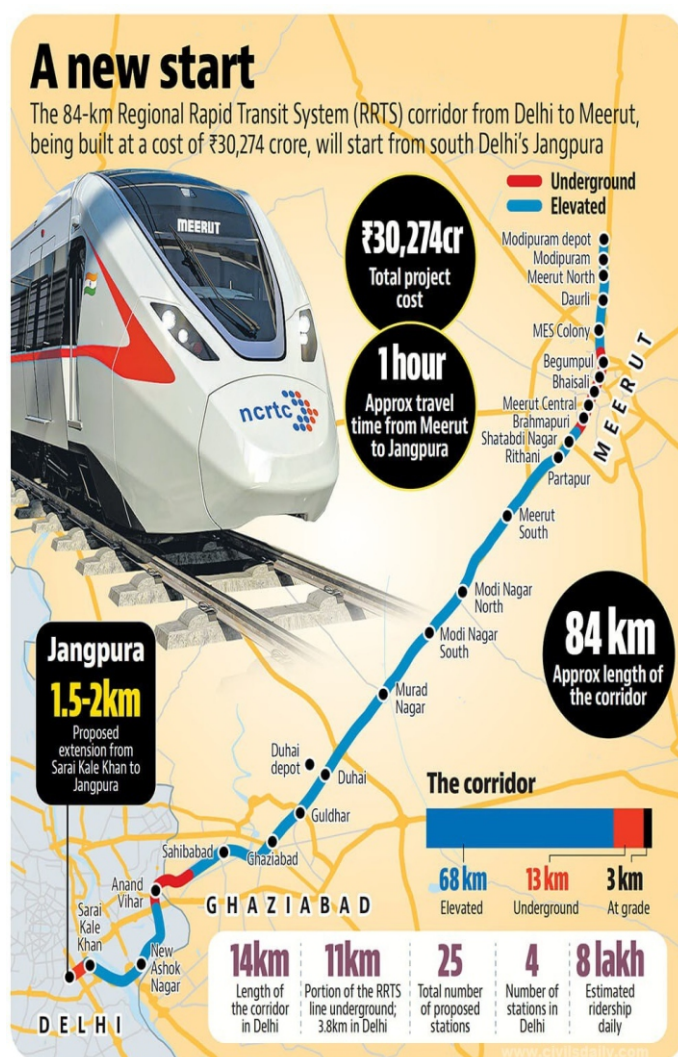


1. The Government has introduced a special program, the **Green Credit Programme**, where an individual or entity can earn green credit and trade it on a dedicated exchange. Green Credit refers to a unit of an incentive provided for a specified activity; delivering a positive impact on the environment. This programme is a follow-up action of the **'LiFE'-(Lifestyle for Environment)** campaign.
2. The **Ministry of Jal Shakti** has announced the commencement of the **5th National Water Awards (NWA)** for 2023. The objective of the National Water Awards is to encourage the stakeholders to adopt a holistic approach toward water resource management in the country as surface water and groundwater play a significant role in the water cycle. In order to embrace these objectives, the 1st National Water Awards were introduced in 2018.
3. The **Ministry of Finance** has conferred the esteemed **'Navratna' status** upon two Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) under the Ministry of Railways, Ircon International Limited (**IRCON**) and RITES Ltd (**RITES**). The Navratna status was first introduced in 1997. There are currently 16 Navratna Companies in India.
4. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the **Green Energy Corridor (GEC) Phase-II - Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS)** for a 13 GW Renewable Energy Project in **Ladakh**. It is aimed to be set up by FY 2029-30. Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) will be the Implementing Agency. The project will contribute to achieving the target of 500 GW of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuels by the year 2030.
5. The **Vizhinjam International Seaport Project**, India's first deepwater transshipment port, has gained attention recently as the first cargo ship arrived at the port. It is an ambitious project taken up by the Government of **Kerala**. A transshipment deepwater seaport is a port that can handle large ships that carry cargo from one place to another.
6. The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare inaugurated the **16th Agricultural Science Congress (ASC) in Kochi**, Kerala in order to promote Sustainability in the Agri-Food System.
7. Indian Prime Minister unveiled **'Amrit Kaal Vision 2047'**, the long-term blueprint for the Indian maritime blue economy while inaugurating the **Global Maritime India Summit 2023 in Mumbai**. It includes initiatives like Advanced Mega Ports, an International Container Trans-shipment Port, island development, Expanded inland waterways, and multi-modal hubs for efficient trade. Global Maritime India Summit is an annual meeting of the Indian and international maritime community to address key industry issues and exchange ideas to bring the sector forward.
8. India has witnessed its first encounter with **Tilapia Parvovirus (TiPV), in Tamil Nadu** causing a significant impact on the country's aquaculture. This virus has been reported in farm-bred tilapia, a freshwater fish species, and has raised concerns due to its high mortality rates.
9. **REC Limited** (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited) a **Maharatna** Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power, has received the **Golden Peacock Award in Risk Management** for its commitment to implementing effective risk assessment strategies. The Awards were established by the Institute of Directors (IOD), India in 1991.
10. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first leg of the **Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)**, also known as **Namo Bharat**, India's first mass rapid system dedicated to regional connectivity, on October 20. Capable of running at speeds up to 180 km/hour, trains on the first section will eventually cut the journey time between Delhi and Meerut to less than an hour.
11. **Yard 12706 (Imphal)**, the third Project 15B stealth guided missile destroyer, being built at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), was delivered to the Indian Navy on 20 October, 2023. The Project is a follow-on of the Kolkata class (Project 15A) destroyers commissioned in the last decade. Imphal follows in the wake of her predecessors Indian Naval Ships Visakhapatnam and Mormugao commissioned in the past two years.
12. **India** will set up a "high-powered committee" to explore the development of large language models or LLMs, tools that harness artificial intelligence to create applications that can understand and process human language.
13. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on **October 24** greeted the personnel of the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police**, which guards India's border with China, on its **raising day** and hailed their "indomitable spirit and valour" while protecting the nation. The ITBP was raised in the aftermath of the 1962 Chinese aggression.





14. More than a year after the Criminal Procedure Identification Act (CrPI) was passed by Parliament, the Centre is all set to roll out '**DNA and Face Matching' systems** at 1,300 police stations across the country. The law that enables police and Central investigating agencies to collect, store and analyse physical and biological samples, including retina and iris scan of arrested persons, was passed by the Parliament in April 2022.
15. A state-of-the-art wind tunnel, a first-of-its-kind in the Indian Army, the **first Vertical Wind Tunnel (VWT)**, offers a controlled environment to enable military trainees to enhance their skills by simulating real-life free fall conditions, has been inaugurated at a training school in Himachal Pradesh. The VWT is designed to improve the Combat Free Fall (CFF) skills of armed forces personnel, creating a controlled environment to simulate real-life freefall conditions. The VWT functions by generating specific air velocities, replicating different CFF conditions.
16. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has concluded a seven-year study on the male contraceptive Reversible Inhibition of Sperm Under Guidance (RISUG), finding it to be safe and effective. RISUG is a non-hormonal injectable contraceptive that provides long-lasting sterility with complete reversibility.
17. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the inclusion of the **Jamrani Dam Multipurpose Project of Uttarakhand** under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana-Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (PMKSY-AIBP) of Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. PMKSY was launched during the year 2015-16.
18. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **37th edition of the National Games in Panaji, Goa**. The National Games are being held in Goa for the very first time. The motto for the 37th National Games of India is "Get Set Goa," which is similar to the catchphrase used in the first National Games of India in 1924 which was "Get Set Play."
19. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **7th Edition of the India Mobile Congress 2023** at Bharat Mandapam in **New Delhi**. The theme of the India Mobile Congress (IMC), the largest telecom, media, and technology forum in Asia, was 'Global Digital Innovation'. During the program, the Prime Minister awarded 100 '5G Use Case Labs' to educational institutions across the country.
20. The **Department of Consumer Affairs in collaboration with IIT (BHU)** launched **Dark Patterns Buster Hackathon 2023**. The deliverables of the Hackathon were to design & prototype innovative apps or software-based solutions such as browser extensions, plugins, add-ons, and mobile applications.
21. The **16th Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference & Exhibition 2023** was conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs through the Institute of Urban Transport (India) and with the support of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd from 27th – 29th October 2023 in New Delhi.
22. Central Vigilance Commission observed the **Vigilance Awareness Week 2023** from 30th October to November 5, 2023, with the theme "Say no to corruption; commit to the Nation." CVC was established in 1964 based on recommendations of the Santhanam Committee on the



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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

QUICK FACTS



1. Physicists in Germany have made a groundbreaking discovery by developing a **quantum engine**, referred to as the '**Pauli engine**,' which can convert the energy difference between two quantum states of a group of atoms into useful work. This innovation has the potential to advance our understanding of quantum thermodynamics and could have applications in the development of more efficient quantum computers.
2. Four years after India walked out of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** agreement, neighbours **Sri Lanka** and **Bangladesh** are now considering their chances of membership in the 15-nation trading bloc. The RCEP negotiations began in 2012. It was officially signed in November 2020, marking a major milestone in regional trade. It was entered into force on January 1, 2022. 15 member countries, are China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Australia, and ASEAN nations(Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam).
3. **Mahsa Amini**, the 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman who died in police custody in Iran last year, has been posthumously awarded the **European Union's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought**. The award was started in 1988 to recognize individuals or groups who defend human rights and fundamental freedoms.
4. The Sustainable Development Goals Summit (**SDG Summit**) was held in **New York, the US**. The Global leaders expressed apprehension regarding the slow progress in achieving SDGs during the SDG Summit. The leaders stressed the importance of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) in achieving the 2030 Agenda, emphasizing efficient use of all financial flows, public and private, for sustainable development.
5. The World has celebrated the **78th anniversary of the United Nations (UN)** on **24th October 2023**. United Nations Day is celebrated every year on October 24. The UN has 6 components which were established in 1945 such as the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice, and UN Secretariat.
6. The Mid Planning Conference (MPC) of **MILAN 24** (Multilateral Naval Exercise - 2024), to be hosted by the Indian Navy at Visakhapatnam from 19 - 27 Feb 24, was conducted by the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) with participating friendly foreign Navies. The Flagship event, MILAN is a biennial multilateral naval exercise, which was incepted by the Indian Navy in 1995. Originally conceived in consonance with India's 'Look East Policy, MILAN expanded in ensuing years with India's 'Act East policy' and Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative, to include participation from other Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs).
7. The joint bilateral training exercise "**Exercise Harimau Shakti 2023**", between the Indian & Malaysian Army was conducted in Umroi Cantonment, India. The Malaysian Army contingent comprises troops from the 5th Royal Battalion of the Malaysian Army. The Indian contingent is being represented by a Battalion of THE RAJPUT REGIMENT. The last edition of the Exercise was conducted in Pulai, Kluang, Malaysia in November 2022.
8. **International Migration Outlook 2023**, a report on international migration patterns was released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (**OECD**) to analyze the migration trends worldwide.
9. The United Nations University- Institute for Environment and Human Security (**UNU-EHS**) released the **Interconnected Disaster Risks Report 2023**. The report said that climate change and overuse of resources have put the world on the brink of six interconnected tipping points that "could trigger abrupt changes in our life-sustaining systems and shake the foundation of societies." UNU-EHS defined these "tipping points" as the moment at which a given socio-ecological system is no longer able to buffer risks and provide its expected function.
10. The European Union (EU) and the US along with diplomats from Germany, France, and Italy are calling on **Kosovo and Serbia** to restart their dialogue to reduce the escalating tensions between the two nations. Kosovo and Serbia both aspire to join the EU, but they have been told to resolve their differences first.
11. Scientists have unearthed an ancient landscape beneath the **East Antarctic Ice Sheet**, revealing that the world's southernmost continent was once teeming with rivers and possibly even forests. This revelation challenges the common perception of Antarctica as a perpetually frozen wasteland. The landscape, which appears to have been formed by rivers at least 14 million years ago,

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predates the initial growth of the East Antarctic ice around 34 million years ago.

12. From 2015 to 2019, the world lost at least 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land each year, according to the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) data**. This is twice the size of Greenland, it added. Land degradation across all regions of the world is becoming worse at an astonishing rate, showed UNCCD's first data dashboard compiling national figures from 126 countries launched October 24, 2023.
13. The Union Cabinet has approved a memorandum of cooperation between **India and Japan** on a **Semiconductor Supply Chain Partnership**. Japan has become the second Quad partner after the US to sign an agreement with India for the joint development of the semiconductor ecosystem and maintain the resilience of its global supply chain.
14. On 24 Oct 23, the **European Union (EU) and India conducted their first joint naval exercise** in the Gulf of Guinea. The exercise followed the third meeting of the EU-India Maritime Security Dialogue on 5 Oct 23 in Brussels. During the exercise, Indian Navy's INS Sumedha, an Offshore Patrol Vessel, was joined by three EU Member States' ships in the Gulf of Guinea: Italian Navy Ship ITS Foscari, French Navy Ship FS Ventôse, and Spanish Navy Ship Tornado.
15. **World Polio Day** is celebrated every year on **October 24** to create awareness around the importance of polio vaccination to protect children. In 2002, the WHO European Region was declared polio-free and from that time on October 24 every year, World Polio Day is celebrated annually. On January 13, 2023, India completed 12 polio-free years which is considered a remarkable achievement; the last polio case in India was detected in 2011.
16. A **Qatar** court sentenced eight Indians — all former personnel of the Navy — on charges of espionage. The Indian nationals are all employees of Doha-based Dahra Global, and were working in their private capacity with Dahra Global to oversee the induction of Italian small stealth submarines U212.
17. Indian Army and Indian Air Force contingent comprising 120 personnel departed for Kazakhstan to take part in

the 7th edition of Joint Military '**Exercise KAZIND-2023**'. The Exercise will be conducted at Otar, Kazakhstan from 30th October to 11th November 2023. The Joint Exercise between India and Kazakhstan was instituted as 'Exercise PRABAL DOSTYK' in the year 2016. After the second edition, the Exercise was upgraded to a company-level exercise and renamed as 'Exercise KAZIND'. The Exercise has been further upgraded as a Bi-service Exercise this year by including the Air Force component.

18. A recent study published in the journal Science sheds light on the catastrophic **earthquakes** that struck **Turkey and Syria in February 2023**. Earth's crust is divided into tectonic plates, where fault lines form due to interactions such as collisions, separations, or sliding. The East and North Anatolian Fault Lines, stretching over 700 km and 1,500 km, played a significant role in the Turkey earthquakes.
19. **India** has asked the World Trade Organization (**WTO**) members to work on a clear definition of e-commerce trade in goods and services as it would help provide developing countries a policy space to make decisions on the fast-growing sector. At present, there is a difference of understanding about the subject between developed and developing member countries of the WTO.
20. **Cyclone Hamoon**, a very severe Bay of Bengal cyclone, which made landfall as a cyclonic storm near midnight on October 24-25, 2023 south of Chattogram, Bangladesh, exhibited highly unusual behavior, changing categories four times within 24 hours before landfall. The cyclonic storm has been named 'Hamoon', a name given by Iran.

78th anniversary of the United Nations

The United Nations, established in San Francisco through a treaty signed by 51 countries, officially commenced its operations on October 24, 1945

193 MEMBER COUNTRIES

Headquarter **NEW YORK**
(Offices: Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi)

<p>MAIN ORGANS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Assembly Security Council Economic and Social Council Trusteeship Council International Court of Justice UN Secretariat 	<p>PERMANENT MEMBERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> US CHINA RUSSIA UK FRANCE
--	--

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

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

QUICK FACTS



1. The nine-day-long annual **festival of flowers Bathukamma** was celebrated across **Telangana**. It is a colourful floral festival celebrated by women with exotic local flowers. During the festival, women make 'boddemma' (a deity of Gowri – mother Durga – made with earthly mud) along with Batukamma and immerse it in the pond. This helps reinforce the ponds and helps it retain more water.
2. **Tamil Nadu** government handed over appointment orders to **15 Odhuvars (among them five are women)**, who were assigned to Shaivite temples in the Chennai region as they serve the deities by singing the hymns and praise. Odhuvars sing devotional hymns in Tamil Nadu's Hindu temples but are not priests. They are in the service of Lord Shiva by singing his praise from Thirumurai in Saivite temples. They sing devotional hymns but do not enter the sanctum sanctorum.
3. **Dhordo** has been conferred the prestigious title of **Best Tourism Village** by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (**UNWTO**). Dhordo received this title at the Best Tourism Village - 2023 award ceremony organized by the UNWTO at Samarkand in Uzbekistan. Dhordo, a village located in the Kutch district of Gujarat, is well-known for being the gateway to the Great Rann of Kutch. This is also the same village where Rann Utsav was launched back in 2005.



Dhordo, Kutch

Sole Indian Village to get honored as
"Best Tourism Village" by UNWTO

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TEST ZONE



PASSAGE - 1

Signalling a roadmap for India's future space ambitions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has “directed” the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to set up an India-crafted, indigenous space station by [1] and land an Indian on the moon by [2]. This followed a review of preparations for the Gaganyaan mission — India's first manned mission to space, scheduled for 2025 — on October 17.

Mr. Modi chaired the meeting to assess the progress of the Gaganyaan mission and outline the future of Indian space exploration. The Department of Space (DoS), under which ISRO functions, presented the state of preparedness and technologies developed for Gaganyaan.

The DoS will make a roadmap for moon exploration, which will consist of a “series of Chandrayaan missions, developing a new generation launch vehicle, constructing a new launch pad, setting up human-centric laboratories and associated technologies,” the PMO statement said.

Mr Modi also “called upon” scientists to work towards interplanetary missions, including a space vehicle to orbit Venus and one that will land on Mars.

Experts have said that a manned mission to the moon and a space station will require large, sustained investments and significant contributions from the private sector. While space stations and moon missions involving the U.S. and Russia were a product of military space races, future space stations will need to follow a different template that would require extensive testing and thus, high costs, an expert connected to the ISRO told The Hindu on condition of anonymity.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: “PM Modi “directs” ISRO to land man on moon by [2]”, by Jacob Koshy, The Hindu]

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

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 2030 | C 2040 |
| B 2035 | D 2045 |

Q.2 Which year has been replaced with '[2]' in the passage above?

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 2030 | C 2040 |
| B 2035 | D 2045 |

Q.3 The International Space Station (ISS), jointly developed and maintained by the United States, Russia, Canada, Japan and European agencies, is the largest but is expected to be decommissioned by –

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 2030 | C 2040 |
| B 2035 | D 2045 |

Q.4 In June 2023, India became the 27th country to sign the nonbinding Artemis Accords. Since India signed the Artemis Accords, the United States' endeavour to return to the moon, there are plans to send an Indian to the ISS in –

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 2024 | C 2026 |
| B 2025 | D 2027 |

Q.5 China's Tiangong is the only other space station, with three astronauts on board, has been operational since late –

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 2019 | C 2021 |
| B 2020 | D 2022 |

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

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PASSAGE - 2

As Assembly and General elections draw closer in Odisha, the demand to open the Ratna Bhandar (treasure room) of the Puri Jagannath Temple is growing louder again. The treasure room at the temple has not been unlocked for three decades.

The precious ornaments of sibling deities — Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra — given by devotees and erstwhile kings over centuries, are stored in the Ratna Bhandar of the 12th century shrine. It is located within the temple and has two chambers—Bhitar Bhandar (inner chamber) and Bahara Bhandar (outer chamber).

The outer chamber is opened regularly to fetch ornaments for the deities during the Suna Besha (golden attire), a key ritual during the annual Rath Yatra, and also during major festivals throughout the year. The inner chamber has not opened in the past 38 years.

Demands to open the Ratna Bhandar gained strength after the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the custodian of the 12th-century shrine, gave a requisition for repair/conservation of the chamber. There are apprehensions that cracks have emerged in its walls that could endanger the precious ornaments stored there.

Servitors, devotees, and temple managing committee members have asked for the reopening to ascertain the safety of the structure and its contents, and to make an inventory. The Puri royal scion is also in favour of opening the Ratna Bhandar.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "Row over Jagannath temple's treasure room: Why has it not been unlocked in 38 years, why demands to open now", by Sujit Bisoyi, The Indian Express]

Q.1 The Jagannath temple, a sacred temple devoted to Lord Jagannath along with his brother Lord Balabhadra and sister Devi Subhadra, was constructed by a famous king of Ganga Dynasty –

- | | |
|--|--|
| A Gajapati Narasingha Deva I | C Gajapati Bhanu Deva IV |
| B Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva | D Jagannatha Gajapati Narayana Deo II |

Q.2 The Jagannath temple is known as the “White Pagoda”, while the _____ is known as the “Black Pagoda”.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| A Virupaksha Temple, Hampi | C Sun Temple, Konark |
| B Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram | D Hoysaleswara temple, Halebidu |

Q.3 The Jagannath temple is one of the four pilgrimage sites of the Char Dham Pilgrimage of India. Who among the following established four Mathas in the four corners of India at Shingeri, Puri, Dwaraka and Badrinath?

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| A Adi Shankara | C Elango Adigal |
| B Nimbarkacharya | D Sittalai Sattanar |

Q.4 The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala in _____ have been added to the UNESCO World Heritage list. This inclusion marks the 42nd UNESCO World Heritage Site in India.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| A Andhra Pradesh | C Kerala |
| B Karnataka | D Odisha |

Q.5 On October 8, 2023, the world's second-largest Hindu temple outside India was inaugurated in New Jersey, United States. The largest temple complex in the world is located in –

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| A Yogyakarta, Indonesia | C Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates |
| B Gombak, Malaysia | D Ankgor Wat, cambodia |

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

Answers

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PASSAGE - 3

Just like on Earth, the surface of Mars sometimes vigorously shakes and unsurprisingly, that is called a marsquake. The largest ever marsquake recorded in history happened in 2022 and scientists now finally know the reason behind it.

A study published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters on Tuesday rules out the possibility that the marsquake was caused by a meteor impact. The quake had a magnitude of 4.7 and since its seismic signal was similar to previous quakes that were caused by meteoroid impacts, scientists initially believed that it might have been caused by an impact as well. This launched an international search for a fresh crater at the time.

Mars is smaller than Earth but it has around the same land surface area as our planet because it has no oceans. This huge amount of ground—about 144 million square kilometres—had to be surveyed. For that, the researchers sought contributions from the European Space Agency, (ESA) the Chinese National Space Agency, (CNSA) the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the United Arab Emirates Space Agency.

This could be the first time that all missions in orbit around the red planet have collaborated on a single project, according to the University of Oxford.

After months of comprehensively searching on the Martian surface, the researchers announced on Tuesday that no crater was found. They instead concluded that the marsquake was caused by the release of tectonic forces from within the planet's interior. This could mean that Mars is more seismically active than we understand it to be.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "Scientists reveal source of most powerful marsquake in history", The Indian Express]

Q.1 Mars is the second smallest planet in our solar system after _____. It possesses two moons, known as Phobos and Deimos.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| A Venus | C Saturn |
| B Mercury | D Neptune |

Q.2 _____ InSight lander has discovered the largest quake ever recorded on Mars, measuring 4.7 on the magnitude scale.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A ESA's | C JAXA's |
| B CNSA's | D NASA's |

Q.3 Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), India's first interplanetary mission to planet Mars was launched in –

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A 2017 | C 2013 |
| B 2020 | D 2023 |

Q.4 World Science Day for Peace and Development is celebrated every year on –

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| A 10 November | C 12 April |
| B 11 February | D 13 June |

Q.5 Which space agency recently announced that its oxygen-generating experiment, called MOXIE, that accompanied the Perseverance rover has successfully completed its mission and generated oxygen on Mars, also known as Red Planet?

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| A ESA | C CNSA |
| B NASA | D JAXA |

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

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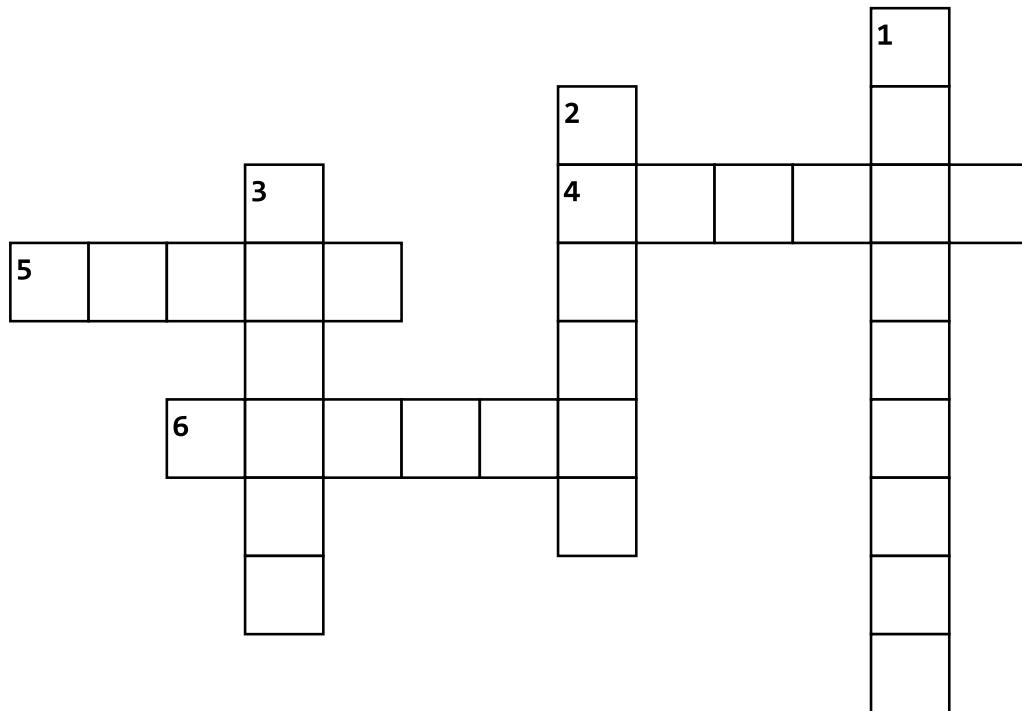
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CROSSWORD CORNER



CROSSWORD - 1



Across

4. Name of the cyclone which is given by Iran
5. Country became the second Quad partner to sign an agreement with India for semiconductor
6. The joint bilateral exercise between India and Kazakhstan

Down

1. World Polio Day
2. Declared as Best Tourism Village by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation
3. Place where Green Energy Corridor (GEC) Phase-II will be set up

Answers

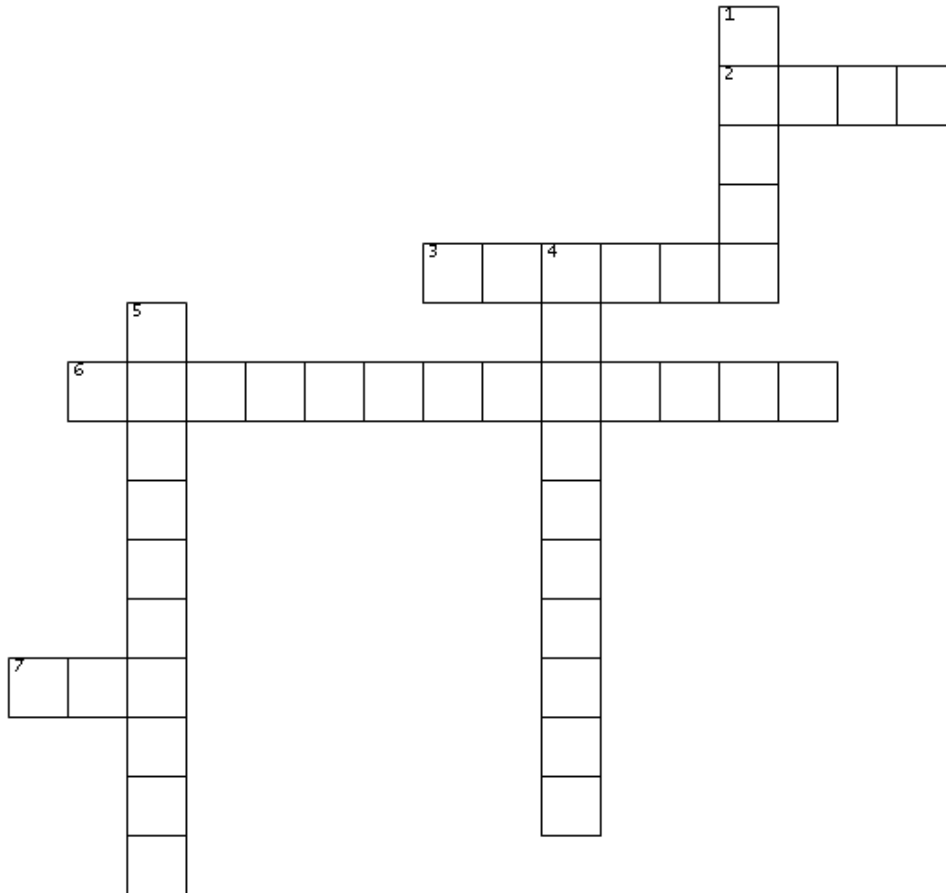
6	KAZIND	3	Ladakh
4	Japan	2	Dhordo
3	Hamoon	1	24October

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CROSSWORD - 2



Across

2. Released the International Migration Outlook 2023
3. Global Maritime India Summit 2023
6. The joint bilateral training exercise between the Indian & Malaysian Army
7. 37th edition of the National Games

Down

1. 16th Agricultural Science Congress (ASC)
4. Winner of European Union's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought
5. India's first mass rapid system

Answers

4	MahsaAmini
3	Mumbai
2	OECD
1	Kochi
7	Goa
6	Harimaushakti
5	Namobharat

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