

## National and International Weekly Current Affairs 25 to 31 March 2024

### National News

#### Enforcement directorate

Arvind Kejriwal has been detained by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

ED:

- The ED is a **government agency in India** tasked with enforcing economic laws and combating economic crimes.
- It operates under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.**
- The ED's focus includes **investigating and prosecuting cases** involving **money laundering, foreign exchange violations, corruption, and economic offenses.**
- Its **primary goal** is to reduce the generation and circulation of black money and ensure compliance with laws related to foreign exchange and prevention of money laundering.
- The agency was originally established as an **"enforcement unit" within the Department of Economic Affairs on May 1, 1956**, to handle violations under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947.
- **In 1957, this unit was officially renamed the Enforcement Directorate.**

The **main objective** of the Enforcement Directorate is to enforce three key Acts of the Government of India:

- **the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA); the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA); and the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 (FEOA).**
- The Enforcement Directorate is **headquartered in New Delhi** and is headed by the Director of Enforcement.
- It has regional offices in **Mumbai, Chennai, Chandigarh, Kolkata, and Delhi**, each headed by a **Special Director of Enforcement.**

#### Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024

The Union environment ministry recently announced the **Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024.**

Key points:

#### Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972

- Elephants, both **wild and captive**, are categorized as **Schedule 1 species** under the **WPA, prohibiting their capture or trade.**
- **Section 12 of the WPA permits the translocation of Schedule I animals** for specific purposes like education, scientific research, and population management without harming wild animals.
- Captive elephants, due to their **historical roles, fall under a special category but are subject to strict transfer rules.**
- **Section 40(2) of the WPA mandates written permission from the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW) for the acquisition, possession, and transfer of captive elephants.**
- An amendment in **2021 allowed elephant transfers for religious or other purposes.**
- **The Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024, detail procedures for intra and inter-state transfers.**
- **State and UT CWWs** have authority to approve or reject such transfers, considering factors like the owner's ability to maintain the elephant and its welfare.
- Transfers require the **elephant's genetic profile in the MoEFCC's electronic monitoring application.**
- Transfer applications must be submitted to the **deputy conservator of forests (DCF)**, who conducts inquiries and verifications before forwarding to the CWW for approval or rejection.

### Maharashtra State News

#### Monthly grant to World War-II veterans and war widows by Maharashtra Government.

- The State Department of Sainik Welfare **increases the monthly grant for World War II veterans from Rs 6,000 to Rs 11,000,**
- This will benefit around **16,000 war widows and 16 veterans in Maharashtra, aged in their 90s.**
- **This amount is the highest in the country.**

About:

- During World War II (WWII), the **British government recruited numerous Indian**

soldiers to fight on various global battlefields from 1939 to 1945.

- Post-war, these soldiers were repatriated without receiving any financial benefits or recognition.
- After India's independence, they were not granted ex-servicemen status or monetary assistance.
- Other states like Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Uttarakhand provide monthly grants ranging from Rs 6,000 to Rs 9,000 to war veterans.
- The government has implemented the decision since January.

### Maharashtra Cash Crop Production Triples Under High Density Planting System (HDPS)

- Over 550 cotton farmers from Nagpur and Wardha districts achieved a threefold increase in cash crop production.
- Implemented in Maharashtra during 2023-24, the high density planting system (HDPS) pilot project facilitated this surge.
- The central government offered a ₹16,000 per hectare incentive to encourage farmers to adopt HDPS, aiming to boost production.
- Previously, Vidarbha farmers typically yielded 6-10 quintals of cotton per acre using conventional methods.
- Notably, a 30-year-old farmer from Wardha attained the highest yield of 19 quintals per acre.

#### HDPS:

- HDPS was introduced in India by the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), and it has shown promising results in various states, including Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu.
- High Density Planting System (HDPS) is an innovative cultivation method for cotton that aims to increase yield by optimizing the use of available resources such as land, water, and nutrients. The key features of HDPS include:
  - Narrower plant-to-plant spacing
  - Compact cotton varieties
  - Higher plant population
  - Efficient resource use
  - Reduced weed pressure

### World Tuberculosis day

- Every year on March 24th, World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is observed worldwide to raise awareness about the devastating health, social, and economic consequences of TB, and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic.
- This day commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacteria that causes tuberculosis, a disease that still affects millions globally.

#### It aims to:

- **Raise Awareness:**
  - a. World TB Day serves as a platform to educate individuals, communities, policymakers, and healthcare professionals about the signs, symptoms, transmission, prevention, and treatment of tuberculosis.
- **Mobilize Resources:**
  - b. World TB Day mobilises resources from governments, international organisations, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to support TB research, innovation, and implementation of evidence-based interventions aimed at ending the TB epidemic.
- **Empower Communities:**
  - c. Empowering communities and engaging affected individuals as advocates and agents of change are key components of TB control efforts. World TB Day encourages community involvement, active participation,
- **Promote Partnerships:**
  - d. Collaboration and partnerships among governments, non-governmental organisations, academia, communities, and affected individuals are essential to achieve the ambitious targets set for ending TB.

#### Theme:

- The theme for World Tuberculosis (TB) Day 2024 is "Yes! We can end TB!"

## Dr Pragya D Yadav is new director-in-charge at National Institute of One Health , Nagpur

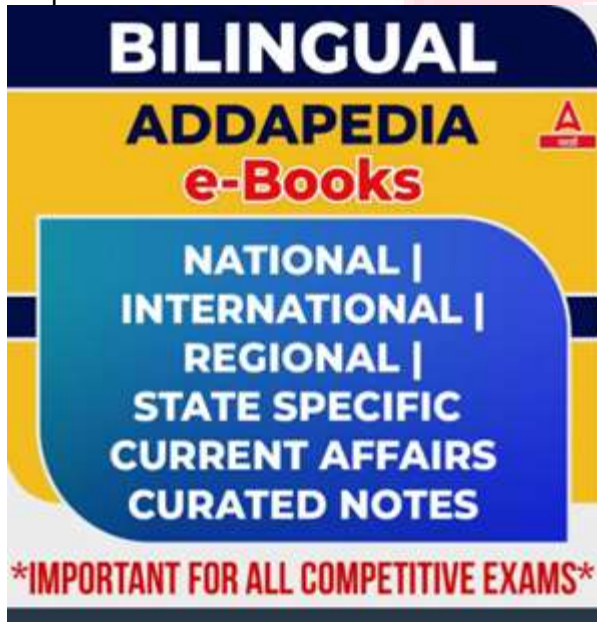
- **Dr Pragya D Yadav**, senior scientist at the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology, **has been appointed the director-in-charge of the National Institute of One Health, Nagpur.**

### About:

- Dr. Yadav, renowned for research on communicable diseases and viral infections, including COVID-19, will oversee NIOH Nagpur alongside her role at ICMR-NIV Pune.
- She played a pivotal role in detecting India's first COVID-19 cases and led the team behind Covaxin, the country's first indigenous vaccine.
- Dr. Yadav will wield administrative and financial authority as Director-in-Charge of NIOH Nagpur, aligning with ICMR's efforts to enhance biosafety infrastructure nationwide through the PM-ABHIM program.

### Note:

- The National Institute of One Health (NIOH) focuses on interdisciplinary research at the intersection of human, animal, and environmental health.
- It aims to address global health challenges, promote collaboration between sectors, and develop holistic approaches to disease prevention and control.



## Thane's Hariyali Lake

- **Thane's Hariyali Lake** is the source of pride for Chendani Koliwada residents.

### About:

- **Hariyali Lake** (meaning "greenery") in Thane dries up in summer, but monsoons bring water that hides under a blanket of new plants. **This seasonal cycle inspired its name.**
- **The lake also supports a local fishery with 10-15 fish varieties sold in Wagle Estate.**
- **First Indian train used Thane's Hariyali Lake for water.**

### Note:

- Under the **AMRUT 2.0** goal, **beautification projects have been under progress.**
- Residents are concerned about water quality during **Thane's Hariyali Lake beautification and urge better maintenance.**
- They believe the lake has potential to be a water source after proper filtration.

## Discovery of Two Temple Bases in Ambajogai Excavation

- The **Maharashtra Archaeology Department** made a **significant discovery during excavation activities near Ambajogai in Beed district.**
- Two temple bases were **unearthed within the Sakaleshwar temple premises, also known as the Barakhambi temple, which dates back to 1228 AD and was constructed by the Yadava dynasty.**

### Key points:

- The excavation, which commenced on March 15, involved the **creation of 14 trenches, each measuring 100 square feet.**
- **Amot Gote, Assistant Director of State Archaeology, stated that among the findings were the bases of two temples, one identified as Kholeshwar, named after a Yadava general.**
- Evidence such as bricks and sculpture fragments, including hands and feet, **indicate that the temples once possessed shikhars.**
- The project also includes plans for a survey of ancient monuments in **Ambajogai, with the intention of granting the area the status of a "heritage village."**

- Ambajogai, historically known by various names including Amrapur, Jayantipur, and Jogaiambe, was also referred to as Mominabad during the Hyderabad Nizam Era.
- The town boasts other notable monuments such as Hatthikhana, Dasopant Temple, and Yogeshwari temple, enriching its historical and cultural significance.

### **Maharashtra Govt. announced 1 day paid leave for workers on poll duty**

- The Maharashtra government has announced one day of paid leave for workers, government officials, and employees on polling days within the state.
- The decision aims to facilitate the exercise of voting rights, as per a government circular issued on Tuesday.
- With elections scheduled in five phases, this initiative ensures individuals have ample opportunity to participate in the electoral process.
- Additionally, the leave provision extends to individuals residing outside their constituency, enabling them to vote in their respective areas.
- The holiday entitlement encompasses various sectors, including industrial groups, corporations, companies, institutions, as well as industrial undertakings falling under the purview of the industry department.

#### **Note:**

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) on March 16 announced general elections to the 18th Lok Sabha as well as four states - Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim.
- The Lok Sabha polls will be held in seven phases over the months of April and May, with over 90 crore eligible citizens voting for 543 seats of the Lower House. Results will be declared on June 4.

### **Power Demand Peaks to 3,500 MW, Marking the Highest Yet**

- Power demand rises in maharashtra, which is all-time highest.

#### **About:**

- Peak power demand in Mumbai surged to 3,500 MW on Tuesday, marking a notable increase.
- Across Maharashtra, the overall peak demand exceeded 28,000 MW, making it the second occurrence within a week and the highest peak demand recorded this year.
- The previous similar peak demand was observed on March 22.
- Sources indicate that the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) procured power of up to 10,000 MW from the exchange at prevailing market rates.
- However, power generation from thermal plants across the state did not surpass 7,300 MW on Tuesday.

#### **Note:**

- Maharashtra's largest thermal power plant is the Chandrapur Super thermal power station.
- It has the capacity of producing 2920 MW of power.
- Five generators of 500 MW capacity and two generators of 210 MW are present at this power plant.
- Here, water is sourced from Chargaon and Erai dams, while the fuel supply is sourced from the nearest coal mines.

### **Wind Monitoring Safety Devices to Be Installed Along Bullet Train Corridor**

An initiative has been launched to install wind monitoring safety devices, known as anemometers, at 14 locations spanning the 508 km corridor.

#### **About:**

- The National High-Speed Rail Corridor Ltd (NHSRCL) is taking proactive measures to address strong winds along the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail corridor.
- Anemometers are devices designed to track wind speeds, ensuring enhanced passenger safety and operational efficiency once the Bullet train service commences.
- According to NHSRCL officials, Bullet trains will adjust their speed when wind speeds fall within the range of 72 to 130 kmph.
- These 14 locations include five in Maharashtra and nine in Gujarat, strategically positioned to monitor wind patterns effectively.



- In Maharashtra, installations will be **situated near Desai Khadi, Ulhas River, Bangla Pada in Thane, Vaitarna River, and Dahanu.**
- Anemometers serve as Disaster Prevention Systems, providing real-time wind speed data **ranging from 0 to 252 kmph and covering 0 to 360 degrees.**
- The Operation Control Centre (OCC) will oversee wind speed monitoring using anemometers at various locations, ensuring timely adjustments in train speeds.
- Additionally, earthquake monitoring devices will also be deployed along the route to monitor seismic activity.
- **Seismometers will be strategically placed in traction sub-stations and switching posts, with six inland seismometers earmarked for installation in earthquake-prone areas across both states.**

#### Note on Bullet Train:

- **Mumbai–Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Corridor (MAHSR) or Mumbai–Ahmedabad HSR** is an under-construction high-speed rail line, which will connect Mumbai, the **financial hub of India, with Ahmedabad, the largest city in the state of Gujarat.** When **completed**, it will be India's first high-speed rail line.
- Union Railway Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** addressed the **Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit** earlier when he declared the **construction on the bullet train project will be done by 2026.**

#### World Theatre Day

- **World Theatre Day** raises the importance of theatre arts, how they play an important role in the field of entertainment and the changes that theatre brings to life

#### About:

**International Theatre Institute (ITI)** was initiated in **1961** to celebrate **World Theatre Day** across the **world** and the value and importance of theatre. The goals of World Theatre Day, as with International Dance Day are:

- To highlight the **importance of art forms around the world.**
- **To make people aware of the importance of the value of art form.**
- To enable the dance and theatre communities to promote their work on a broad scale. To

make opinion leaders aware of the value of these forms and support them.

- **To enjoy the art form for its own sake.**

#### Theme:

- The theme for World Theatre Day 2024 is **'Theatre and a Culture of Peace'.**

#### **Kitchen Gardens Thrive in Over 24,000 Government Schools Across Maharashtra**

- Over 24,000 govt schools in Maha run kitchen gardens

#### Key points:

- Over the past year, **24,741 government schools in Maharashtra have established kitchen gardens on their premises.**
- Students are responsible for maintaining these gardens under the guidance of their teachers, and the produce is **utilized for school meal preparations.**
- A competition will be launched by the state education department to recognize the best kitchen gardens across schools statewide.
- **In the 2023-24 period, 46,946 schools in Maharashtra participated** in the Union government's kitchen garden scheme, with a budget allocation of approximately **Rs 20 crore under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2019.**
- The Union ministry of education has provided guidelines for planning kitchen gardens, specifying suitable plants, including vegetables and fruits, for cultivation.

#### **Discovery of Four New Gecko Species in the Sahyadri Region.**

- Researchers from Shivaji University, Kolhapur (SUK) and **Thackeray Wildlife Foundation** have found **four new species** of wild geckos in Northwest Maharashtra.
- **These geckos belong to the genus Cnemaspis and are known for their territorial behaviour.**
- They are found in a small area and prefer cooler climates, **restricting their occurrence to favourable habitats.**
- These newly **discovered geckos have only been found within their native range during research expeditions.**
- The findings have **been published in the international journal Zootaxa under the guidance of Dr. Sunil Gaikwad.**

**Note:**

- Geckos are reptiles and are found on all the continents except Antarctica. These colourful lizards have adapted to habitats from rainforests, to deserts, to cold mountain slopes.

**Maharashtra ATS chief, a 26/11 hero, selected to lead NIA**

- **Sadanand Date, a 57-year-old IPS officer recognized for his pivotal role during the 26/11 attacks**, has been appointed as the new director general of the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)**, the premier counter-terrorism agency in India.
- Currently serving as the director general of the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), Date expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to join NIA, considering it an honour.
- Date led the operation to apprehend **Ajmal Kasab and his mentor Ismail Khan at Cama Hospital during the 26/11 attacks**, sustaining injuries in the process.
- Despite being **wounded, Date led the covert operation in November 2012 to transfer Kasab from Arthur Road Jail to Yerwada Jail in Pune**, where the terrorist was eventually executed.
- Notably, during his tenure as the **Superintendent of Police in Bhandara**, Date played a significant role in reintegrating misguided youth involved in **Naxal activities back into mainstream society, achieving notable success such as the surrender of a Naxal along with an AK-47**, a first in the state.

**Villagers Rally Against 'Third Mumbai' Plan, Threaten Massive Protest**

- Villagers in **Uran, Panvel, and Pen areas of Raigad district oppose the proposed 'Third Mumbai' township**.
- **Submitted objections to the government, resisting land acquisition for the project**.
- Threatened **massive agitation involving lakhs if notification is not withdrawn**.
- State government issued notifications on **March 4, handing over 124 villages around Atal Setu Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link for development to NTDA**.

- Villagers responded within the 30-day period given by the government.
- **Initially planned a massive morcha, reduced due to code of conduct**.
- Warnings of lakhs converging to protest if plan proceeds.
- **Objections submitted under "MMRDA Virodhi Shetkari Samiti, Raigad"** by gram panchayat members, social activists, and political leaders at Konkan Bhavan office.
- **Raised slogans against the plan and MMRDA**.

**Note on Third Mumbai:**

- Urban Development Department (UDD) seeks public input on the proposed Third Mumbai from 124 affected villages.
- Third Mumbai primarily encompasses areas influenced by the newly operational Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), also known as Atal Setu.
- Anticipated economic growth from MTHL prompts the state government to incorporate surrounding regions into the Third Mumbai plan.
- UDD invites suggestions and objections to ensure inclusive development in the affected areas.
- MTHL's impact on regional and state-level economic development drives the government's decision to leverage its potential.

**Bombay High Court Appoints 11 Permanent Judges.**

- **Eleven additional judges were elevated to permanent positions at Bombay High Court**.
- Swearing-in ceremony held in the Central Court Hall of the Bombay High Court building.
- **High Court judges from Goa, Nagpur, and Aurangabad benches participated virtually**.
- Justices **Kishore Chandrakant Sant, Kamal Khata, Sharmila Deshmukh, Sandeep Marne, Gauri Godse, Rajesh Shantaram Patil, and Arif Doctor** sworn in at the **Principal Seat**.
- **Justice Valmiki S.A. Menezes** sworn in at the **Goa Bench**.
- **Justice Arun Pedneker** sworn in at the **Aurangabad Bench**.
- Justices **Urmila Sachin Joshi-Phalke and Bharat Pandurang Deshpande** sworn in at the **Nagpur Bench**.

## Pune's Water Crisis

- Pune, facing a deepening water crisis, witnesses a concerning situation as its four main dams approach critically low levels.

### Key points:

- **Khadakwasla reservoir:** Currently holds 1.07 TMC, which is 54.39% of its total storage.
- **Panshet reservoir:** At 48.10% capacity with 5.12 TMC.
- **Temghar reservoir:** Dwindles at 9.11% capacity, holding only 0.34 TMC.
- **Warasgaon dam:** Fairing slightly better at 53.40% capacity, with 6.85 TMC of water.

### Impact:

- **Borewells in Pune have dried up due to the diminishing groundwater levels.**
- Residents face a severe water shortage, resorting to water tankers for daily needs.
- Manjri area residents bear the brunt with exorbitant charges from tanker owners, exacerbating their difficulties.

## Sinhagad Fort to Implement Plastic Ban

- The Junnar forest department has decided to ban plastic at Sinhagad Fort, following the **successful implementation at Shivneri Fort.**
- This decision, effective from June 5, aims to preserve the sanctity of the fort and protect the environment.

### About:

- **Sinhagad is an ancient hill fortress** located at around **49 km southwest of the city of Pune, India.**
- Previously known as **Kondhana**, the fort had been the site of many battles, most notably the **Battle of Sinhagad in 1670.**
- It is located in the Pune district in Maharashtra.

## Sambhajnagar District to Have 45 Model Polling Stations

- Sambhajnagar district is set to have 45 model polling stations for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

### Key points:

- Among these, **18 polling stations will be exclusively managed by female staff**, while 18 will be **run by youth staff**. The remaining nine stations will be operated by **staff with Disabilities (PwD).**
- District collector Dilip Swami highlighted that **model polling stations will offer additional**

**amenities to enhance the voting experience beyond the basic facilities available at regular polling stations.**

- Aurangabad central and Aurangabad west will each host five model polling stations, with five more in Kannad, Gangapur, Vaijapur, Sillod, Paithan, and Phulambri. Additionally, three stations will be set up in the Aurangabad east assembly segment.

## Two SUK researchers get patent for energy device

- Two researchers, **Dr. Sagar Delekar and Swapnajit Mulik, from Shivaji University Kolhapur (SUK)** were granted a patent by the government on Thursday for their energy storage device utilizing nano-composites.

### Key points:

- The device aims to enhance the capacity of supercapacitors through cathodes made from nanocomposite-based materials.
- Materials such as nickel cobaltite, cobalt oxide, and porous carbon have been utilized for these supercapacitor devices.
- The nano-composite is expected to enhance device efficiency, potentially revolutionizing the energy sector.
- Dr. Delekar highlighted the device's cost-effectiveness and its potential in energy conservation, offering solutions to societal energy challenges.

## Focus on National Education Policy (NEP) in 2024-25

- Pune's steering committee, led by Nitin Karmalkar, plans **changes to the National Education Policy (NEP) in 2024-25**, focusing on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) courses.
- They aim to emphasize **ancient knowledge like mathematics, science, medicine, philosophy, arts, languages, and more.**

### Key points:

- The **steering committee for NEP 2020** implementation in Maharashtra observed that some higher educational institutes were teaching **"religion, jingoism, and blind hero-worship" under the IKS course subjects.**
- Changes are planned to address this issue, with a focus on improving the quality of IKS courses.

- A sub-committee has been formed to **outline dos and don'ts for the IKS curriculum, ensuring it aligns with the goals of NEP 2020.**
- Nitin Karmalkar emphasized that **IKS should focus on imparting ancient knowledge of Indian civilization, such as mathematics, science, medicine, astronomy, architecture, philosophy, arts, languages, literature, and culture.**
- A new circular issued by the state's higher education department allows students to choose a maximum of three subjects in the first year of their undergraduate program and decide on their major and minor subjects in the following year.

### International News

#### Operation Indravati

- In response to the recent turmoil in **Haiti, the Indian government has launched Operation Indravati to evacuate its citizens from the violence-stricken country to the neighboring Dominican Republic.**

#### Key points:

- Haiti has been grappling with a state of emergency triggered by recent violent attacks.
- Haiti, a **Caribbean country**, has plunged into chaos due to gang warfare.
- Gang control in Haiti's capital has **reached 80%, according to the UN**, with fighting ongoing in the remaining areas.

**Capital:** Port-au-Prince

### Economy News

#### Exchange-traded funds

- The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has instructed mutual fund companies to halt new investments in **schemes that invest in overseas exchange-traded funds (ETFs) from April 1, 2024.**
- SEBI's decision stems from the fact that investments in these foreign ETFs are nearing the **mandated limit of \$1 billion.**

#### About:

- An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is a type of **security that tracks an index, commodity, bonds, or a basket of assets, similar to an index fund.**

- Unlike regular mutual funds, **ETFs are traded like common stocks on stock exchanges.**
- The price of an ETF changes throughout the day as it is bought and sold on the stock exchange.
- The trading value of an **ETF is based on the net asset value of the underlying stocks it represents.**
- ETFs are known for their **high daily liquidity and low fees compared to mutual fund schemes**, making them appealing to individual investors.
- They are **also considered more tax efficient.**
- There are **five main types of ETFs: equity ETFs, bond ETFs, commodity ETFs, international ETFs, and sectoral/thematic ETFs.**

### Summits & Conferences News

#### Nuclear Energy Summit

- World leaders convened in **Brussels** on 21st March for the **inaugural Nuclear Energy Summit**, emphasizing **nuclear energy's role in tackling global challenges like reducing fossil fuel usage, enhancing energy security, and stimulating economic development.**

#### Key points:

- Organised jointly by the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Belgium.**
- Co-chaired by the **Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo** and the **Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi**, the Summit will be the highest-level meeting to date exclusively focused on the topic of nuclear energy.
- The Summit follows **nuclear energy's landmark inclusion** in the Global Stocktake during the **UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai in December 2023.**
- Aligned with the launch of the **IAEA's Atoms4NetZero initiative.**

#### India's Statement:

- India is set to have nuclear energy a significant share in the electricity mix **by the year 2047** when India celebrates **100 years of independence.**



As a medium-term target, it is set to achieve **tripling nuclear power generation capacity by 2030** from around 7.5 GW at present.

### Defense News

#### Samudra Paheredar

- Indian Coast Guard ship **Samudra Paheredar**, a specialized pollution control vessel, arrived at Manila Bay, Philippines on Sunday for a three-day visit.

#### Purpose of Visit:

- Demonstration of **ICG Marine Pollution Response capabilities**.
- Shared concern and resolve towards **marine pollution in the ASEAN region**.
- Bolstering bilateral cooperation with the **Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)**.
- The ICG ship is on an **overseas deployment to ASEAN countries** namely the **Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei** from 25 March to 12 April 2024.
- The deployment is the **third in a row by the Indian Coast Guard to ASEAN countries**.
- Earlier in the year 2023, ICG **pollution control vessels visited Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia** as part of the initiative.

#### Samudra Paheredar Overview:

- Stationed on the **East Coast of India in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**.
- Under the Command of Deputy Inspector General **Sudhir Ravindran**.
- Successfully undertaken various **Coast Guard operations including Pollution Response, IMBL/EEZ surveillance, counter-transnational crimes, and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR)**.

### Ranks & Reports News

#### India Employment Report 2024

- The **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** recently released the **India Employment Report 2024**, shedding light on the **country's employment landscape**.

- The report highlights **grim employment trends, sectoral imbalances, and pervasive informal sector dominance**.

#### Key Findings:

##### Deteriorating Employment Indicators (2000-2018)

- India witnessed a decline in crucial labor metrics, reflecting a challenging employment scenario.
- Youth unemployment remains a **significant concern, with nearly 83% of the unemployed population comprising young individuals**.
- The proportion of **unemployed educated youth almost doubled from 35.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2022, signaling a skill-job mismatch**.

##### Slight Improvements Amid Economic Distress (Post-2019)

- Key labor market indicators like **LFPR, WPR, and UR showed a slight improvement after 2019**, but their sustainability remains questionable.
- **Sectoral Imbalances and Informal Sector Dominance**
- Despite higher growth in non-farm employment, the sector struggles to absorb workers adequately, leading to underemployment.
- **Informal employment persists, engaging nearly 90% of the workforce**.
- **Contractualization** is on the rise, with a small **percentage of regular workers benefitting from long-term contracts**, contributing to job insecurity.

The report underscores the need for addressing systemic challenges, aligning skills with job market demands, and promoting formal sector growth to foster a more robust employment environment in India.

### Science and Technology News

#### PUSHPAK Viman

- The Pushpak, also known as the **Reusable Launch Vehicle Technology Demonstrator (RLV-TD)**, is **India's first uncrewed flying testbed** for this ambitious project that aims to **significantly reduce payload delivery costs to low Earth orbit**.
- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has announced a successful landing

experiment as part of its ongoing efforts to develop **reusable space launch vehicles**.

#### Project Cost:

- The **total cost of the Pushpak (RLV-TD) project was approximately ₹95 crore**.

#### Objectives of the Project:

- **Primary Objective:** Develop a TSTO reusable launch vehicle to achieve an 80% reduction in payload delivery costs to low Earth orbit.
- **Testing Objectives:** Evaluate key technologies such as hypersonic flight, autonomous landing, powered cruise flight, and air-breathing engine propulsion.

#### CoViNet

- WHO has launched **CoViNet, a global network for coronaviruses**, to coordinate **global expertise and capacities for early and accurate detection**, monitoring, and assessment of SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV, and other novel coronaviruses.

#### Key points:

- CoViNet is a network of **36 global laboratories from 21 countries across all 6 WHO regions**, with expertise in **human, animal, and environmental coronavirus surveillance**.
- CoViNet expands on the **initial focus of the WHO COVID-19 reference laboratory network**, established during the early days of the pandemic, to now include a broader range of coronaviruses such as MERS-CoV and potential new coronaviruses.
- Representatives of the laboratories met in **Geneva on 26 – 27 March to finalize an action plan for 2024-2025**, aimed at better equipping WHO Member States for early detection, risk assessment, and response to coronavirus-related health challenges.
- The CoViNet meeting brings together **global experts in human, animal, and environmental health**, using a comprehensive One Health approach to monitor and assess coronavirus evolution and spread.
- **Impact on WHO's Work:** Data generated through CoViNet will guide the **work of WHO's Technical Advisory Groups on Viral Evolution (TAG-VE) and Vaccine Composition (TAG-CO-VAC)**, ensuring that

global health policies and tools are based on the latest scientific information.

#### Miscellaneous News

#### Bima Sugam

- The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has approved the establishment of **Bima Sugam—an online insurance marketplace**—for purchasing, selling, and servicing insurance policies, as well as settling claims.

#### About:

- **Bima Sugam is an e-commerce platform** for insurance companies to sell their products.
- It will onboard all **companies offering life and non-life insurance products under one roof**.
- Bima Sugam aims to provide an **'end-to-end'** digital journey for policyholders, including buying insurance policies, renewals, claim settlements, portability, and grievance redressal.
- The marketplace serves as a one-stop solution for all insurance stakeholders, promoting transparency, efficiency, and collaboration across the entire insurance value chain.

#### Atlantic “Ring of Fire”

A recent study conducted by scientists in **Portugal** has **uncovered a subduction zone beneath the Gibraltar Strait** between **Spain and Morocco**, which could potentially **lead to the Atlantic Ocean's gradual disappearance in the distant future**.

#### Key Findings:

- The study has revealed that the **African plate is slowly pushing beneath the Eurasian plate**, initiating a process that may take an estimated **20 million years to reach its final stage**.
- The African plate is currently in the early stages of subduction beneath the Eurasian plate, **causing a gradual narrowing of the Gibraltar Strait**.
- As the process continues, a new subduction system called the **"Ring of Fire"** will form in the Atlantic.
- The **Ring of Fire will initially extend approximately 125 miles** and could eventually grow to over 500 miles in length, ultimately resulting in the **closure of the Atlantic Ocean**.

### Ring of Fire:

- The "Ring of Fire" is a chain of tectonic plates that collide with one another at their junctions.
- Subduction zones mark the areas on Earth where two crustal plates meet, with one sliding beneath the other, causing significant geological changes over millions of years.
- While this geological process is extremely slow, taking place over millions of years, the study offers fascinating insights into the potential future geography of our planet and the powerful forces that shape it.

### Delisting of Monuments

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has decided to delist 18 centrally protected monuments previously categorized as "untraceable."
- These monuments will no longer receive conservation, protection, or maintenance from the ASI, and activities near them will be exempt from certain restrictions.

### Reason for Delisting

- The ASI has opted to delist these 18 monuments due to their assessed lack of national importance. Some notable monuments affected by the delisting include:
  - Kos Minar No.13 at Mujessar village in Haryana
  - Barakhamba Cemetery in Delhi
  - Gunner Burkill's tomb in Jhansi district
  - A cemetery at Gaughat in Lucknow
  - The Telia Nala Buddhist ruins in Varanasi

### About:

- The ASI is responsible for protecting and preserving monuments and archaeological sites of national importance.
- This duty is mandated by acts such as The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904, and The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act).

### Great Indian Bustard

- The Supreme Court has recently appointed a seven-member committee to address the challenge of balancing conservation efforts for the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) with the

promotion of renewable energy in the same regions.

### About:

- The Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), also known as the Indian bustard, is a large bird found in the Indian subcontinent.
- It has a horizontal body and long bare legs, resembling an ostrich.
- These birds are often found in the same habitat as blackbuck and are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 in India.
- Formerly widespread in India and Pakistan, the Great Indian Bustard is now critically endangered, listed as such on the IUCN Red List since 2011.
- The population has drastically declined, with possibly fewer than 250 individuals remaining as of 2008.
- The main threats to the species are hunting and habitat loss.
- Historically, they were hunted for meat and sport, and poaching remains a concern.
- Increased agriculture due to irrigation projects like the Indira Gandhi Canal has also led to habitat loss.

### Efforts of Conservation:

- To address these challenges, the state of Rajasthan launched "Project Great Indian Bustard" on World Environment Day in 2013.
- The project aims to protect and manage bustard breeding grounds within protected areas and outside by fencing them off and providing secure breeding enclosures.

### Ramakrishna Mission

- Swami Smaranananda Maharaj, the president of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, passed away in Kolkata.

### About:

- The Ramakrishna Mission, established in 1897 by Swami Vivekananda, is a philanthropic organization rooted in the principles of karma yoga, emphasizing selfless service to God.
- Its multifaceted work includes healthcare, disaster relief, rural management, tribal welfare, education, and cultural activities.

- Additionally, the mission provides religious and spiritual teachings and publishes numerous important Hindu texts.
- The organization primarily promotes Advaita Vedanta and advocates four yogic ideals: **Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, and Raja yoga.**
- The Ramakrishna Movement, also known as the Vedanta Movement, was initiated by Swami Vivekananda to disseminate the message of Vedanta and uplift the underprivileged. Its motto is **"for one's own liberation and for the good of the world."**

## Brucethoa ISRO

Researchers have recently identified a new species of deep-sea isopod off the Kollam coast in Kerala, naming it **Brucethoa ISRO** in honor of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

### Key points:

- This tiny crustacean, part of the *Brucethoa* genus, was found living as a parasite on the Spinyjaw greeneye fish.
- It is the second species from this genus to be discovered in India.

### Isopods:

- Isopods, which belong to the order "Isopoda," are invertebrates within the larger group of crustaceans, which includes crabs and shrimp.
- They are incredibly diverse, with approximately 10,000 known species found in various habitats worldwide, ranging from mountains and deserts to the deep sea.
- Despite their diversity, isopods share common features.
- They all possess two pairs of antennae, compound eyes, and four sets of jaws.
- Their bodies consist of seven segments, each with its own pair of walking legs.
- Additionally, isopods have a short abdominal section composed of six segments, known as "pleons," with one or more segments fused into a tail section.
- About half of all isopod species live in the ocean, while others inhabit coastal and shelf waters, either moving along the seafloor or residing in plants.
- While most isopods are free-living, some marine species are parasitic, living on other animals.

## Philippines

- India has voiced support for the sovereignty of the Philippines, a move that has drawn a reaction from China.

### About:

- The Philippines, officially known as the **Republic of the Philippines**, is an archipelagic nation in Southeast Asia, comprising 7,641 islands with a total land area of 300,000 square kilometers.
- The country is divided into three main geographical regions from north to south: **Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.**
- With a diverse population, it is the world's twelfth-most-populous country.
- Manila serves as the capital, while Quezon City is its most populous city.

### Border Countries:

- Geographically, the Philippines is bordered by the **South China Sea to the west**, the **Philippine Sea to the east**, and the **Celebes Sea to the south.**
- It shares maritime borders with **Taiwan to the north**, **Japan to the northeast**, **Palau to the east and southeast**, **Indonesia to the south**, **Malaysia to the southwest**, **Vietnam to the west**, and **China to the northwest.**
- Due to its location as an island nation on the Pacific Ring of Fire and its proximity to the equator, the **Philippines is prone to earthquakes and typhoons.**

### Key points:

- Economically, the Philippines has a mixed economic system that combines private freedom with centralized economic planning and government regulation.
- The country is a member of the **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)** and the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).**
- The Philippines has experienced significant economic growth in recent decades, with an average annual growth rate of approximately **6% since 2010.**
- In 2023, the Philippine economy was estimated to be \$435.67 billion, with a per capita income of \$12,127 in 2024.
- The dispute between **China and the Philippines** centers on China's claim to the



Spratly Islands, which it asserts dates back centuries.

- China contends that almost the entire South China Sea, including the Spratlys and other island groups, falls within its sphere of influence, a claim strongly disputed by the Philippines and Vietnam, among others.

### Afanasy Nikitin Seamount

- India has applied to the **International Seabed Authority (ISA) in Jamaica for rights to explore two vast tracts in the Indian Ocean seabed.**
- One of these regions, the **Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount)**, is rich in **cobalt** and is also claimed by Sri Lanka under different laws.
- India's application is partly motivated by reports of Chinese vessels conducting reconnaissance in the same area.

#### About:

- The AN Seamount is a **structural feature in the Central Indian Basin, located approximately 3,000 km from India's coast, and contains rich deposits of cobalt, nickel, manganese, and copper.**
- Countries have exclusive rights up to 200 nautical miles from their borders, including the underlying seabed.
- Regions beyond this limit are considered **'high sea' and open for exploration with ISA permission.**
- The ISA is currently reviewing India's application for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crust, seeking clarification due to the overlap with Sri Lanka's claim.
- India presented **scientific evidence in Jamaica to support its exploration claims, with a decision expected later this year.**
- India has also applied for permission to explore the **Carlsberg Ridge for polymetallic sulphides, which are rich in copper, zinc, gold, and silver.**
- India has staked a claim for its **continental shelf up to 350 nautical miles** but awaits approval, having previously secured exploration rights in the Central Indian Ocean.

#### Seamounts

- Seamounts are **underwater mountains with pointed summits** that rise from the **seafloor but do not reach the ocean's surface.**

- They are **volcanic in origin** and can be **3,000-4,500 meters tall.**
- The Emperor Seamount, an extension of the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean, is a well-known example.

#### Guyots:

- Guyots are **flat-topped seamounts that show evidence of gradual subsidence** through stages to become flat-topped submerged mountains.
- It is estimated that more than **10,000 seamounts and guyots exist in the Pacific Ocean alone.**

#### Mid-oceanic ridge

- A mid-oceanic ridge is composed of **two chains of mountains separated by a large depression.**
- The mountain ranges **can have peaks as high as 2,500 meters**, and some even reach above the ocean's surface.

#### ISA:

- The **International Seabed Authority (ISA) is an autonomous international organization established in 1994.**
- It regulates **mining and related activities in the international seabed** beyond national jurisdiction, covering most of the world's oceans.
- The ISA was **established upon the entry into force of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**, which sets out international law regarding territorial waters, sea lanes, and ocean resources.
- The ISA is **responsible for granting licenses for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources** in the international seabed, regulating activities related to these endeavors, and ensuring compliance with international standards and guidelines.
- It also promotes **fair and efficient utilization of mineral resources, ensuring benefits for all stakeholders involved.**

#### Southern Africa's SEAMA Ecoregion

- The **South East Africa Montane Archipelago (SEAMA)** is a **newly recognized ecoregion in southern Africa.**

- Recent studies reveal a **rich biodiversity in SEAMA, yet it faces urgent conservation challenges.**

**Life in SEAMA:**

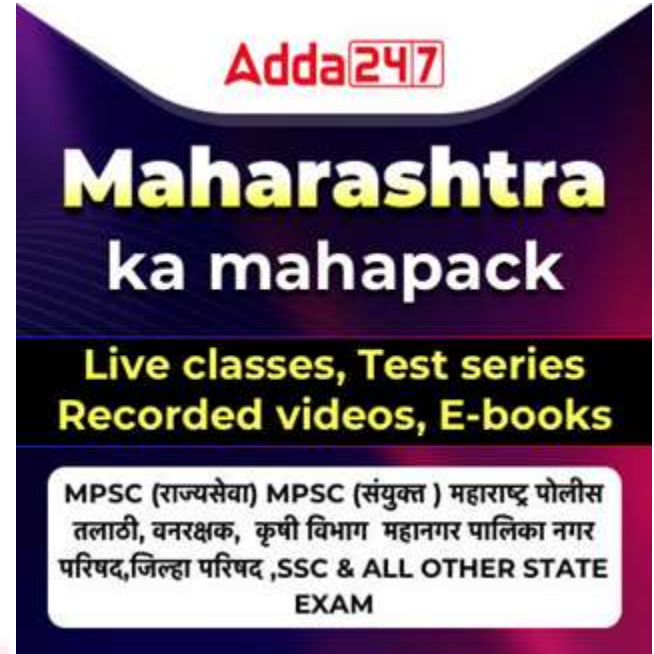
- SEAMA is a **newly recognized ecoregion stretching from northern Mozambique to Mount Mulanje in Malawi.**
- The region is home to **numerous previously undocumented species, including 127 plants, 45 vertebrates, and 45 invertebrates.**
- SEAMA boasts of **two endemic genera of plants and reptiles and 22 strictly endemic reptile species, mostly threatened by habitat loss.**

**Conservation Challenges:**

- Despite its ecological significance, SEAMA is experiencing **one of the highest deforestation rates in Africa.**
- Since 2000, SEAMA **has lost 18% of its primary humid forest cover, with rates reaching up to 43% in some areas.**
- The major causes of deforestation include **slash-and-burn agriculture and charcoal production,** necessitating conservation agriculture and sustainable livelihood alternatives.

**Conclusion:**

- SEAMA's diverse ecosystems and species highlight its **global biological importance, warranting immediate conservation efforts to mitigate threats and preserve its rich biodiversity.**



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