National News

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act

- **The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act** came into effect on **May 1, 2014**.

About act:
- The Act was enacted to **legalise the vending rights of street vendors (SVs)**.
- It aims to **protect and regulate street vending in cities through State-level rules and schemes**, and **execution by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)**.
- It commits to **accommodating all 'existing' vendors in vending zones** and **issuing vending certificates (VCs)**.
- It establishes a participatory governance structure through **Town Vending Committees (TVCs)**.
- The Act outlines mechanisms for **addressing grievances and disputes, proposing the establishment of a Grievance Redressal Committee** chaired by a civil judge or judicial magistrate.

46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46)

- The **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**, through the **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**, will host the **46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting** and **26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection in 2024**.
- These **meetings will take place** from May 20 to 30, 2024, in **Kochi**, **Kerala**.

Key points:
- The **46th ATCM agenda** includes strategic planning for **sustainable management of Antarctica**, **biodiversity prospecting**, **addressing climate change impacts**.
- The **26th CEP agenda** focuses on **Antarctic environment evaluation, impact assessment, management, climate change response**, area protection and management plans, and conservation of Antarctic biodiversity.

Do you know:
- **India's first Antarctic research station**, **Dakshin Gangotri**, was established in **1983**. Currently, India operates two year-round research stations: **Maitri (1989)** and **Bharati (2012)**.
- These permanent research stations **facilitate Indian Scientific Expeditions to Antarctica**.
- In **2022**, **India enacted the Antarctic Act**, reaffirming its commitment to the Antarctic Treaty.

Maharashtra State News

Maharashtra Diwas

- Maharashtra Day, also known as Maharashtra Diwas, is **celebrated annually on May 1 to commemorate the formation of the state of Maharashtra**.
- Maharashtra, **established in 1960** through the **Bombay Reorganization Act**.

About Formation of Maharashtra:
- The **Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (United Maharashtra Committee)** was established in **1956** to **advocate for a separate state for Marathi-speaking individuals**.
- In **1959**, the Indian government created a panel to reorganise states along linguistic lines.
- The **panel advocated for a distinct Marathi-speaking state that would include Bombay City and other Marathi-speaking territories** within the state of Bombay.

Fast-track courts under POCSO

- The **Bombay High Court (HC)** directed its **administrative department and the state government's law and judiciary department to collaborate**.
- The collaboration is t**o determine the requirements to establish 138 fast-track courts** under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** in the state.

About Fast-track courts:
- Fast-track courts are s**pecialised establishments aimed at expediting the trial process** for cases related to sexual offences, particularly those involving rape and violations of the **POCSO Act**.

About POCSO Act:
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, established in **2012** in India, is designed **to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse**.
- **Objective**: The primary goal of the POCSO Act is **to safeguard children under the age of 18** from offences like sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.

District Good Governance Index (DGGI)

- **Raigad district topped the list** in the recent **District Good Governance Index (DGGI) of Maharashtra**.
- The **DGGI evaluates 10 governance sectors** with **161 indicators and over 300 data points**.

Key points:
- The **index is the first of its kind** carried out **by the department of administrative reforms and organisation and methods**.
- **Maharashtra** has become the **fifth state in the country to implement such an exercise**.
- In terms of **citizen-centric governance** and **human resources development, Nashik district stood second, followed by Gondia and Pune districts, respectively**.
- **Raigad district topped the list** with 529 points, **followed by Gondia** with 518 points.

Shakti Criminal Laws

- Maharashtra State Home Minister presented a report on the Shakti Bill.
- The committee submitted the **amendments to the Shakti Bill, which was sent to the joint committee**.
- The **Shakti Criminal Laws (Maharashtra Amendment) Bill, 2020** is a bill on **crimes against women and children**.

Key points:
- The bill has recommended **capital punishment for rape cases**.
- It also recommends a **time-limit of 30 days for completing the probe since the day of registration of the complaint**.
- The **amendment has put the onus on social media platforms** and **companies providing Internet data** to share data for police investigation.

Majhi Vasundhara (MV) Curriculum

- The Maharashtra Government is introducing a **comprehensive curriculum for Grades I-VIII**.
- The aim is **to inculcate climate-consciousness and green values** in the next generation.

Key points:
- The **new curriculum has been developed by** the **Department of Environment and Climate Change** and **UNICEF**.
- The curriculum is named the "**Majhi Vasundhara (MV) Curriculum**".
- The **curriculum aims to inculcate application-based awareness on issues like climate change** among students from Grades I-VIII.
- The curriculum will raise awareness among students by **keeping a balance between traditional and local knowledge**.

Article 39 (b) of the Indian Constitution

- The **Solicitor General**, **representing the Union and Maharashtra governments**, stated in the Supreme Court that the **application of Article 39 (b) mandates state policies to aim for an egalitarian society by distributing material resources of the community to subserve common good**.
- It was **limited by the laws framed by Parliament and assemblies** to enact appropriate legislation to achieve the goal.
- The **term 'community', used in Article 39 (b)**, must be **understood** not in the colloquial way but **in its wider sense of society in general**.

About Article 39 (b):
- Article 39(b) of the Indian Constitution is **part of the Directive Principles of State Policy**, which guides the State in formulating policies and laws.
- Article 39(b) mandates that the **State should ensure that the ownership and control over the community's material resources are distributed in a manner that best serves the common good**.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

- **Mangroves** in Thane district, Maharashtra, are being **cleared for the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PM Awaas scheme)**.
- Activists have raised an alarm over this issue, as **mangroves play a crucial role in maintaining the ecological balance**.

About PMAY:

- The **main goal of PMAY is to provide affordable housing to the urban poor** and **economically weaker sections**.
- **Target Group**: The scheme targets the economically weaker sections (EWS), low-income groups (LIG), and middle-income groups (MIG) of the society. It also specifically targets women, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and other backward classes.
- **PMAY includes four major components**:
  o **In-situ Slum Redevelopment** using land as a resource with private sector participation.
  o **Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS)** for EWS, LIG, and MIG categories.
  o **Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)** with public and private sectors.
  o **Subsidy for Beneficiary-led Individual House Construction/Enhancement**.

Think:

- Read about Mangroves.

Maharashtra Rural Connectivity Improvement Project

- The **Indian government** and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** signed a 300-million-dollar loan on September 8, 2021.
- The **loan agreement was signed as additional financing** to scale up the **improvement of rural connectivity in Maharashtra**.

Key points:

- The additional financing for the "**Maharashtra Rural Connectivity Improvement Project**" will help in improving an additional 1,100 rural roads and 230 bridges.
- Under the project, a **gender action plan** has been prepared to **focus on capacity development of women workers** so that they can **benefit from semi-skilled and unskilled labour opportunities**.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)

- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)** was **introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic** with the **aim of generating jobs**.
- The scheme had a target of spending Rs 22810 crores till **March 31, 2024**.
- **Maharashtra has the highest number of beneficiaries under this scheme**, making it the top state.
- Following Maharashtra, **Gujarat and Karnataka are the states with the next highest number of beneficiaries**.

Mission Vatsalya

- The **Maharashtra government has launched** a special initiative named "**Mission Vatsalya**".
- Mission Vatsalya is **designed to provide a range of services and approximately 18 benefits under a single platform**.

Key points:

- The mission has been **specifically designed for widows**, with a **particular emphasis on those from rural areas, poor backgrounds, and deprived sections**.
- Schemes such as the **Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana and Gharkul Yojana will be included in this mission** to benefit these women.
- This mission is being implemented by the **women and child development (WCD) Department**.

New species of jumping spiders discovered

- Researchers recently **discovered a new species of jumping spiders** in **Solapur** and **Dharashiv districts of Maharashtra**.
- The species named **Stenaelurillus solapur** and **Stenaelurillus naldurg** were **found only in the habitat they were discovered in**.

Key points:

- The spiders were **found in a compact and fragmented semi-arid grassland patch**.
- The species of **spiders lived secluded in colonies and were rare to find**.
- **Researchers conducted the exploration** of the species in the **Western Ghats, Deccan Plateau** and the **eastern coastal region**.

- The **other two species of jumping spiders found in Tamil Nadu** were named **Stenaelurillus feral** (from **Villupuram**) and **Stenaelurillus judithblesternae** (from **Coimbatore**).
- **Jumping spiders play a crucial role in maintaining the ecological balance**.
- **Acting as predators**, they **help control the population of insects and other arthropods**, thus **reducing the spread of diseases and damage to crops**.

Enforcement Directorate (ED)

- A **Bombay court has recently emphasized the constitutional obligation of the Enforcement Directorate (ED)** to ensure speedy trials.
- The court made this observation while granting bail to two accused in the **Cox and Kings case**.

About ED:
- The Enforcement Directorate is a **law enforcement agency** and **economic intelligence agency responsible for enforcing economic laws** and **fighting economic crime in India**.
- It was **established in 1956**.
- The ED operates under the **Department of Revenue of the Ministry of Finance**.
- **Primary Functions:**
  o Enforcement of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (**FEMA**), which replaced the earlier Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973 (**FERA**).
  o Enforcement of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (**PMLA**).

Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP)

- The Borivali Residents Association **complained to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)** about the **large-scale dumping of debris** at the border of the **Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP)**.

About Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP):
- **Situated in Mumbai, Maharashtra**, it is **one of the major national parks existing within a metropolis limit** and is **one of the most visited parks in the world**.
- The **park was established in 1969, Originally named Krishnagiri Park**, it was later renamed in the **1980s after Sanjay Gandhi**.
- The **2,000-year-old Kanheri caves**, sculpted by monks out of the rocky basaltic cliffs, **lie within the park**.
- The **park is also known as the lungs of the city**.
- The **governing body of the national park is the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.

Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Information Technology (IT)

- The **Maharashtra government has announced the creation of a new award** named the "**Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Information Technology (IT)**".
- The award will be **presented to institutions and companies for their outstanding performance in the IT sector**.
- The presentation will coincide with the **birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi**.
- The **state government will collaborate** with **several organizations, including NASSCOM**, to finalize the modalities of the award.

Maharashtra Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy

- The Maharashtra government has unveiled the "**Maharashtra Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy**".
- The **policy was unveiled by the State Environment Minister** and was **approved by the cabinet**.
- The aim of the policy is to **promote the adoption of electric vehicles, their production, and the strengthening of necessary infrastructure**.
- The **policy seeks to ensure that EVs comprise at least 10% of new vehicles registered by 2025** and **25% electrification of public transport by 2025 in six urban centres**: Mumbai, Nagpur, Pune, Amravati, Aurangabad, and Nashik.
- The policy also plans to **set up 2,500 charging stations in urban areas and highways**.

Maharashtra Prevention of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Inhuman and Inhumane Practices of Witchcraft Act

- A horrific incident occurred in Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra, where two **elderly tribals were attacked and burnt alive by villagers over suspicion of witchcraft**.
- The police registered a case under **sections 302, 307, 201, 143, 147, 149, and Sub-Section 3 (2)** of the **Maharashtra Prevention of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Inhuman and Inhumane Practices of Witchcraft Act**.

About act:

- The law aimed at **combating superstitious practices in Maharashtra**.
- The act aims to **combat and criminalize the practice of human sacrifices and other harmful practices** rooted in **superstition** that exploit people's beliefs, especially those that could cause harm or danger to life.
- The **law was enacted in 2013**, following the **assassination of Narendra Dabholkar**, an anti-superstition activist, which accelerated the legislative process.
- The law also emphasizes the **importance of education and awareness campaigns to educate the public about the harmful effects of such practices** and to promote a **scientific temper** among the populace.

Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal (MAT)

- A decision by the **Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal (MAT)** to **set aside the termination order of a police patil** in Miraj, Sangli.

About MAT:

- The **Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal (MAT)** was **established to handle disputes and complaints related to the recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and posts** in connection with the affairs of the State of Maharashtra.
- MAT exercises **jurisdiction over matters specified in the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985**. It deals primarily with matters **concerning government employees' recruitment** and **conditions of service**.
- **Composition**: The tribunal is typically composed of a **Chairperson, who is or has**

been a judge of a High Court, and **other judicial and administrative members** who are or have been **high-ranking officials or have legal experience**.
- **Appeal Process**: Decisions made by the Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal **can be challenged and appealed in the High Court**.

Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA)

- The **Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA)** has been **invoked in the Salman Khan firing case**.

About MCOCA:

- MCOCA is a law **enacted by Maharashtra state in India in 1999** to **combat organized crime and terrorism**.
- **Objective**: The primary objective of MCOCA is to **dismantle organized crime** syndicates by enabling law enforcement agencies to intercept communications, use confessions to police as admissible evidence, and attach properties acquired through the proceeds of crime.
- **Special Courts**: MCOCA provides for the **establishment of Special Courts to ensure speedy and efficient trial of cases** under its provisions.
- **Tough Bail Conditions**: Under MCOCA, **getting bail is challenging as the law requires the court to be satisfied that the accused is not likely to commit a similar offense while on bail**.
- **MCOCA shifts the burden of proof to the accused**, requiring them to prove their innocence in certain scenarios, which is **contrary to the usual criminal justice system premise where the burden is on the prosecution**.

Right to Education Act 2009

- This year, **Maharashtra recorded only around 47,654 applications under the Right to education**, as **against the available over 8.7 lakh seats**.
- A section of educational activists **attribute the drop in the applications to the amendment in the RTE Act**.

About RTE act:

- The Right to Education Act (RTE), officially known as The **Right of Children to Free and**

Compulsory Education Act, was enacted in India in 2009.

- **Age Group Covered**: The RTE Act provides free and compulsory education to children between the ages of **6 to 14 years** in India.
- **Compulsory Education**: It mandates that **every child has a right to full time elementary education** of satisfactory and equitable quality in a **formal school** which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.
- **No Detention Policy**: The **Act originally included a no-detention policy**, meaning that students were automatically promoted to the next grade. This was to minimize the stress of board exams. **However, as of 2019, amendments allow states to hold back students in certain circumstances**.
- **Private School Quota**: The Act mandates that **non-government schools must reserve 25% of seats for children from economically weaker sections** and **disadvantaged communities**.

Heritage Tree

- The **Maharashtra Cabinet** approved an **action plan to protect ancient and old trees aged 50 years and above in urban areas**.

About Heritage Tree:

- **Heritage Tree Concept**: The Cabinet approved the **implementation of the 'Heritage Tree' concept in Maharashtra**.
- **Amendment to Act**: The action plan amends the **Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Tree Protection and Conservation Act, 1975**. The amendment **aims to safeguard the green cover across urban landscapes and provide a robust mechanism to protect heritage trees**.
- **Details of Amendments**: The government will introduce the "concept of Heritage Trees" and the **age of trees for their protection and preservation**. The amendment ensures **compensatory plantation**, proposes reserving common land for plantation, and suggests following scientific methods like **Miyawaki plantation**.
- **Maharashtra State Tree Authority**: To protect a significant number of trees, the Maharashtra government will set up the "Maharashtra State Tree Authority".

Global Leaders Group on Antimicrobial Resistance

- **The European Society for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID)** and the **Global Leaders Group (GLG) on AMR** jointly organised a high-level event, '**Forging partnerships between science and policy**', **Barcelona, Spain.**
- The meeting **aimed to position research, science, and implementation on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** into the political agenda and address the crisis across sectors.
- The **talks were in alignment leading up to the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on AMR** scheduled for **September 2024 in New York, United States**.

About Global Leaders Group (GLG) on AMR:

- Consists of world leaders and experts from across sectors **working together to accelerate political action on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)**.
- Performs an **independent global advisory and advocacy role.**
- The **Quadripartite Joint Secretariat (QJS) on Antimicrobial Resistance**, a joint effort by the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**, the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, and the **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)** provide secretariat support for the Group.

Think:

- Know about Antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Five Eyes intelligence alliance

- Four countries from the **Five Eyes intelligence-sharing network** have **accused India of conducting espionage operations**.

About Five Eyes intelligence alliance:

- **Members**: The Five Eyes alliance consists of the **United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand**.
- **Origins**: The **alliance originated from secret World War II intelligence collaborations**. It was formally established in the aftermath of the war through the **UKUSA Agreement in 1946**,

which was **initially a treaty between the UK and the USA** for **joint signal intelligence (SIGINT) operations**.

- **Purpose**: The primary purpose of the Five Eyes is to **share intelligence among the member countries**, focusing mainly on signals intelligence (SIGINT). This **collaboration helps the countries to monitor international communications and gather information on various global issues and threats**.

Appointment News

Stand-By Arrangement (SBA)

- The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has approved an immediate disbursal of **USD 1.1 billion to Pakistan**.
- It is **part of a bailout package**.
- The bailout package is supported by the **IMF's Stand-By Arrangement (SBA)**.

About SBA:

- Provides **short-term financial assistance to countries facing balance of payments problems**.
- **All member** countries are **eligible for SBA**.
- Most often used by advanced and emerging market countries, but low-income countries sometimes use the SBA together with the **Standby Credit Facility (SCF)**.
- **Conditions**:
  o **Countries' economic policies must address the problems** that led the country to seek funding.
  o Disbursements conditional on the observance of **quantitative performance criteria**.
  o Progress in **implementing structural measures that are critical to achieving the objectives of the program** is assessed in a holistic way, including via benchmarks.

Green taxonomy

- The **RBI** and the **Finance Ministry** could look especially at the ASEAN region for a layered **green taxonomy**.

About Green taxonomy:

- A **framework for defining** what can be considered **environmentally sustainable investments**.

- A classification system that **defines which economic activities and assets are "green" or environmentally sustainable**.
- **Purpose**:
  o Helps prevent **greenwashing**.
  o Assists investors in making **informed investment decisions**.
  o Channels investment toward sustainable or green economic activities and assets.

Ethylene oxide in spice brands

- A **crisis of confidence is affecting** the **Indian spice export industry**.
- At least **five countries, including Singapore, Hong Kong, and the U.S., have announced an investigation into possible contamination of spice mixes** sold by top Indian brands, MDH and Everest.

Key points:

- The complaints cite the **presence of ethylene oxide**, a **toxic chemical used as a food stabiliser**, **beyond permissible limits**.
- The **Spices Board of India** has initiated **mandatory testing of products shipped abroad**.
- The international scrutiny has stirred a **demand for the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India to ensure stringent quality checks on spices and curry powders sold in domestic markets**.

Summits & Conferences News

G7 (Group of Seven)

- **G7 energy ministers** discussed a **possible time frame for phasing out coal-fired power plants**.
- The **Group of Seven meeting in Turin** is the **first big political session since the world pledged at the UN's COP28 climate summit** in December to **transition away from coal, oil, and gas**.

About G7:

- The G7, or **Group of Seven,** is an **intergovernmental organization** consisting of some of the **world's largest advanced economies**.
- **Formation**:

- o Originally formed as the **Group of Six (G6)** in **1975**, with **Canada joining in 1976 to become the G7**.
  - o **The European Union (EU)** has also participated fully in the G7 since 1981 as a **"non-enumerated" member**.
- **Objective**: The **primary aim of the G7 is to discuss and coordinate economic policy among the world's largest industrial nations**. Over time, its agenda has expanded to include a wide range of **global issues including trade, security, climate change, and development**.
- The **host of the G7 summit**, also known as the presidency, **rotates annually among member countries**.
- It was formerly **referred to as the G-8 until Russia was suspended from the group in 2014 after annexing Crimea**.

Schemes and Committees News

Localizing the SDGs: Women in Local Governance in India Lead the Way

- The **Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations** and the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** are **collaborating to organize an event** with the **United Nations Population Fund**.
- The title of the event is "**Localizing the SDGs: Women in Local Governance in India Lead the Way**".
- This event is scheduled to take place during the **57th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD57)**.

About Commission on Population and Development (CPD57):

- The Commission on Population and Development was **established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** in **1946**.
- The Commission is composed of **47 member countries**.
- **Member countries are elected by the Economic and Social Council** for a **period of four years** based on **geographic distribution**.
- The Commission was constituted as a **three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism**.

- The **meetings of the Commission were held** typically **every two or three years** until 1994. **After 1994, it has been held once a year**.

Defense News

Supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART)

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** tested a **next-generation torpedo release system** aimed at **enhancing the Navy's anti-submarine warfare capabilities**.
- The system, known as the **Supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART)**, has been **designed and developed by the DRDO**.

About SMART system:

- This **missile-based mechanism can launch lightweight torpedoes** that can **target submarines hundreds of kilometres away**, far beyond the conventional range of lightweight torpedoes.
- It is a **canister-based missile system** that comprises several advanced subsystems, including **two-stage solid propulsion** and **precision inertial navigation**.

Ranks & Reports News

Inflation Expectations Survey of Households and Consumer Confidence Survey

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** announced the **launch of two surveys**:
  - o 'Inflation Expectations Survey of Households' and
  - o 'Consumer Confidence Survey'.
- These surveys will provide **key inputs for the bi-monthly monetary policy**.
- **The survey will be conducted across 19 cities**, including Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, and Thiruvananthapuram.

About Inflation Expectations Survey of Households:

- It aims to capture **subjective assessments on price movements and inflation**, based on **individual consumption baskets**.
- Seeks qualitative responses from households on price changes.

About Consumer Confidence Survey:
- It aims to **gather qualitative responses from households regarding their views on the general economic situation, employment scenario, price levels, household income, and spending**.

World Press Freedom Index 2024

- **India press freedom score falls**, says **Reporters sans Frontieres.**

About World Press Freedom Index:
- **World Press Freedom Index**: This is an **annual index** compiled by **Reporters Without Borders (RSF for Reporters sans Frontières)**, which **measures the freedom enjoyed by journalists in 180 jurisdictions**.
- **India's Score**: India's score in the World Press Freedom Index fell from **36.62 to 31.28 over the last year**.
- **India's Rank**: Despite the drop in score, **India's rank improved from 161 in 2023 to 159 in 2024**. However, **this improvement was due to other countries slipping in their rankings**, not because of an improvement in India's press freedom.
- **Top Countries**: **Norway** and **Denmark** topped the RSF table, indicating high levels of press freedom in these countries.
- **Bottom Countries**: **Eritrea was at the bottom** of the RSF table, with **Syria** just ahead of it, **indicating low levels of press freedom in these countries**.

Water ice in polar craters of the moon

- The study was conducted by scientists from **ISRO's Space Applications Centre (SAC)** in **collaboration** with researchers from **IIT Kanpur**, **University of Southern California**, **Jet Propulsion Laboratory**, and **IIT (ISM) Dhanbad**.
- The research found **evidence of an enhanced possibility of water ice occurrence in the polar craters of the moon**.

Key points:
- The study suggests that **drilling on the moon to sample or excavate that ice will be crucial for future missions** and **long-term human presence**.

- The **extent of water ice in the northern polar region** is **twice** that in the **southern polar region**.
- The **primary source** of **sub-surface water ice** in the lunar poles is **believed to be out-gassing during volcanism** in the Imbrian period.
- The **distribution of water ice is likely governed by** mare **volcanism** and **preferential impact cratering**.

Antares

- The **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), based in Bengaluru**, filmed the **passing of the moon in front of Antares, a bright red star**.
- This event was **visible only from southern India** according to IIA.

About Antares:
- Antares, also known as **Alpha Scorpii**, is the **brightest star in the constellation Scorpius** and the **15th-brightest star in the night sky**.
- It is a **massive red supergiant star** that is **10,000 times brighter than our sun**.
- Antares is one of the largest known stars, with a diameter 700 times that of the sun.
- **Antares is relatively cool for a star**, with a **surface temperature of about 6,100 degrees F** (3,400 degrees C), in contrast to our **sun's surface temperature of about 10,000 degrees F** (5,500 degrees C).

Shaksgam valley

- **India has registered its protest** against **China's "illegal attempts" to "alter facts on the ground" in the Shaksgam valley** of **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir**.
- Recent satellite **pictures indicate that China is building a road** into the lower **Shaksgam valley**.

Key points:
- **India has never accepted** the so-called **China Pakistan Boundary Agreement of 1963**, through which **Pakistan unlawfully attempted to cede the area to China**.
- The **Shaksgam Valley is part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir**, and was ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963, a year after the India-China war.

About Shaksgam valley:
- Shaksgam Valley is **located in the disputed region** near the northern borders of **Kashmir**.
- It is **part of the broader Trans-Karakoram Tract**.
- The valley is characterized by its rugged terrain, high mountains, and is predominantly a **high-altitude desert**. It is **nestled between the Karakoram Range to the south and the Kun Lun Mountains to the north**.
- The area is **strategically significant due to its location near the Siachen Glacier**, another contested area, and its proximity to several important mountain passes.

International Labour Day

- International Labour Day, also known as **May Day**, is being observed on 1st May to **honour the contribution of workers across the world**.
- The **day aims at paying tribute to workers' sacrifices in achieving economic and social rights** all over the world.

Key points:
- In **1886**, a **large demonstration of labourers**, **demanding eight hours of daily work**, was held in **America**.
- This demonstration went out of hand in Chicago with lots of people getting hurt in an incident known as **The Haymarket Affair**.
- **The Haymarket Affair marked the start of the International Labour Day**.
- In **1889**, **many socialist parties in Europe came together and decided to celebrate May 1 as International Labour Day**.
- Since then, this special day has been observed every year on the same day.

International Leopard Day

- International Leopard Day is **celebrated annually on May 3**.

About International Leopard Day:
- **Origin**: The day was officialised and endorsed as a lasting legacy of the **Global Leopard Conference held in March 2023**.
- **Significance**: Leopards are indicators of a healthy ecosystem, and their **presence often correlates with high biodiversity levels**. Protecting leopards means **safeguarding the habitats and prey species that support**

them, thereby conserving a wide array of plant and animal species.

Standard Essential Patents (SEP)

- There is a **potential crisis in India** due to the way **certain technology companies are using 'standard essential patents' (SEPs) against the telecom manufacturing sector**.
- The **regulation of SEPs has been left to the judiciary**, which has largely failed to address the issue.

About SEP:
- A Standard Essential Patent (SEP) is a **patent granted for a technological invention** that is **crucial for the implementation and operation of a standard**.
- A **standard is a set of technical requirements or agreed technical descriptions** that **ensure technologies interact and work together**. These **can be adopted worldwide, regionally, or nationally**.