

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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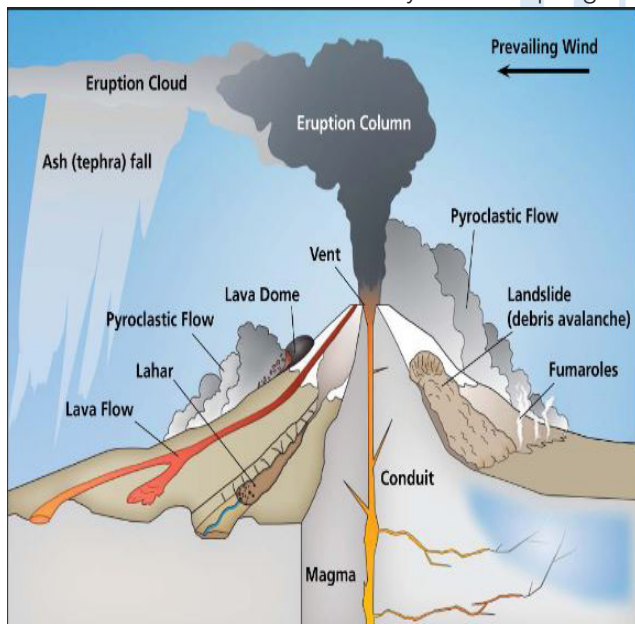
ICELAND VOLCANO ERUPTION

In Context

- **Fagradalsfjall volcano** located on the **Reykjanes peninsula** in southwest Iceland, erupted after weeks of intense earthquakes and tremors.
 - ♦ **Iceland** is one of the **most volcanically active regions** on the planet.

What are Volcanoes?

- Volcanoes are **geological formations on the Earth's crust** that result from the eruption of magma (molten rock), ash, and gases from beneath the Earth's surface.
- Volcanoes are often found **near tectonic plate boundaries**, where the Earth's plates interact.
- Volcanoes can be **active, dormant, or extinct**.
 - ♦ Active volcanoes are volcanoes that have had recent eruptions or are expected to have eruptions in the near future.
 - ♦ Dormant volcanoes no longer produce eruptions, but might again sometime in the future.
 - ♦ Extinct volcanoes will likely never erupt again.



What are the different kinds of Volcanoes?

- The **three main types of volcanoes** are **stratovolcanoes (composite volcanoes)**, **shield volcanoes**, and **cinder cone volcanoes**.

Stratovolcanoes (Composite Volcanoes)

- **Structure:** These are large, conical mountains with steep slopes. They are characterized by alternating layers of solidified lava flows, volcanic ash, and other volcanic debris.
- **Eruption Style:** They often exhibit **explosive eruptions** due to the high viscosity of their magma, which can trap gas and build up pressure.

Shield Volcanoes:

- **Structure:** Shield volcanoes have broad, gently sloping profiles resembling a warrior's shield. They are formed by the accumulation of low-viscosity basaltic lava flows.
- **Eruption Style:** Shield volcanoes usually have **non-explosive eruptions**, and lava flows easily cover large areas.

Cinder Cone Volcanoes:

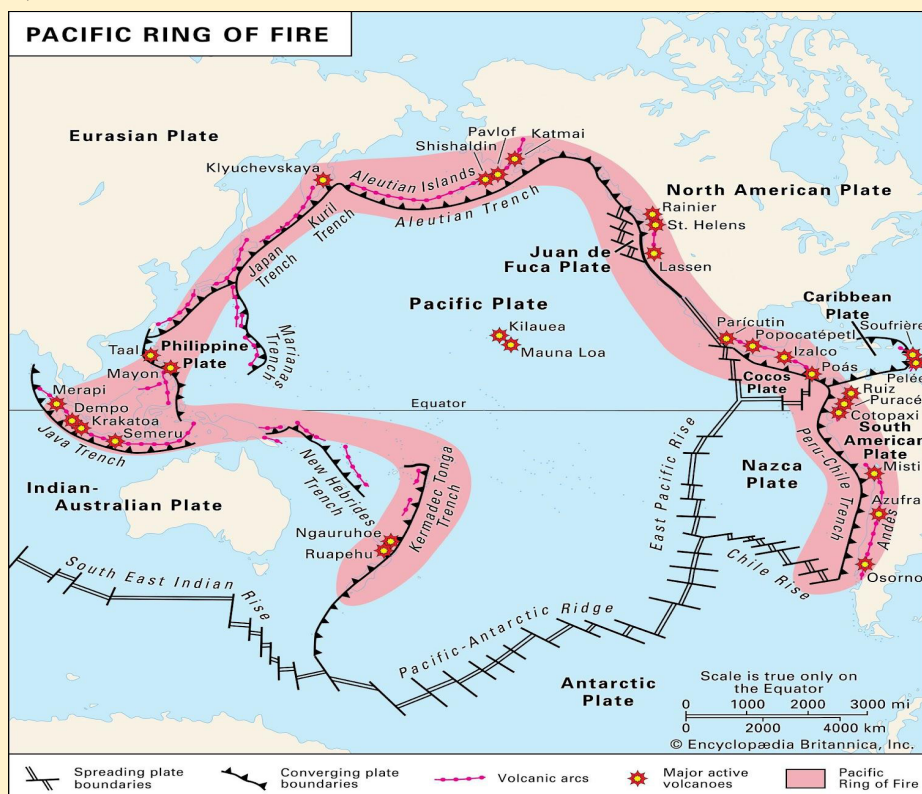
- **Structure:** Cinder cone volcanoes are relatively small, steep-sided mounds built from the accumulation of volcanic debris, such as volcanic ash, cinders, and volcanic rocks.
- **Eruption Style:** They often have short-lived and relatively explosive eruptions, producing pyroclastic material that falls around the vent.

Why is Iceland so volcanically active?

- Iceland sits on the **Mid-Atlantic Ridge** (part of the longest mountain range in the world) in the North Atlantic Ocean, where the Eurasian and North American plates are moving apart a few centimetres every year.
 - ♦ This produces **volcanic rift zones**, regions where the Earth's crust is being pulled apart and fractured, and here molten rock, or magma, rises up, and some reaches the surface and erupts as lava and/or ash.
- The island sits over a **hot zone** which leads to enhanced volcanic activity in the region.

The Pacific Ring of Fire

- The Pacific Ring of Fire is a **horseshoe-shaped zone** around the **edges of the Pacific Ocean basin** that is characterized by **high seismic and volcanic activity**.
- This region is home to about **75%** of the world's active and dormant volcanoes and experiences a significant number of earthquakes.
- The term "**Ring of Fire**" was coined to describe this area due to the shape formed by the numerous volcanoes and tectonic plate boundaries.
- Countries and Regions:** The Ring of Fire encompasses a large number of countries and regions, including the **west coasts of North and South America**, parts of Asia, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and the western coasts of North America.



Source: **IE**

PARLIAMENTARY PANEL ON CHILD LABOUR

Context

- Recently, the Parliamentary panel informed that the **country needs uniform definition of 'child'** first to eliminate **child labour**.

About

- According to the **52nd report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles And Skill Development Committee** tabled in the Parliament, the Panel found **ambiguity in the definition of child** under various legislations.

Definition of a Child

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHRC):** A child as an individual who has **not attained the age of 18 years**.
 - India** has been a **signatory** to the UNHRC since 1992.
- The International Labour Organization (ILO):** Child is any person under 18.
 - Child Labour** (as per the ILO) refers to work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and/or mental development.
- The Plantation Labour Act 1951:** It has separate definitions for child, adolescent and adult.

- ♦ **'Child'** means a person who has **not completed his fourteenth year**.
- ♦ **'Adolescent'** means a person who has completed his fourteenth year but has not completed his eighteenth year.
- ♦ **'Adult'** means a person who has completed his eighteenth year.
- **The Motor Transport Workers Act (1961)**, and the **Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act (1966)**: These define a child as a person **who has not completed 14 years of age**.
- **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006)**: A **male (21 years of age)** and a **female (18 years of age)** cannot attain majority.
- **The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016**: 'Child' means a person who has **not completed his fourteenth year of age** or such age as may be specified in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, whichever is more.
- **The Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986)**: 'Child' means a person **who has not completed his fourteenth year of age** or such age as may be specified in the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**, whichever is more.
 - ♦ Under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, 'Child' means a male or female aged six to fourteen years.
- **The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 (amended in 1986)**: A 'child' is a person who has **not completed his fourteenth year of age**.
- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**: It defines 'child' as a person who has **not completed eighteen years of age**.
 - ♦ However, the term **'adolescent'** is not defined in the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.
 - ♦ The Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakaram (under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare): It defines **an adolescent as a person between 10-19 years**.

Child Rights in India

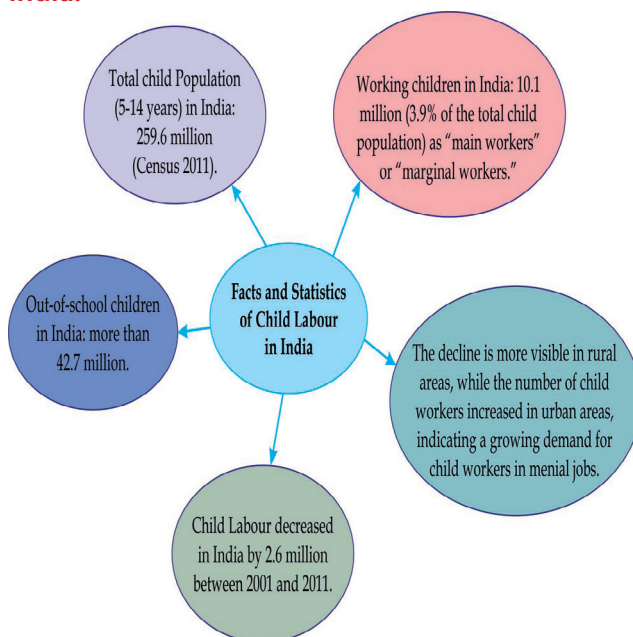
- **The Constitution of India** guarantees all children certain rights, which have been specially included for them. These include:

Article 21 A	• Right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children in the 6-14 year age group
Article 24	• Right to be protected from any hazardous employment till the age of 14 years
Article 39(e)	• Right to be protected from being abused and forced by economic necessity to enter occupations unsuited to their age or strength
Article 39 (f)	• Right to equal opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and guaranteed protection of childhood and youth against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment
Article 45	• Right to early childhood care and education to all children until they complete the age of six years

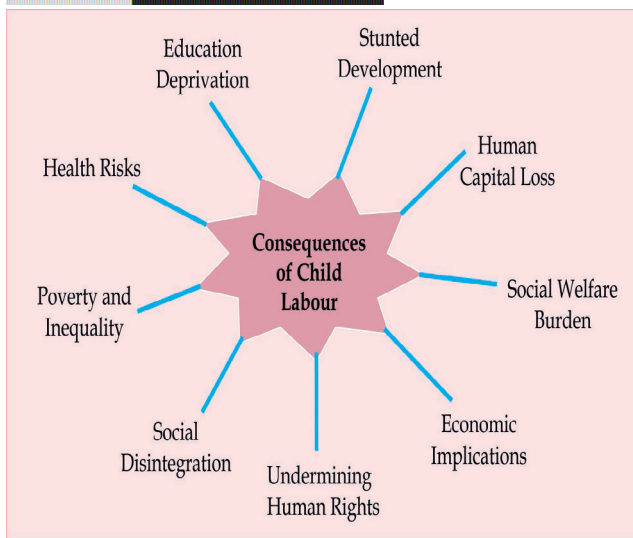
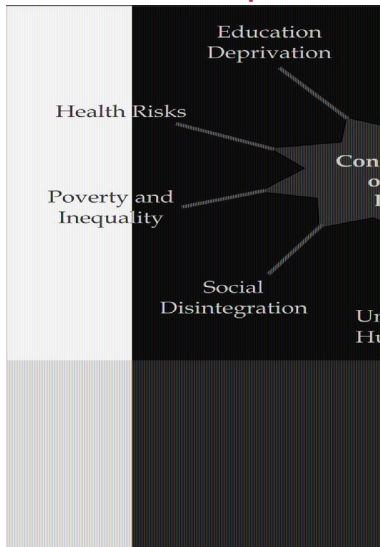
- Besides, Children also have **rights as equal citizens of India**, just as any other adult male or female:

Article 14	• Right to equality
Article 15	• Right against discrimination
Article 21	• Right to personal liberty and due process of law
Article 23	• Right to being protected from being trafficked and forced into bonded labour
Article 29	• Right of minorities for protection of their interests
Article 46	• Right of weaker sections of the people to be protected from social injustice and all forms of exploitation

Facts and Figures related to Child Labour in India:



Causes and Consequences of Child Labour:



- **National Level Child Tracking Mechanism:** It aims to facilitate **coordination among the states/Centre** to facilitate prevention, tracing, tracking, rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of the rescued children.
- **United Nations (SDG 8.7) and International Labour Organization (ILO):** The elimination of child labour in all forms **by 2025** as per commitments made by the **India** after ratification of the **ILO** conventions and to achieve the target stipulated in **Goal 8.7 of SDG**.
- **Gurupadswamy Committee (1979):** It was formed to study the issue of child labour and to suggest measures to tackle it. The Committee observed poverty is main factor for the child labour.
 - ♦ The Committee recommended that **a multiple policy approach** was required in dealing with the problems of working children.
 - ♦ **The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act was enacted in 1986** based on the recommendations of Gurupadaswamy Committee.
- The Union and State Governments need to prepare an effective action plan under the guidance and supervision of the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and of the **United Nations Organization (UNO)**.

Source: **IE**

LOK SABHA PASSES BILL ON CEC, EC APPOINTMENT

Context

- The Lok Sabha passed the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023**.
 - ♦ It was passed by the Rajya Sabha earlier.

Background:

- The Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991 **did not have a clause** related to the appointment of CEC and other ECs.
- The **Dinesh Goswami Committee on Electoral Reforms (1990)** and the **Law Commission in its 255th report on Electoral Reforms (2015)**, had suggested that the **CEC and ECs** should be **appointed by a committee** consisting of the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and the Leader of the Opposition or the largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

Recommendations of the Panel

- **Mechanism:** For the functioning of **DPS (District Project Societies)** with regard to uploading information of the rescued child on **PENCIL Portal**, awareness generation, facilitating vocational training, conducting baseline survey, etc put in place **in a time-bound manner** so that there is no discontinuity with regard to the mandate assigned to DPS through a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**.
- **Responsible reporting by traffic police:** It desires that the responsibility of reporting children selling goods or begging at traffic lights be assigned to the traffic police and they may also be held accountable for not reporting such instances.
- **Child-friendly Police stations and Courts:** Panel suggested the Labour Ministry to pursue other Ministries for having **child-friendly police stations and courts**.

- It is in **line with the Supreme Court's directions** (by exercising its powers under **Article 142**, to issue directions for doing 'complete justice' in any matter), adding that the committee mentioned in its judgement was a '**stop-gap**' arrangement.
- ♦ Earlier, the **Supreme Court of India** had ruled that the selection panel should comprise the **Prime Minister, the LoP in the Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India**.
- The **Supreme Court of India** drew reference to various other institutions **supporting Constitutional democracy** that have **independent mechanisms for the appointment** of its head/members like the National and State Human Rights Commission, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Information Commission, Lokpal etc.

Highlights of the Bill of 2023:

Election Commission Of India (Constitutional Provisions):

- **Article 324** provides for the composition of the Election Commission of India (ECI), consisting of the CSE and two other ECs.
- It provides that the appointment of the CEC and EC shall, **subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament**, be made by the President of India.
 - ♦ The President will periodically fix the number of ECs.
- It aims **to replace** the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, by **providing for the appointment, salary, and removal** of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs).
- **Appointment of the Commission:** The Commission will be appointed by the President, upon the recommendation of the Selection Committee.
 - ♦ **The Selection Committee** will comprise the **Prime Minister, Cabinet Minister, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha** (or leader of the single largest opposition party).
 - ♦ **A Search Committee** headed by the **Cabinet Secretary** will suggest five names to the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee may consider any person other than those suggested by the Search Committee.

- **Eligibility Criteria:** The CEC and ECs **must**:
 - be persons of integrity;
 - have knowledge and experience in the management and conduct of elections, and;
 - be or have been Secretary (or equivalent) to the government.
- **Term and Reappointment:**
 - ♦ Members of the Election Commission will hold office **for six years, or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier**.
 - ♦ Members of the Commission **cannot be re-appointed**.
 - ♦ If an EC is appointed as a CEC, the overall period of the term may not be more than six years.
- **Salary and Pension:**
 - ♦ The salary, allowances, and other conditions of service of the CEC and ECs will be **equivalent to that of the Cabinet Secretary**.
 - Under the 1991 Act, it was equivalent to the salary of a Supreme Court Judge.
 - They will have an option to draw pension and other retirement benefits from the service that they belonged to previously.
- **Removal:**
 - ♦ It retains the manner of removal of CEC and ECs as specified in the Constitution of India.
 - ♦ The CEC may be removed in the **same manner and on the same grounds as a Supreme Court Judge**.
 - ♦ **ECs** may be removed **only upon the recommendation of the CEC**.

Key Issues and Analysis:

- **Dominance of Union Government:** The selection process of the Election Commission may be dominated by the Union government, which has **implications for its independence**.
 - ♦ Accepting the Selection Committee's recommendations in spite of a vacancy **may effectively lead to a monopoly of government** members in selecting candidates.
- **Salary is fixed by the Government, not by the Act of Parliament:** Making the CEC and EC's salary equivalent to the Cabinet Secretary may lead to government influence as it is fixed by the Union government.

- ♦ This is unlike the salary of a Supreme Court judge which is fixed through an Act of Parliament.
- **Performing Quasi-Judicial Functions:** CECs and ECs also perform quasi-judicial functions. Limiting these posts to senior bureaucrats may exclude other suitable candidates.

Source: **TH**

WHO DECLARED 'NOMA' AS NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASE (NTD)

In Context

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has added the disease noma in the official list of **neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)**.

About

- The disease noma is also known as **gangrenous stomatitis or cancrum oris**, and is a rapidly progressive bacterial infection of the face and mouth.
- The disease is primarily found in **sub-Saharan Africa and mainly affects malnourished children** between the ages of 2 and 6 years.
- Poor oral hygiene, malnutrition, weakened immune systems, and extreme poverty are among the risk factors.

Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)

- WHO defines NTDs as a diverse group of communicable diseases that prevail in tropical and subtropical conditions in 149 countries.
- Populations living in poverty, without adequate sanitation and in close contact with infectious vectors and domestic animals and livestock are those worst affected.
- NTDs also find a mention in **SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals 2030)**.

Current Status in India

- India has the world's largest absolute burden of at **least 10 major NTDs**, including hookworm, dengue, lymphatic filariasis, leprosy, visceral leishmaniasis or kala-azar and rabies.
- NTDs continue to pose significant health burdens on some of the most disadvantaged communities in India. In the country, over 670 million people are at risk of **infection by Wuchereria bancrofti**

and **Brugia malayi** parasites in 272 districts which represents around 40 per cent of the global disease burden.

- ♦ India has the largest population in south Asia, and has been trying for two decades to eliminate these diseases. India aimed for their elimination by 2015, then 2018, then 2020. Post pandemic the loose target is now 2030.
- ♦ India has committed towards the target of eradicating lymphatic filariasis by the end of 2027.

National Programmes to Deal with NTDs

- The following national programmes in relation to tropical diseases are being implemented:
 - ♦ **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP):** for control of Dengue and elimination of Kala-azar and Lymphatic Filariasis.
 - ♦ **National Leprosy Eradication Programme:** India has achieved the elimination of leprosy at national level in December 2005. Focus is now to achieve elimination of leprosy at district level.
 - ♦ **National Programme for Control of Blindness:** services are provided for the control of Trachoma.
 - ♦ **School Health Programme:** services are provided for the prevention of Soil-transmitted Helminthiasis

Source: **ET**

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND BILATERAL TRADE MEETING

Context

- The India and New Zealand trade ministers discussed a range of bilateral and multilateral trade issues.

Highlights of the meeting

- **India and New Zealand** discussed the issue of **Public Stock Holding (PSH)**, ahead of the World Trade Organisation's Ministerial Conference.
- Both the nations welcomed the finalization of the Memorandum of Understanding to further liberalize the **bilateral Air Services Agreement** between the two countries.
- The importance of the annual meeting of the **Joint Trade Committee (JTC)**, established under

the **1986 India-New Zealand Trade Agreement** was acknowledged.

What is the issue of Public Stock Holding?

- As per WTO norms, agricultural subsidies should not exceed **10 percent** of the value of agricultural production for developing countries.
- However India and many other developing countries have been pushing for a permanent solution to the issue of providing subsidies for PSH, as it would allow them to expand schemes like MSP for foodgrains without worrying about breaching limits.
- Large agriculture commodity exporters such as the US and Canada are critical of such a move as they believe that higher subsidies are distorting agriculture prices in the global market.

Peace Clause

- WTO members at the **Bali ministerial meeting in 2013** put in place a mechanism called the Peace Clause to tackle the differences between nations on food subsidy.
- Under this clause, developing nations could not be dragged to arbitration if they did breach the prescribed limit of **10 per cent** on support to farmers.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

- WTO** is the international organization that deals with the rules of trade between countries.
- History:** WTO was founded in **1995**. It is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established in the wake of the Second World War.
- Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
- Member:** The WTO is run by its 164 members.
- Mandate:** Its aim is to promote free trade, which is done through trade agreements that are discussed and signed by the member states.
- The WTO also provides a forum for countries to negotiate trade rules and settle economic disputes between them.

WTO's Ministerial Conference

- The WTO also provides a forum for countries to negotiate trade rules and settle economic disputes between them.

WTO's Ministerial Conference

- The Ministerial Conference is the WTO's **top decision-making body**. It usually meets every two years.
 - All members of the WTO are involved in the Ministerial Conference and they can take decisions on all matters covered under any multilateral trade agreements.

Source: *IE*

DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNISING SELF-REGULATORY ORGANISATIONS (SROs)

In Context

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently placed on its website, a '**Draft Omnibus Framework for recognising Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) for its Regulated Entities (REs)**'.

About

- The move is in pursuance to **develop better industry standards for self-regulation** and sought comments from stakeholders.
- The need for this was felt following,
 - the **rapid growth of the REs in terms of number** as well as scale of operations, and
 - an increase in the adoption of innovative technologies and enhanced customer outreach**, thus making it difficult for the RBI to regulate the sector effectively.

About the Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs):

- An SRO is a **non-governmental organisation** that sets and enforces rules and standards relating to the conduct of entities in the industry (members) with the **aim of protecting the customer and promoting ethics, equality, and professionalism**.
- Their **self-regulatory processes are administered through impartial mechanisms** such that members operate in a disciplined environment and accept penal actions by the SRO.
- An SRO is **expected to address concerns beyond the narrow self-interests of the industry**, such as to protect workers, customers or other participants in the ecosystem.

- Regulations, standards and dispute resolution by an SRO **do not replace but supplement existing laws or regulations.**
- The recognised SRO serves as a **two-way communication channel** between its members and the RBI.
- Those entities who are interested in being recognised as SROs **will have to apply to the RBI**, which issues a letter of recognition.

About the Regulated Entities(REs)

- REs means all Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs)/ Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)/ Local Area Banks (LABs)/ All Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs) /State and Central Co-operative Banks (StCBs / CCBs) and any other entity which has been **licenced under Section 22 of Banking Regulation Act, 1949.**
- They as a group shall be referred as '**banks**', **All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs), All Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs),** Miscellaneous Non-Banking Companies (MNBCs) and Residuary Non-Banking Companies (RNBCs).

Highlights of the draft

- The draft omnibus framework **contains broad parameters applicable to any Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO)**
 - ♦ It includes **objectives, responsibilities, eligibility criteria, governance standards, application process** and other basic conditions for grant of recognition to the SRO.
- The existing SROs already recognized by the Reserve Bank would **continue to be governed by the terms and conditions under which they were recognised**, unless this framework is specifically extended to such SROs.

Significance

- In general, the **SRO is expected to adhere to a set of overarching objectives for betterment of the sector they represent**, foster advancement and address critical industry concerns within the broader financial system, the regulator said.
- These objectives would **collectively define the expected role and responsibilities of the SRO** in steering the sector towards enhanced **professionalism, compliance, innovation, and ethical conduct.**

- This includes a strong emphasis on the development and adherence to **robust self-regulatory principles, practices and conventions that are conducive to the furtherance of the sector.**
- **Upholding the principles of good faith and avoiding conflicts of interest** should be the cornerstones of its operations.
- The SRO is also **expected to act as a bridge between the REs and the Reserve Bank.**

Way Ahead

- **Final omnibus framework** would be issued after considering the stakeholder comments.
- **Reserve Bank shall issue separate notification inviting applications for SROs** for a category/class of its REs, within the broad contours of final omnibus framework.

Source: **TH**

INDIA SKILLS REPORT 2024

In Context

- The **11th edition of India Skills Report 2024** has been released by the **talent assessment firm Wheebox.**
 - ♦ Theme of the report is '**Impact of AI on the Future of Work, Skilling & Mobility**'.

Major Highlights

- **Employability:** The report surveyed youths through a National Employability Test which indicated that the employability in India has **improved.**
 - ♦ **51.25%** of the assessed youths were found to be employable with the required skills.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Skill:** India boasts a global leadership position in AI skill penetration and talent concentration, earning an impressive score of 3.09.
 - ♦ India has 416K AI professionals as of 2023 and will manage to meet the current demand of approximately 629K, which will surge to 1 million by 2026.
- **Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram, in Kerala** have emerged as the **most preferred places to work** among the youth in India.
- **Highly Employable Youth:** Haryana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and Telangana have the highest concentration of highly employable youth.

- ♦ In the age range of 22 to 25 years, Uttar Pradesh stands out with the highest talent concentration at 74.77%, followed closely by Maharashtra at 71.97%.
- **Computer Skills: Thiruvananthapuram** claimed first position in excellence in nurturing computer skills, while Kerala came third overall among States.
- **Kochi** is the top choice among Indian cities for female job aspirants.

Government of India's Initiatives for Skill Development

- **Schemes & Initiatives through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**
 - ♦ Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
 - ♦ Rozgar Mela
 - ♦ Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK)
 - ♦ Capacity Building Scheme
 - ♦ Udaan
 - ♦ School Initiatives and Higher Education
 - ♦ India International Skill Centres (IISCs)
 - ♦ Pre Departure Orientation Training (PDOT)
- **Schemes & Initiatives through Directorate General of Training (DGT)**
 - ♦ Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS)
 - ♦ Crafts Instructor Training Scheme (CITS)
 - ♦ Apprenticeship Training under the Apprentices Act, 1961
 - ♦ Advanced Vocational Training Scheme (AVTS)
 - ♦ Vocational Training Programme For Women
- **Schemes related to Entrepreneurship**
 - ♦ Pradhan Mantri 'YUVA' Yojana

Source: **TH**

NEWS IN SHORT

UNESCO ASIA-PACIFIC AWARDS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION 2023

In Context

- **Three heritage projects from Punjab and Haryana** have secured prestigious spots among the **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation**.

About

- In **2023 edition**, **Rambagh Gate in Amritsar, Punjab** received the highest honour- the Award of Excellence, the **Church of Epiphany in Gurugram, Haryana** earned the Award of Merit and **Pipal Haveli, Gurdaspur, Punjab** was honoured for its sustainable development.
 - ♦ Earlier in 2022, **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, Domakonda Fort, Telangana, and Byculla Station, Mumbai** accorded special recognition.
- Additionally, three projects received the **Award of Distinction**, including
 - ♦ the Fanling Golf Course in Hong Kong SAR, China;
 - ♦ Dongguan Garden Residences in Yangzhou, China; and
 - ♦ **Karnikara Mandapam at Kunnamangalam Bhagawati Temple in Kerala, India.**
- Five projects earned the **Award of Merit**, namely
 - ♦ Yan Nan Yuan at Peking University, Beijing, China;
 - ♦ Pan Family Residence in Suzhou, China;
 - ♦ **Church of Epiphany in Haryana, India;**
 - ♦ **David Sassoon Library and Reading Room in Mumbai, India; and**
 - ♦ **Bikaner House in New Delhi, India.**

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation programme

- **Established since:** 2000
- **Objective:** Recognizing the efforts of private individuals and organizations in restoring, conserving, and transforming structures and buildings of heritage value in the region.
 - ♦ By acknowledging private efforts, the Awards programme encourages others to undertake conservation projects within their own communities.
- UNESCO introduced the new category, **'Special Recognition for Sustainable Development'**, in **2020**, together with an updated set of Awards Criteria to acknowledge the role and contribution of cultural heritage to sustainable development within the broader framework of the **UN 2030 Agenda**.
- The awarded projects **serve as a testament to how cultural heritage can be successfully preserved** whilst at the same time mobilized to be integrated into various local development strategies.

Insights about the winning projects in Punjab and Haryana:

1. Rambagh Gate & Ramparts, Amritsar:



- The Rambagh Gate is situated at the **convergence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 19th-century city wall and Amritsar's new city**.
- This **three-storied structure** now serves the historical gate community as a **traditional market, a government school, and a municipal printing press**.

2. Church of Epiphany, Gurgaon:



- The **Church of the Epiphany** was originally built to cater to the spiritual needs of the few British civil and military officers posted in **Gurgaon during the 1860s**.

3. Pipal Haveli, Gurdaspur:



- Pipal Haveli represents a **contemporary, community-centred, multi-use educational building** deeply rooted in sustainable principles.

- Situated in rural Punjab, it **emphasises ecological and traditional building methods**, utilising locally sourced materials and vernacular architectural language.
- Pipal Haveli **supports women's empowerment** through initiatives like the **BaRi Collective**, offering programmes that strengthen women's livelihoods via environmentally conscious craft practices.

Source: **IE**

'ANGOLA' LEAVES OPEC

Context

- Africa's second-biggest oil producer 'Angola' is leaving OPEC after disagreements over production targets.

About

- The producer group **lowered Angola's oil output target** as part of a series of cuts led by Saudi Arabia to help prop up prices.
- Hence Angola clashed with Saudi Arabia at recent meetings and decided to leave the group.

About OPEC

- **The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** was established in **1960** at the **Baghdad conference**.
- **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria
- **Member:** Currently, it has 13 members including Angola, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Venezuela.
 - ♦ **Angola** had joined **OPEC in 2007**.

Angola

- **Angola**, a country located in southwestern Africa.
- **Bordering Nations:** It is bordered by **Namibia** to the south, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** to the northeast, **Zambia** to the east, and the **Atlantic Ocean** to the west.



Source: **AIR**

NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS 2023

In Context

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports announced the **National Sports Awards 2023**.

About

- The awardees will receive their awards from the **President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan**.
- National Sports Awards are given **every year** to recognize and reward excellence in sports.
- **Announced by:** Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.
- **Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award:** The award is conferred for the most outstanding performance in the area of sports by a sportsperson over the time period of the **last four years**.
- **Arjuna Awards for Outstanding Performance in Sports and Games:** The award is conferred for great performance over last four years and for demonstrating qualities of sportsmanship, a sense of discipline, and leadership.
- **Dronacharya Award for Outstanding Coaches in Sports and Games:** The award is conferred to **coaches** for demonstrating outstanding work consistently and for making it possible for sportspersons to ace in International events.
- **Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime Achievement in Sports and Games:** The award is conferred to honor the sportspersons who have actually contributed to the field of sports through their performance, and who contribute to sports even **post-retirement**.
- **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy:** The award is given to the overall high-performing **university in inter-university tournaments**.

Source: **PIB**

UNESCO'S 2023 PRIX VERSAILLES

Context

- Terminal 2 (T2) of Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru wins a **special prize at UNESCO's 2023 Prix Versailles**.

A Prix Versailles Initiative:

- It is for recognising the 'World's Most Beautiful' Achievements, which are granted by the **Prix Versailles**.
- These achievements, awarded each year by the Prix Versailles, are examples presented to the world, signs of exceptional architecture and design.
- It was established in 2015.
- It focuses on intelligent sustainability as a cultural driver, acknowledging innovation, creativity, reflection of local heritage, ecological efficiency, and values of social interaction.

2023 World Titles:

- The World Judges Panel for the Prix Versailles 2023, chaired by renowned fashion designer Elie Saab, announced the latest architectural projects to win a World Title.
 - ♦ **Prix Versailles:** Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport, Satellite Concourse in Shenzhen, China;
 - ♦ **Special Prize for an Interior:** Kempegowda International Airport, **Terminal 2 of Bengaluru, India**.
 - ♦ **Special Prize for an Exterior:** Newark Liberty International Airport, Terminal A of Newark, NJ, United States.

Earlier recognition of T2 of Kempegowda International Airport:

- A **Platinum LEED rating by the US Green Building Council** before operational commencement.
- **Platinum Certification** under the **IGBC Green New Building** rating system.

Source: **TH**