



THE HINDU



## GS Paper 3-Science and Tech

# Plan to amend nuclear liability law may enthuse American, French firms

Announcement comes ahead of Modi's visit to Paris and Washington this week; government's U-turn a decade later spells hope for Westinghouse, Electricite de France plans, deals for new-age small reactors; experts hail the decision, but call for more clarity on the amendments proposed

Suhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

**A**head of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Paris and Washington from Monday, the Union government's announcement that it would amend the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act (CLNDA), 2010, and the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, is likely to enthuse American and French nuclear power companies, whose projects have been deadlocked due to legal concerns for more than 15 years. However, experts who welcomed the decision, called for more clarity on the amendments.

The announcement, which marked a sharp U-turn from the government's position in 2015, was made in the Budget speech on February 1. In

MoU, signed in 2012, to build six AP1000 reactors at Kovvada in Andhra Pradesh.

In addition, it is expected to help India tap into new nuclear power technologies, particularly for small modular reactors (SMR), now gaining popularity in developed economies.

"For an active partnership with the private sector towards this goal, amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act will be taken up," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in the speech, calling for "at least 100 GW" of nuclear energy by 2047, and making an outlay of ₹20,000 crore for the development of five SMRs to be operationalised in India by 2033. India has a nuclear power capacity of 6,780 MW from 22 reac-



**Joint effort:** India's only foreign nuclear operator, Rosatom, is involved in the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu.

mandate a high degree of liability for suppliers and contradict the international Convention for Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC) which focuses only on the liability of operators of the plant. The clauses were inserted in 2012, following heated debates in Parliament, where the then-in-Opposition NDA members

"This law was amended by the government just to satisfy the Opposition at the time, even though it was clear that the international operators legal liability clause would create problems down the road," Shyam Saran, former Foreign Secretary, who was the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change at

nistry declined to comment on what the proposed amendments would entail. Officials aware of discussions on the issue said that while the CLNDA would be amended to separate operator's liability from supplier's liability to bring it in line with the CSC, the Atomic Energy Act would liberalise investment in power projects in India.

### Legal standard

"The pragmatic way out is to break the deadlock by amending the CLNDA to bring it on par with international conventions to which India itself is a party – so that there is a clear legal standard in our domestic legislation aligned with international standards and is applicable to international partners and domestic industry," said Venkatesh Verma, former

courage U.S. energy exports, for both oil and LNG, as well as nuclear power, and France and India negotiating deals for SMR projects, the issue will be on the agenda as Mr. Modi travels to France and the U.S. this week. It remains to be seen whether the government's plans to amend the laws will finally forge the breakthrough required, two decades after India signed civil nuclear deals with the U.S. and France.

Significantly, in a "Frequently Asked Questions" memorandum issued by the Ministry after the Republic Day visit to India by U.S. President Barack Obama in February 2015, the government had said that there was "no proposal to amend the Act or the Rules", and that U.S. officials had reached a "general understanding that In-



## KEY POINTS

- The Indian government plans to amend the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act (CLNDA) and Atomic Energy Act to help progress stalled nuclear power projects with American and French companies.
- The amendments aim to advance stalled projects like EDF's Jaitapur reactor and Westinghouse's Kovvada reactor. They also focus on promoting new nuclear technologies, including small modular reactors (SMRs).





THE HINDU



## GS Paper 2-Governance

### In poll-bound Meghalaya, rat-hole coal mining hopes ride on Article 371

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

A regional party in poll-bound Meghalaya has indicated that bringing the State under the purview of Article 371 could help resume rat-hole coal mining, which has been banned since April 2014.

Article 371 of the Constitution grants special powers to certain States.

Strong Pillar Kharjana, one of the candidates of the Voice of the People Party (VPP), cited the example of Nagaland to seek Article 371 for Meghalaya.

Specific to Nagaland, Article 371A has special provisions guaranteeing the protection of land and its resources apart from the Naga customary law and procedure.

Mr. Kharjana is contesting from the Mawkhar-Pyn-



**Narrow path:** A file photo of rat-hole mines seen in East Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya. RITU RAJ KONWAR

are scheduled for February 21. Elections to the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) will also be held on the same day.

The two tribal councils have 30 seats each but elections are held in 29 while the Governor nominates a member.

Claiming that rat-hole mining is rampant in Nagaland, Mr. Kharjana said the

Article 371A. The NGT banned rat-hole mining in Meghalaya in 2014. The ban, upheld by the Supreme Court, was extended to other areas of North-east. "We understand that the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India empowers a district council to make laws on allotment of land, social custom, forest, etc., but Paragraph 12A of

Kharjana said.

In February 2024, Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio told the Assembly that Article 371A has been the major hurdle in the State government's efforts to regulate small-scale illegal coal mining activities.

Barring the VPP and the Congress, which advocated the incorporation of some provisions of Article 371 to make the Sixth Schedule more potent, the other parties agreed that the two constitutional provisions were incompatible.

The discussions on Article 371 intensified a week after the Coal Controller under the Ministry of Coal signed three escrow agreements with the project proponents for mining sites at three locations - Pyndengshalang in West Khasi Hills, Saryngkham in West Jaintia Hills, and Lumiakhi





## KEY POINTS

- India consciously adopted 'quasi-federalism' to accommodate multitudes of identities, religions and languages.
- Special provisions provided to other States are listed in Articles 371 (A–J) in Part XXI of the Constitution, which deals with "temporary, transitional and special powers for certain States."



## Article 371 - 371J



THE HINDU



## GS Paper 2-Governance

### ₹500-crore fund gives autonomy for National Mission on Manuscripts

Allocation over next six years to be done through special committee; it is not yet clear if the new 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' announced in the Budget will be a part of the NMM or a separate entity

Sreeparna Chakrabarty  
NEW DELHI

Steps have been initiated to make the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) autonomous, with the Centre allocating nearly ₹500 crore over the next six years separately to the institution through a Special Finance Committee.

The NMM was established in February 2003 by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. A unique project in its programme and mandate, the Mission seeks to unearth and preserve the vast manuscript wealth of India.

From this year, the NMM has been again put under a Central sector scheme. For Central sector schemes, all initiatives are



**Conservation efforts:** The NMM has digitised 3.5 lakh manuscripts that contain 3.5 crore pages. FILE PHOTO

of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). But for January to March, the funds for the institution were routed through the Sahitya Akademi.

the body till 2031.

However, sources said it was not yet clear whether the new 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' for manuscripts, announced in the Union Budget last week, would be a part of the NMM or be

cover more than one crore manuscripts.

It would undertake the "survey, documentation and conservation" of India's manuscript heritage lying with academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collectors, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her budget speech on February 1.

*The Hindu* had reported last October that the Union Culture Ministry was set to "revive and relaunch" the NMM, and was mulling the formation of an autonomous body to help preserve ancient texts.

According to the Ministry, the NMM has documented around 5.2 million manuscripts across the country.



## KEY POINTS

- The National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), established in 2003, is being made autonomous with ₹500 crore allocated over six years. Now part of a Central sector scheme, it has been allocated ₹491.66 crore till 2031. The Gyan Bharatam Mission, aimed at conserving one crore manuscripts, may or may not be linked to the NMM.





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## GS Paper 3-Environment

### *Mithuns get a glow-up for road safety*

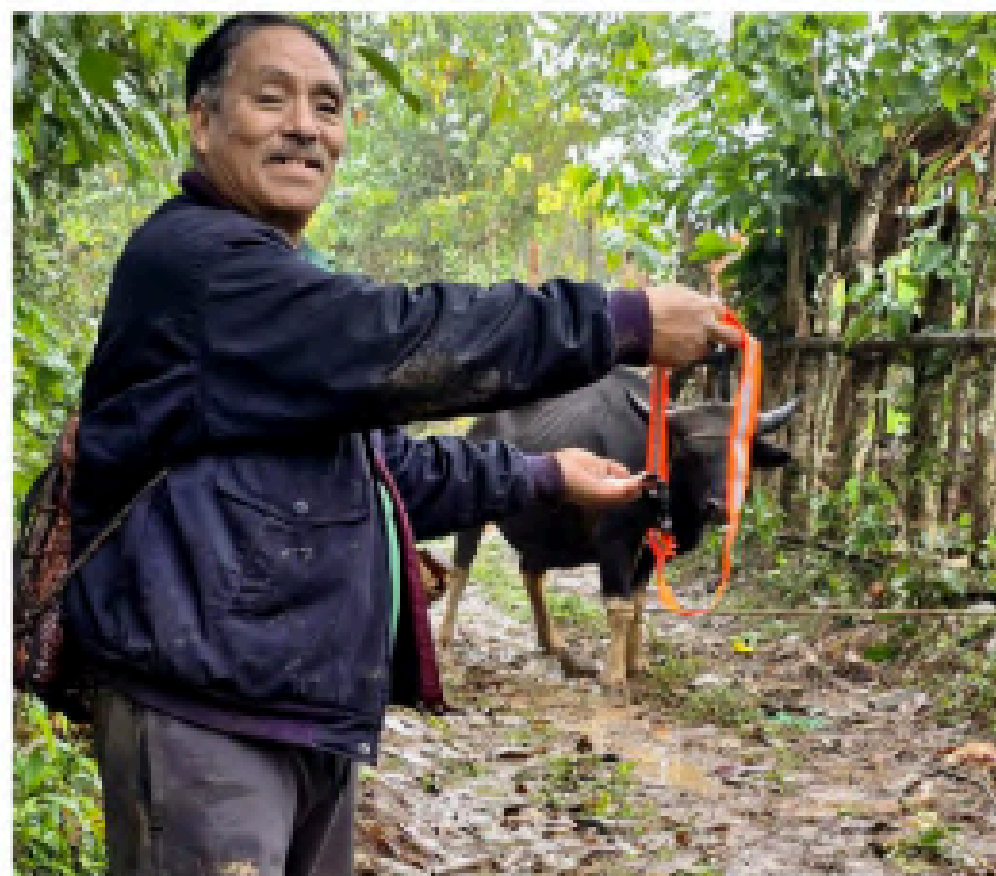
The semi-wild bovines of Arunachal Pradesh will soon wear fluorescent collars that are visible enough for vehicle drivers on highways, thus ensuring the safety of both humans and animals

**Rahul Karmakar**  
GUWAHATI

**T**he mithun, a semi-wild bovine creature, will soon start wearing fluorescent collars to be visible enough for drivers on a major highway in central Arunachal Pradesh's Siang district.

The mithun (*Bos frontalis*) is a free-ranging animal and stays mostly in the jungles. Seeking warmth, mithuns usually spend winter nights on the roads, leading to accidents fatal for humans and animals.

"Unlike cows, mithuns



A mithun owner displaying a fluorescent collar received from the Pangin Circle Officer and PWD (Highways) Executive Engineer in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

presented with the collars after they were convinced that their animals would be safer at night. "We thought we had too many collars. As it turned out, we could not give the collars to quite a few mithun owners," Ms. Pertin, who is also in charge of the Kebang Circle, said.

"We wanted the mithuns to be as safe as the humans who use the roads. We hope our initiative will serve the purpose," Mr. Dai said.

The mithun collar idea has caught on, officials in Pangin said. There have been enquiries from



## KEY POINTS

- The mithun (*Bos frontalis*) is a semi-domesticated bovine species significant to the socio-economic and cultural life of tribal communities. It thrives in cool climates and is mostly found in Northeast India, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Also found in parts of Southeast Asia, it is primarily reared for meat.



## GS 3-Economy

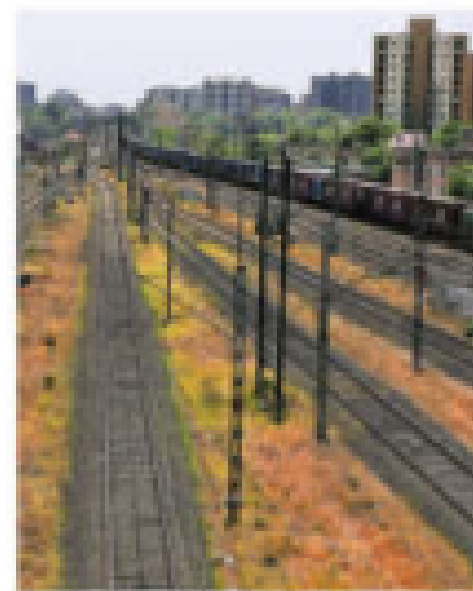
### Bifurcating one of the highest revenue-generating zones of Railways: What will change?

The Union Cabinet last Friday gave ex-post facto approval

**DHEERAJ MISHRA**  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 9

NEARLY A month after Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the headquarters of South Coast Railway in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, the Union Cabinet on Friday gave the ex-post facto approval for the plan to create South Coast Railway Zone. The new railway zone has been created as per Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014. It will be the 18th zone of the

#### TO BE THE 18TH ZONE OF THE INDIAN RAILWAYS



**THE UNION** Cabinet Friday gave the ex-post facto approval for the plan to create South Coast Railway Zone. The new railway zone has been created as per Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. It will be the 18th zone of the Indian Railways, whose jurisdiction has been carved out from the East Coast Railway and South Central Railway zones.

## KEY POINTS

- The Union Cabinet approved the South Coast Railway (SCoR) zone to improve efficiency, covering parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu.
- The Waltair division's revenue sections will be split, creating a new division at Rayagada. Odisha's political parties have opposed the move, citing economic concerns.



GS 2-IR

## Baltic states switch to European power grid, ending Russia ties

REUTERS

VILNIUS, FEBRUARY 9

THE BALTIC states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania completed a switch from Russia's electricity grid to the EU's system on Sunday, severing Soviet-era ties amid heightened security after the suspected sabotage of several subsea cables and pipelines.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen hailed the move, years in the planning, as marking a new era of freedom for the region, in a speech at a ceremony in Vilnius alongside



From left: Estonian President Alar Karis, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and

## KEY POINTS

- The Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—disconnected from Russia's power grid to integrate with the EU's electricity network.
- Located in Northern Europe, they are bordered by Russia, Belarus, Poland, and the Baltic Sea.





# PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU

## GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



## GS3-Defence

Ministry of Defence



## Aero India 2025

A Glimpse into the Future of Aerospace and Defence Innovation

Posted On: 08 FEB 2025 11:41AM by PIB Delhi

## KEY POINTS

- Aero India, Asia's largest air show, is a biennial event in Bengaluru organized by the Indian Ministry of Defence. The 15th edition, from February 10–14, 2025, at Yelahanka Air Force Station, will focus on "The Runway to a Billion Opportunities," featuring air shows, exhibitions, the Defence Ministers' Conclave, and CEOs' Round-Table.





## GS Paper 3-Defence

**Joint Military Exercise 'Cyclone 2025' Between India And Egypt To Begin Today In Rajasthan**



## KEY POINTS

- Cyclone 2025," a joint military exercise between India and Egypt, begins today in Rajasthan. The 14-day exercise focuses on enhancing defence cooperation and special forces interoperability, featuring counter-terrorism, reconnaissance, and specialized missions.

