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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 27-03-2025

Table of Content

INDIA PITCH FOR UNSC REFORMS

Context

- India stresses the **need for UNSC reform to achieve lasting peace in conflict situations.**

Major Highlights

- **Security of Peacekeepers:** Pacekeepers are facing non-state actors, armed groups, terrorists, and complex threats.
    - India emphasizes the importance of safety and security for peacekeepers, calling for justice for the crimes against them.
- **Modernisation:** Advocates for integrating advanced surveillance, communication, and data analytics into peacekeeping operations.
    - India offers training courses through its Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK), addressing modern peacekeeping demands.
- **Funding:** Stresses the need for adequately funded and resourced peacekeeping missions, with resources matching the mandates.
- **Inclusion in Mandate Formation:** Calls for the inclusion of troop-contributing countries in the mandate formulation process to adapt operations to new realities.

About the UNSC

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is **one of the principal organs** of the United Nations, responsible for **maintaining international peace and security.**
- It was established in **1945** as part of the UN Charter and is composed of **15 member states**, including **five permanent members** with veto power—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and **ten non-permanent members** elected for **two-year terms** by the General Assembly.
- It is headquartered in **New York City.**

Need for the Reforms in the UNSC

- **Current Composition:** The current composition of the Security Council has **under-representation and un-representation of key regions**.
- **Inability to Address Conflicts:** The existing composition of the Council has demonstrated significant limitations in effectively addressing major international conflicts. This has undermined its credibility and hindered its core mandate of upholding international peace and security.
- **Changes in World Order:** The world has undergone significant **changes since 1945** and the **new realities need to be reflected** in the permanent membership.

- **Veto Power:** Currently, **only the five permanent members** hold veto powers and through its use have stalled action in the Council to address global challenges and conflicts such as in Ukraine and Gaza.
    - The remaining 10 nations in the Council are elected to sit as non-permanent members for two-year terms and **do not have veto powers.**
- **Legitimacy:** The disproportionate power held by the five permanent members, particularly their veto power **lead to a perception of unfairness and lack of legitimacy.**

Why Should India Get Permanent Membership of UNSC?

- **Global Population and Representation:** India is one of the world's most populous countries, accounting for approximately 18% of the global population.
    - Such demographic significance warrants proportional representation in global decision-making bodies like the UNSC.
- **Economic Powerhouse:** India has emerged as a major global economic force, ranking among the top economies by GDP (nominal) and GDP (PPP).
    - Its economic strength contributes significantly to global stability and development, which aligns with the UNSC's mandate to maintain international peace and security.
- **Commitment to Peacekeeping:** India has been one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping missions, demonstrating its commitment to global peace and security.
- **Strategic Importance:** India occupies a pivotal geopolitical position in South Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.
    - Its influence extends beyond regional boundaries, making it crucial in addressing global security challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and maritime security.
- **Democratic Values:** As the world's largest democracy, India upholds principles of pluralism, tolerance, and inclusivity, which are fundamental to the UN's ethos.
- **Support from Member States:** India enjoys broad support from a significant number of UN member states, including influential nations from various regions.
    - This backing reflects recognition of India's global role and its potential contributions to enhancing the UNSC's capacity to respond to global crises.

Limitations in Introducing the Reforms in UNSC

- **Veto Power of Permanent Members:** Any reforms to the composition or working methods of the UNSC require the approval of the five permanent members.
  - These countries have divergent interests and are reluctant to support changes that could diminish their influence within the Council.
- **Regional Dynamics:** Regional rivalries and geopolitical tensions complicate efforts to reform the Council.
- **Complexity of the Reform Process:** Amending the UN Charter to enact reforms requires a lengthy and complex process involving ratification by a significant number of member states, making it difficult to enact substantive reforms.
- **Chinese Opposition:** China being a permanent member blocks the growth of India becoming a Permanent Member.

Way Ahead

- It is important that both the **permanent and non-permanent membership** be representative of the world as it is today, not the world as it existed in the wake of the Second World War.
- Reforms in the UNSC are essential for maintaining its relevance, legitimacy, and effectiveness in addressing the complex security challenges facing the international community in the 21st century.
- However, achieving consensus on such reforms among the UN's member states remains a challenging and ongoing process.

Source: ET

INDIA-CHINA LOOK FORWARD TO STABILIZE TIES

Context

- The Indian delegation discussed **cross-border cooperation with Chinese officials** during the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs.

Key Highlights

- The meeting was part of efforts by the **two sides to normalise bilateral relations**.
- It also came in the wake of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent remarks** about India-China cooperation **being essential for global stability and prosperity.**
- India and China explored ways to rebuild ties, focusing on people-to-people exchanges, including **resumption of direct flights and Kailash Manasarovar Yatra.**
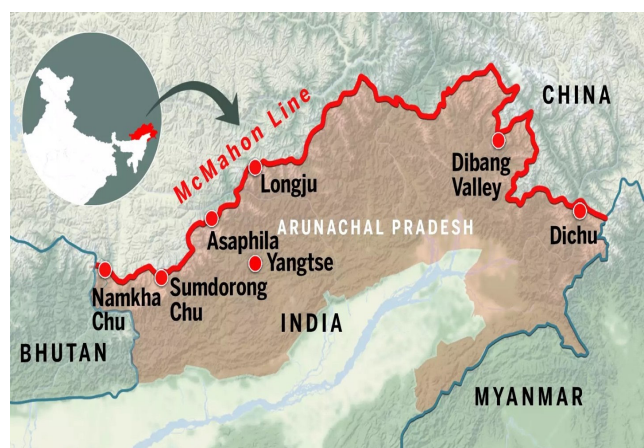
- The two sides discussed **resuming dialogue in a "step-by-step" manner to stabilize relations.**

India-China Relations (2025 marks the 75 Years of Ties)

- **Panchsheel Agreement:**
  - Signed in 1954 which emphasized the principles of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, forming the foundation of India-China diplomatic relations.
- **Historical Tensions:**
  - Strained since the **1962 Sino-Indian war,** deepened by **recent clashes and mistrust.**
  - India restricted Chinese investments, banned Chinese apps (e.g., TikTok), and halted flights to China.
- **Trade Relations:** China overtook the U.S. in 2024 as India's largest trading partner, with over $100 billion in imports. Despite tensions, economic ties continue to grow.
- **Ongoing Mechanisms:** Despite tensions, mechanisms like the Special Representatives (SR) and Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) have been in place to address the boundary issue.
- **Recent Developments:**
  - **2024 Disengagement:** India and China announced successful disengagement in eastern Ladakh.

Key areas of concern in India-China Relations

- **Ongoing Border Tensions:**
  - The unresolved border dispute spans over 2,000 miles, marked by frequent clashes.
  - Incidents in Doklam (2017), Galwan Valley (2020), and northeastern states (Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh).

- **Military Infrastructure:** Both countries have heavily fortified the border with roads, railways, and airstrips for rapid troop mobilization.

- **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** India has expressed reservations about China's Belt and Road Initiative, especially regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through territory of India.
- **Trade imbalance:** While politically desirable, reducing trade dependence is complicated by China's economic influence and India's need for foreign investment.
- **China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region:**
  - **Sri Lanka:** China's presence at Hambantota Port and investments in an oil refinery raise concerns in India.
  - **Nepal:** China's investments in infrastructure (e.g., Pokhara airport) challenge India's strategic position.
  - **Bangladesh:** China's growing influence, including loan agreements, threatens India's regional influence.
  - **Myanmar:** China's deepening ties with Myanmar's junta, including the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, strengthen its presence in India's backyard.

India's Efforts to Address these concerns

- **India's Defense Partnerships:** Strengthened ties with France, Germany, Spain, and expanded naval alliances in Southeast Asia.
- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad):** India's shift towards the U.S. and its allies to counter China's growing influence.
- **Maritime Security:** India has prioritized maritime security, expanding its naval capabilities and strengthening defense ties with the U.S. and Japan.
- **Countering the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** India joined alternative infrastructure projects such as the Global Infrastructure Facility and India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor to counter China's BRI.
- **Trade Relations:** India seeks to reduce reliance on Chinese goods, especially in electronics and renewable energy.

Way Ahead

- **Addressing the Border Issue:** Resolving boundary disputes remains critical. Continued efforts through military and diplomatic negotiations—such as recent developments regarding Depsang and Demchok along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)—are essential to ensure stability and prevent future escalations.
- **Diplomatic Engagements:** Sustaining open and constructive dialogue is key. India should strengthen bilateral communication mechanisms and actively engage through regional and multilateral platforms such as BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and others to foster mutual understanding and strategic stability.

Source: IE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GST REGIME

In News

- The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** has recommended a simplified Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime in its 19th report.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

- The idea of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India was first proposed during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure.
  - In December 2014, the Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill was introduced, passed in 2015, and ratified in 2016 as the 101st Constitutional Amendment, paving the way for GST.
  - GST was officially launched on 1st July 2017 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking a significant step in India's tax reform.
- It is a **destination-based consumption** tax levied at all stages, from manufacture to final consumption, with credit for taxes paid at previous stages.
- The tax burden is ultimately borne by the final consumer, and the revenue is allocated to the authority governing the place of consumption (place of supply).

Objectives

- **GST** aims to simplify India's indirect tax system by combining multiple Central and State taxes into one, reducing the cascading effect and creating a unified national market.
- It stimulates economic growth, broadens the tax base, increases trade volumes, and improves tax compliance.

Challenges

- The implementation of GST has faced challenges, including complex compliance requirements and high costs for small businesses.
- Frequent changes in tax rates and multiple tax slabs have caused confusion.
- Issues with refund processes create liquidity problems, and cross-border trade is complicated by varying GST rates across states.

Latest Recommendations

- The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC**) urged the Finance Ministry to review the current framework to eliminate unnecessary complexities and ease compliance.

- The Committee expressed concerns about issues in the **biometric-based Aadhaar authentication process,** potentially hindering the "One Nation One Tax" vision.

- **Other Recommendations**
  - **Streamlining the process by consolidating forms**, reducing filing frequency, and introducing a tiered compliance approach for smaller businesses.
  - **Improving the portal's ease of use** and providing clearer guidance for taxpayers during filing.
  - **Addressing the issue of harsh criminal penalties** for unintentional errors in compliance, particularly for honest taxpayers.
  - **Using data analytics and AI tools** to accurately project GST revenue, addressing the decline in indirect tax share.
  - **Implementing a more efficient refund system** with clear timelines, regular updates, and a dedicated grievance redressal mechanism.
  - **Simplifying GST compliance for MSMEs** by automating return filing and refund processing with reduced frequency and easier online reporting.

Source :TH

GOVT. SUBMITS STATUS REPORT ON DEEPFAKES

Context

- Recently, the MeitY submitted a comprehensive **status report to the Delhi High Court,** addressing the growing concerns surrounding deepfake technology.
  - It highlights the challenges posed by deepfakes, particularly in the context of misinformation, privacy violations, and malicious uses, while proposing actionable recommendations to mitigate these risks.

About Deepfake Technology

- The term **'deepfake'** originates from 'deep learning' and 'fake' referring to AI-generated synthetic media that manipulates or replaces real content with fabricated, hyper-realistic counterparts.

- Deepfake models use **generative adversarial networks (GANs)**, where two AI models — the generator and the discriminator — compete against each other to improve the authenticity of the generated content.

Working of Deepfakes

- **Data Collection:** The AI is trained on a large dataset of real images, videos, or audio recordings of the target person.

- **Feature Learning:** The deep learning model learns facial structures, expressions, and speech patterns.

- **Synthesis & Manipulation:** AI algorithms generate synthetic media that can swap faces, alter expressions, or mimic voices.

- **Refinement via Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs):** The generated content is refined to improve realism and reduce detectable inconsistencies.

Key Concerns Highlighted in the Status Report

- **Lack of Uniform Definition:** Stakeholders emphasized the absence of a standardized **definition for 'deepfake',** complicating efforts to regulate and detect such content effectively.

- **Targeting Women During Elections:** Deepfakes have been increasingly used to target women, especially during state elections, raising serious concerns about privacy and the spread of harmful content.

Other Concerns Surrounding Deepfakes

- **Misinformation and Political Manipulation:** In India, where social media platforms play a crucial role in political discourse, deepfake videos can be weaponized to create unrest.

- **Threat to National Security:** Malicious actors can use deepfakes to impersonate government officials, leading to misinformation or even cyber warfare tactics that threaten national security.

- **Financial Frauds and Cybercrime:** AI-generated deepfake voices have been used to mimic corporate executives, leading to financial fraud.
  - In India's digital economy, such crimes could severely impact businesses and individuals.

- **Violation of Privacy and Defamation:** Deepfakes are frequently used to create non-consensual explicit content, disproportionately targeting women.

- **Undermining Trust in Media:** When realistic fake content circulates widely, it erodes public trust in authentic journalism and evidence-based reporting, affecting democratic processes.

Government Response and Legal Framework

- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** It provides a broad framework for cybercrimes but

lacks specific provisions addressing deepfake-related offenses.

- ◆ **Section 66D:** Punishes identity theft and impersonation using digital means.
- ◆ **Section 67:** Penalizes the publishing of obscene material, which can be used against deepfake pornography.
- **Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB) [Now Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023]:** It aims to regulate the collection and use of personal data. Misuse of deepfakes involving personal identity could be challenged under this act.
- **Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code (2021):** These rules mandate social media platforms to proactively monitor and remove harmful content, including deepfakes, failing which they may lose legal immunity under the IT Act.
- **Fact-Checking and AI Detection Initiatives:** Platforms like **PIB Fact Check** have been actively debunking deepfake videos spreading misinformation.
  - ◆ Indian start-ups and researchers are developing AI tools to detect and flag deepfake content.
- **Global Collaboration:** India is collaborating with global tech firms and governments to combat deepfakes through policy discussions and AI research initiatives.

Challenges in Regulation

- **Intermediary Liability Frameworks:** The report raised concerns about over-reliance on intermediary liability frameworks, which determine the extent to which platforms can be held accountable for content.
- **Detection Difficulties:** Audio deepfakes, in particular, pose significant challenges for detection, underscoring the need for advanced technological solutions.

Recommendations from the Report

- **Mandatory Content Disclosure:** The report advocates for regulations requiring AI-generated content to be disclosed and labelled, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- **Focus on Malicious Actors:** Emphasis was placed on targeting the malicious uses of deepfake technology rather than benign or creative applications.
- **Improved Enforcement:** Instead of introducing new laws, the report recommends enhancing the capacity of investigative and enforcement agencies to tackle deepfake-related crimes effectively.

Source: IE

INDIA'S BIOECONOMY & ROAD AHEAD

In News

- **India BioEconomy Report** has pegged the value of India's bioeconomy in 2024 at more than $165 billion, accounting for over **4.2% of the country's GDP.**
  - ◆ The report highlighted ample opportunity for this sector to grow to about **$300 billion by 2030, and to $1 trillion by 2047.**
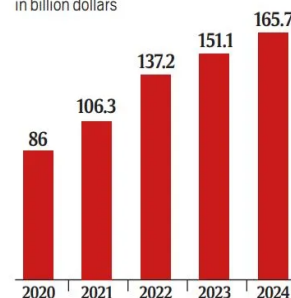
What is Bioeconomy?

- **Bioeconomy** refers to the industrial **use of biological resources (plants, animals, and microorganisms)**, and the replication of natural biological processes in the production of goods and services.
- **Bioresources** like plants or microorganisms are renewable, relatively cheap, and locally available, while natural processes are more sustainable and eco-friendly.
- A prime example of this is the **growing use of ethanol, which is produced through fermentation of crops** like sugarcane or corn by microorganisms, as a biological alternative to fuels traditionally derived from hydrocarbons.

Why Bioeconomy Matters for India?

- **Economic Growth & Jobs:**
  - ◆ Expected to contribute **$1 trillion by 2047.**
  - ◆ The number of companies in the bioeconomy has increased by **almost 90% in the last three years.**
  - ◆ Nearly half the value of the **bioeconomy (roughly $78 billion)** was generated in the industrial sector, for the development and use of biofuels and bioplastics.

VALUE OF INDIA'S BIOECONOMY

in billion dollars

Year	Value
2020	86
2021	106.3
2022	137.2
2023	151.1
2024	165.7

TOP CONTRIBUTING STATES (IN 2024)

State	Value*	Share of total value
Maharashtra	35.45	21.4%
Karnataka	32.4	19.5%
Telangana	19.9	12%
Gujarat	12.9	7.8%
Andhra Pradesh	11.1	6.7%
Tamil Nadu	9.9	6%
Uttar Pradesh	7.7	4.6%

*in billion $. Source: India BioEconomy Report

- **Food & Agriculture Security:**
  - ◆ GM technologies improve yields by 21%.
  - ◆ Biofertilizers enhance soil health.
  - ◆ Innovations like golden rice combat micronutrient deficiencies.

- **Healthcare Access:**
  - Affordable drug and vaccine production (e.g., CERVAVAC – HPV vaccine).
  - Gene therapy advancements (e.g., Hemophilia A trial).
  - India supplies 25% of WHO's total vaccine volume.
- **Environmental Benefits:**
  - Promotes circular economy via waste-to-energy technologies.
  - Reduces reliance on fossil fuels with biogas and ethanol.
  - Supports biodiversity conservation and eco-restoration (e.g., TERI's Oilzapper).
- **Climate Action:**
  - Helps achieve India's net-zero target by 2070.
  - Reduces emissions through bio-based alternatives.

BioE3 Push For India's Bioeconomy

- To catalyze this growth, the government launched the **BioE3 policy in 2024**—Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment.
- The policy **promotes:**
  - Establishment of **Bio-AI Hubs, Bio-Foundries, and Bio-Enabler Hubs**
  - Focus on advanced technologies, sustainable biomanufacturing, and pan-India implementation
  - **Assam became the first state to formally adopt the BioE3 framework**, setting the stage for widespread national rollout.

Other Initiatives

- **BioSaarthi Mentorship Initiative (2025):** BioSaarthi is designed as a six-month cohort facilitating structured mentor-mentee engagements, offering personalized guidance to emerging entrepreneurs in the biotech sector.
- **Draft National Biotechnology Development Strategy (2020–25):** Targets $150 billion bioeconomy by 2025, focusing on R&D innovation, Industry competitiveness & startup growth.
- **BioSaarthi Mentorship Initiative (2025):** Global mentorship program for biotech startups with expert guidance, including Indian diaspora mentors.
- **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC):** Public sector interface to Fund biotech startups.
- **National Biopharma Mission:** Supports clinical trials, biosimilars, biotherapeutics, and vaccine development.

- **PM-JIVAN Yojana:** Focus on bioethanol and compressed biogas from agri-waste.
- **SATAT & GOBARdhan Schemes:** Promotes bio-CNG plants and waste-to-energy models, aligned with rural bioeconomy goals.
- **Global Biofuel Alliance (2023)**: Led by India, USA, and Brazil to strengthen biofuel supply chains and reduce fossil fuel dependence.
- **IP Guidelines (2023):** Encourages commercialization of public-funded research.

Challenges to Address

- Despite progress, India's bioeconomy faces several hurdles:
  - **Fragmented Regulation**: Overlaps between agencies delay biotech approvals.
  - **Limited Investment:** High risk and long return on investment deter private capital.
  - **IP & Bio-piracy Issues:** Weak enforcement hampers innovation and indigenous protection.
  - **Weak Industry-Academia Linkages:** Limits commercial translation of research.
  - **Import Dependence:** On high-end equipment and biotech inputs.
  - **Skill Shortages:** Need for trained professionals in genomics, bioinformatics, etc.
  - **Public Perception:** Skepticism around GMOs and lab-grown food remains high.
  - **Environmental Risks:** Overexploitation of biological resources could harm biodiversity and land use.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthen Policy Implementation & Coordination:** Ensure effective rollout of the BIO-E3 Policy across all states.
  - Establish a National Bioeconomy Mission to provide centralized coordination.
  - Promote state-level policies aligned with national bioeconomy goals (as Assam has done).
- **Boost Investment & Public-Private Partnerships:** Create dedicated Bioeconomy Investment Funds.
  - Offer tax incentives and risk-sharing models to attract private capital in high-risk biotech ventures.
  - Scale PPP models in R&D, manufacturing, and skill development.
- **Accelerate Regulatory Reforms:**
  - Streamline regulatory frameworks through a single-window system (expand BioRRAP).

- ◆ Harmonize biotech approvals across agencies (DBT, FSSAI, GEAC, etc.).
  - ◆ Build capacity in biosafety and ethics review boards for faster innovation deployment.
- **Foster Research, IP & Innovation Ecosystem:** Fast-track IP approvals and set up specialized IP courts for biotech.
  - ◆ Strengthen academia-industry linkages through co-development platforms.
  - ◆ Encourage applied research in synthetic biology, gene therapy, bioinformatics, etc.
- **Expand Biotech Infrastructure & Hubs:**
  - ◆ Set up Bio-AI Hubs, Biofoundries, and bio-incubation centers in Tier 2/3 cities.
  - ◆ Invest in shared testing labs, pilot-scale facilities, and data repositories.
  - ◆ Support precision farming zones and bio-industrial parks.
- **Empower Startups & Entrepreneurs:**
  - ◆ Scale initiatives like BioSaarthi for mentorship and global exposure.
  - ◆ Strengthen BIRAC schemes for funding, incubation, and early-stage scale-up.
  - ◆ Encourage grassroots bio-entrepreneurship and women-led biotech ventures.
- **Invest in Skilling & Education:** Integrate bioeconomy curricula in universities and skill development missions.
  - ◆ Establish Centers of Excellence in genomics, molecular biology, and bio-manufacturing.
- **Enhance Global Collaboration:** Forge R&D partnerships with biotech leaders like the EU, Japan, USA.
  - ◆ Lead international forums like the Global Biofuel Alliance and One Health platforms.

Source: IE

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

BEDMAP3

In News

- Scientists have created the most comprehensive map yet of Antarctica's landscape beneath its ice sheet, **called Bedmap3**.

Bedmap3

- It extends the previous Bedmap2 dataset.
- It includes data from 84 new aero-geophysical surveys, 15 data sources, 52 million additional data points, and 1.9 million line-km of measurements.

- **Coverage of Gaps:** It fills major gaps in knowledge, including information on mountain ranges, the deep interior of East Antarctica, and the coastlines of West Antarctica and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Importance

- Bedmap3 provides a clearer picture of Antarctica's subglacial landscape and ice distribution, offering insights into the continent's evolution and ice sheet modeling.
- It will help study how the ice sheet interacts with the bedrock and how it may behave as global warming continues, helping scientists predict future ice loss and sea-level rise.

Do you know?

- Antarctica is a continent. It is Earth's fifth-largest continent and is covered almost completely in ice. Antarctica covers Earth's South Pole.
- Antarctica has no trees or bushes. The only plants that can survive the extreme cold are lichens, mosses and algae.
- Antarctica is the coldest continent on earth.

Source :TH

PRIVILEGE MOTION

In News

- An opposition leader has moved a **privilege motion** against the Minister of State for Rural Development, alleging that he made a false statement regarding the comparative allocation of MGNREGS funds to Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

Privilege motion

- A **privilege motion** is moved when a Member of Parliament (MP) believes that there has been a **breach of parliamentary privileges**.
- It must relate to a **recent incident** and warrant the **intervention** of the House.
- The motion can be **admitted or rejected** by the **Speaker (Lok Sabha)** or **Chairman (Rajya Sabha)**.
- If admitted, it is referred to the **Committee of Privileges**, which:
  - ◆ Investigates the matter.
  - ◆ May summon witnesses or documents.
  - ◆ Submits a report within **one month**.
- The House then **considers the committee's recommendations**, and **penal action** is taken only in **extreme cases**.

Distinction from Contempt of the House

- **Breach of privilege:** Involves violating the special rights of the House or its members.
- **Contempt of the House:** Any act that obstructs the functioning of the House, even if no specific privilege is violated.

Parliamentary Privileges

- Parliamentary privileges are special rights and immunities enjoyed by Parliament and its members, enabling them to discharge their functions independently and effectively.

Constitutional Backing

- **Article 105**: Deals with the powers, privileges, and immunities of Parliament and its members.
- **Article 122:** Bars courts from inquiring into the validity of parliamentary proceedings.

Key Features

Freedom of speech within the House (not absolute; restricted in cases like **judicial conduct under Article 121**).

Immunity from legal action for anything said or any vote cast in the House or its committees.

Protection from arrest in civil cases during the session and 40 days before and after it.

No immunity in criminal cases.

No member can be arrested or served with legal processes within the precincts of Parliament without permission from the Speaker or Chairman.

Source :TH

SAMAGRA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)

In News

- A Parliamentary Standing Committee has urged the Ministry of Education to resolve the dispute with West Bengal, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu regarding the non-release of over ₹4,000 crore in funds under the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**.

About

- The recommendation comes amid a conflict between the Centre and Tamil Nadu over the stoppage of SSA funds after the state refused to implement the three-language formula of the National Education Policy (NEP) and sign an MoU for PM-SHRI schools.

The Samagra Shiksha scheme

- It is being implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy.
    - It is a centrally sponsored scheme.
- It aims to provide holistic school education from **pre-primary to class XII**, in line with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- It ensures quality, equitable, and inclusive education, addressing diverse backgrounds, multilingual needs, and different academic abilities.

Features

- Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to States and UTs for various initiatives, including free uniforms and textbooks for elementary students, reimbursement under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, support for out-of-school children, special training, and bilingual teaching materials.
- It also funds infrastructure development, such as the construction of school buildings, additional classrooms, hostels, and the strengthening of teacher education and ICT interventions.
- Additionally, support is given for the establishment and upgradation of schools and hostels for marginalized groups, including tribal and border areas.

Source :TH

PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA (PMMVY)

Context

- The opposition has pointed out that maternity benefits mandated under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) are not being adequately implemented due to low budgetary allocation.

About

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a **Maternity Benefit Programme** that is implemented in accordance with the **provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013.**
- **Mission Shakti which encompasses the PMMVY Scheme** came into operation from **2022**.
- **Eligibility:** Women belonging to socially, economically disadvantaged, and marginalised sections of society.
- **Benefits:**
    - Provides ₹5,000 as maternal benefit during pregnancy and lactation.

- The remaining amount (under Janani Suraksha Yojana) brings the total maternity benefit to ₹6,000 on average.
- Pregnant women & lactating mothers receive free meals during pregnancy and up to 6 months postpartum through Anganwadis, to meet nutritional standards.
- **Mission Shakti:** Provides ₹6,000 for a second child if the second child is a girl, promoting positive behavior towards the girl child.

Source: TH

BETTING AND GAMBLING ARE STATE SUBJECTS

Context

- Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that **betting and gambling are State subjects.**
  - MeitY has issued **1410 blocking directions** related to online betting/gambling/gaming websites **between the year 2022- 25.**

Regulation

- **Finance Act 2023:** 30% income tax on net winnings from online gaming, effective from assessment year 2024-25.
  - GST at 28% on online gaming from 1st October 2023.
- **Online gaming suppliers must register** under the Simplified Registration Scheme of the IGST Act.
- **GST Intelligence Headquarters** can direct blocking of unregistered platforms violating the IGST Act.
- **State Role in Betting & Gambling:** Betting and gambling are state subjects under the Constitution, with states responsible for prevention, investigation, and prosecution of related crimes.
  - The Central Government supports states with advisories and financial assistance for capacity building.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:** Punishes unauthorized betting and gambling with 1-7 years of imprisonment and fines.
- **Other initiatives:**
  - Ministry of Education advisory for parents and teachers on managing online gaming addiction.
  - Ministry of Information and Broadcasting guidelines for advertisements related to online gaming, including disclaimers about financial risks and addiction.
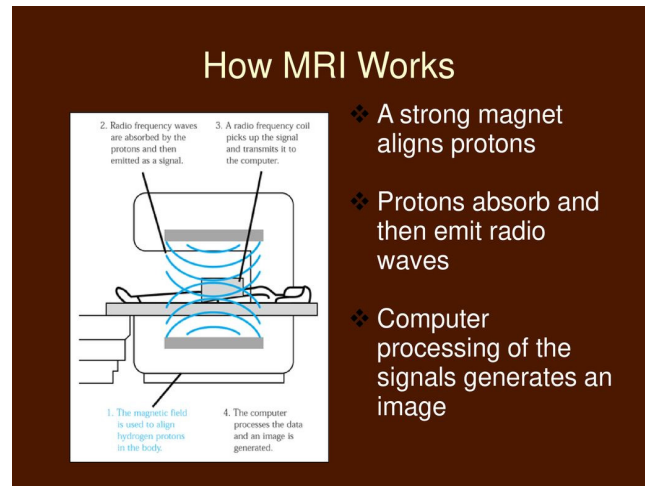
Source: TH

MRI TECHNOLOGY

In News

- India has developed its first indigenously manufactured MRI machine, which is set to be installed at AIIMS Delhi for trial runs.

About MRI Technology

How MRI Works
- A strong magnet aligns protons
- Protons absorb and then emit radio waves
- Computer processing of the signals generates an image

- **MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)** is a non-invasive medical imaging technology used to create detailed images of the organs, tissues, and structures inside the body—especially the brain, spinal cord, muscles, and joints.
- **Unlike X-rays or CT scans**, MRI does not use ionizing radiation, making it safer for repeated use.

Source: LM

ABEL PRIZE

In News

- Japanese mathematician **Masaki Kashiwara** was awarded this **year's Abel Prize.**
- He was honored with the Abel Prize for his groundbreaking work in **algebraic analysis, representation theory, the development of D-modules**, and the discovery of crystal bases.

About Abel Prize

- Named after legendary **Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel (1802–1829)**, the prize was established by the **Norwegian Parliament in 2002** to commemorate the **200th anniversary of Abel's birth.**
- First awarded in 2003, the Abel Prize is often regarded as the **Nobel Prize equivalent in mathematics**.
- Recipients are selected by a committee appointed by the Academy, in consultation with the International Mathematical Union (IMU) and the European Mathematical Society (EMS).

- The award includes a cash award and a glass plaque designed by Norwegian artist Henrik Haugan.

Source: IE

BLACK SEA

Context

- Russia and Ukraine agreed **to halt military strikes in the Black Sea** and on energy sites during talks brokered by the United States.

Black Sea

- The Black Sea is a **large inland body** of water located in **southeastern Europe, bordered by six countries:** Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, and Turkey.

- It is connected to the **Mediterranean Sea through the Bosporus Strait**, **the Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles Strait.**

- The Black Sea deeper water is devoid of oxygen and rich in hydrogen sulfide, which makes it **unsuitable for most marine life.**

  - **The Black Sea does have marine life in its upper, oxygen-rich layers.**

- **Significance:** Ports like Odessa (Ukraine), Constanta (Romania), Varna (Bulgaria), and Novorossiysk (Russia) are vital for the countries bordering the sea.

  - The Black Sea is also important for fishing, energy resources (including natural gas and oil), and shipping.

  - It serves as a strategic point of control for access to the Mediterranean Sea and, historically, has been the site of many conflicts.

Source: TH