

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 04-04-2025

Table of Content

LS Passed Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024

USA's 'Reciprocal Tariffs' on India & World

Forest Rights Act (FRA)

Undersea Cables

NEWS IN SHORT

Tipitaka

Bharani Festival

Parliament Adopts Statutory Resolution Confirming President's Rule in Manipur

Baku to Belem Roadmap

GI Tag to Chapata Chilli

Axiom-4 Mission (Ax-4)

GI Tag for Kannadippaya

US Tariff Impact on Seafood Export

Pope's Pit Viper Venom

National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)

Heard and McDonald Islands

LS PASSED COASTAL SHIPPING BILL, 2024

Context

- The Lok Sabha has passed the **Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024**.

About

- The Bill **regulates vessels engaged in trade within Indian coastal waters**, which include territorial waters and adjoining maritime zones.
- The Bill is based on **global best practices and dedicated laws** of major maritime nations.
- It **consolidates and amends laws related** to coastal shipping, promotes coasting trade, and encourages domestic participation.

Major Highlights

- **Coastal Waters:** Territorial waters extend up to **12 nautical miles (about 22 km)**, and adjoining maritime zones extend up to **200 nautical miles (about 370 km)**.
- **Repeal of Merchant Shipping Act:** The Bill seeks to repeal Part XIV of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, regulating ships in coastal trade.
- **Vessel Types Covered:** The Bill regulates all types of vessels, **including ships, boats, sailing vessels, and mobile offshore drilling units**.
- **Expansion of Coasting Trade Definition:** The Bill expands coasting trade to include services like exploration, research, and other commercial activities (except fishing).
- **Licence Requirements:**
 - ♦ Vessels wholly owned by **Indian citizens don't need a licence** for coasting trade.
 - ♦ Vessels not wholly owned by Indian citizens need a licence.
 - ♦ Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) hiring vessels for operations outside India are exempt from the licence requirement.
- **Licence Issuance: The Director General of Shipping**, appointed by the central government, issues licences.
- **Increased Penalties:** The Bill raises the maximum fine for unlicensed coasting trade to Rs 15 lakh or four times the gains from the unlicensed voyage.
- **Replaces imprisonment penalties with civil penalties** (up to Rs 5 lakh or twice the gains from contravention).
- **National Strategy Plan:** The central government must prepare a National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan within two years of the Act's commencement.

- **National Database:** Introduces a National Database for Coastal Shipping to enhance transparency and coordination.
- **Exemption Powers:** The central government has the power to exempt certain classes of vessels from the Bill's provisions.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** Removes the general trading license requirement for Indian ships and reduces compliance burdens.
- **Support for Indian Shipbuilding:** Encourages foreign vessels to support Indian shipbuilding and employment for seafarers.

India's Shipping Sector

- **Cargo Traffic Growth:** Coastal cargo traffic surged by **119% from 2014-2024**, with a **target of 230 million tonnes by 2030**.
- **Achievements:** The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways has increased cargo handling capacity by **103% in the last decade**.
- **Port Ranking Improvement:** India's port ranking improved from **54th in 2014 to 38th in 2023**, with nine Indian ports now in the top 100 globally.
- **Future Goals:** India has outlined investments of **US\$ 82 billion in port infrastructure projects by 2035** to bolster the maritime sector.
 - ♦ India plans to establish a new shipping company to **expand its fleet by at least 1,000 ships within a decade**.

Initiatives by Government

- **Sagarmala Programme:** Focuses on leveraging India's coastline and of navigable waterways.
 - ♦ Supports port infrastructure, coastal development, and connectivity.
 - ♦ Financial aid for projects like coastal berths, rail/road connectivity, fish harbours, cruise terminals.
- **Maritime India Vision 2030 (MIV 2030):** Aiming for India to become a top 10 shipbuilding nation by 2030 and create a world-class, efficient, and sustainable maritime ecosystem.
 - ♦ Includes 150+ initiatives across ten key maritime sectors.
- **Inland Waterways Development:** 26 new national waterways identified by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI).
 - ♦ Provides alternative, sustainable transport, easing road/rail congestion.
- **Green Tug Transition Program (GTTP):** Aims to replace fuel-based harbour tugs with eco-friendly, sustainable fuel-powered tugs.
 - ♦ Transition to be completed by 2040 across major ports.

- **Sagarmanthan Dialogue:** An annual maritime strategic dialogue to position India as a global center for maritime conversations.
- **Maritime Development Fund:** 25,000 crore fund for long-term financing to modernize ports and shipping infrastructure, encouraging private investment.
- **Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy (SBFAP 2.0):** Modernized to help Indian shipyards compete with global giants.

Conclusion

- The Bill seeks to unlock the full potential of India's vast and strategic coastline, providing a dedicated legal framework for coastal trade.
- It will reduce our dependence on foreign vessels and significantly lower logistics costs, promote green transport, and create jobs in shipbuilding, port services, and vessel manning.
- The efforts will take India's maritime sector toward a sustainable, innovative, and future-ready ecosystem, ensuring its place as a central player in the global maritime landscape.

Source: PIB

USA'S 'RECIPROCAL TARIFFS' ON INDIA & WORLD

Context

- In a significant move, US President Donald Trump announced '**reciprocal tariffs**' on imports from various countries, **including India**, aimed to address trade imbalances but sparked global concerns about economic stability and diplomatic relations.

Tariff

- It is a tax or duty imposed by a government on imported goods and services.
- It is used to regulate trade, protect domestic industries, generate revenue, correct trade imbalances, and exert economic leverage.

Reciprocal Tariff

- It refers to trade measures imposed by one country in response to tariffs or trade barriers set by another country.
- It aims to create a **level playing field by mirroring the duties** imposed on exports.

Discounted Reciprocal Tariff

- It is a trade arrangement between two countries (or economic blocs), where each agrees to reduce or eliminate import duties on goods or

services from the other on a reciprocal basis, but at discounted rates compared to standard tariff commitments.

- It is a trade measure designed to counteract perceived trade imbalances.

Key Highlights of Reciprocal Tariffs

- **'Liberation Day' Announcement:** Trump declared April 2, 2025, as 'Liberation Day' marking the introduction of reciprocal tariffs aimed at addressing trade imbalances.
- **Baseline Tariff:** A universal 10% tariff was imposed on all imports, with higher rates applied to countries with significant trade surpluses with the USA.
 - ♦ The tariffs **ranged from 10% to 50%** on its exports to the USA.
 - ♦ Major sectors affected included textiles, chemicals, machinery, and electronics.
- **Country-Specific Tariffs:** India faced a 26% discounted reciprocal tariff, while China was hit with 34%, the European Union with 20%, Japan with 24%, and Taiwan with 32%.
- **Economic Rationale:** The tariffs were calculated to balance trade deficits and address non-monetary trade barriers such as currency manipulation and regulatory differences.
- **Impact on India**
 - **Export Challenges:** India faced a 26% tariff on its exports to the US, affecting key sectors such as automobiles, textiles, and fisheries.
 - ♦ It posed a challenge for Indian exporters, who had to navigate higher costs and reduced competitiveness in the US market.
 - **Economic Adjustments:** To mitigate the impact, India might consider reducing tariffs on US imports, including gems, jewelry, and auto parts.
 - **Strategic Partnerships:** Despite the tariffs, India is emphasizing its commitment to strengthening bilateral trade relations with the U.S., aiming for long-term economic collaboration.
 - **Comparative Advantages:** Tariff on India (26%) is **lower than other Asian and South Asian countries** including Vietnam (46%), Thailand (37%), Bangladesh (37%), Sri Lanka (44%) and Pakistan (30%), which could give **India some 'comparative advantages'**.

India-USA Trade: Key Highlights

- **Total Trade:** The total goods trade between the U.S. and India was an estimated \$129.2 billion in 2024.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ US Exports to India: \$41.8 billion, up 3.4% from 2023. ◆ US Imports from India: \$87.4 billion in 2024, up 4.5% from 2023. • Trade Deficit: \$45.7 billion in 2024, a 5.4% increase over 2023. 	
India's Top Exports to the USA	USA's Top Exports to India
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precious Stones & Metals: Diamonds and gold are among the highest-valued exports. • Pharmaceutical Products: Generics and APIs form a major chunk of India's export to the USA. • Apparel & Textiles: Garments, home textiles, and cotton fabrics dominate. • Engineering Goods: Includes auto components, tools, industrial machinery. • Organic Chemicals: Raw materials for chemicals and allied industries. • IT & Software Services: Though not always visible in merchandise data, IT services are a massive contributor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petroleum & Crude Oil: Crude oil and LNG exports have risen significantly. • Aerospace & Defense Equipment: Includes aircraft, parts, and defense systems. • Medical Devices & Instruments: High-quality diagnostic and surgical tools. • Electronic Goods: Semiconductors, computer parts, and more. • Industrial Machinery: Automation, manufacturing, and power generation equipment. • Agricultural Products: Notably almonds, apples, and soybeans.

Sectors Affected in India

- **Electronics Sector:** Nearly \$14 billion worth of electronics exports from India may be hit by new US tariffs.
- **Gems and Jewellery:** Over \$9 billion worth of exports could be affected.
- **Auto Parts & Aluminium:** Not impacted by the new 26% tariff, but still face an existing 25% tariff announced earlier by Trump.

- **Pharmaceuticals & Energy Products:** Approximately \$9 billion in pharmaceutical exports are exempt from the latest tariffs.
 - ◆ Energy products are also exempt.

Impact on the Rest of the World

- **Global Trade Tensions:** Countries like China, Vietnam, and the European Union faced even higher tariffs, with rates reaching up to 54%.
 - ◆ It escalated trade tensions and raised fears of a global trade war.
- **Market Volatility:** The tariffs triggered significant market fluctuations, with global stock indices experiencing sharp declines.
 - ◆ Businesses reliant on international supply chains faced disruptions and increased costs.
- **Retaliatory Measures:** Several countries announced counter-tariffs on U.S. goods, further straining international trade relations.

Source: TH

FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA)

In News

- Researchers and campaigners fear that the government has not properly reviewed rejected claims under **the Forest Rights Act (FRA) ahead of a crucial Supreme Court hearing.**

About

- More than 150 tribal and forest rights organisations, under platforms such as the **Campaign for Survival and Dignity**, have accused the government of submitting incomplete and misleading data on forest encroachments, while failing to fully implement the FRA.

About the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006

- The **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act**, commonly known as the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)**, was enacted in 2006 to:
 - ◆ Recognise historical injustices against **forest-dwelling communities.**
 - ◆ Grant legal rights over forest land and resources to Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs).
 - ◆ **Empower Gram Sabhas** to verify and approve claims at the grassroots level.
 - ◆ Ensures that **tribal populations and forest dwellers are not evicted without proper rehabilitation**, aligning with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Settlement Act, 2013.

- The FRA includes provisions for individual and community rights over land, forest produce, grazing areas, and traditional knowledge.

Evolution of Forest Rights Act (FRA)

- In the colonial era, British policies exploited forest resources, leaving tribal and forest-dwelling communities in a state of tenurial insecurity.
- The **National Forest Policy of 1988** emphasized the involvement of tribal people in forest protection, leading to the enactment of the **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**, which aimed to protect their rights to the environment, life, and livelihood.
- The FRA recognizes the rights of tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers to access forest land and resources.

Issues and Concerns

- According to **Land Conflict Watch**, since 2016, there have been 117 land conflicts involving FRA, impacting 611,557 people.
- Key issues include non-implementation of FRA provisions (88.1%), lack of legal protection over land rights (49.15%), and forced evictions (40.68%).
- The issue stems from the lack of clarity regarding whether due process was followed in rejecting claims, particularly in tribal areas with high Left-Wing Extremism.
- Many affected people are poor, illiterate, and unaware of the correct procedure, with gram sabhas being inadequately informed.

Way Ahead

- The Forest Rights Act is a crucial law designed to empower indigenous communities by recognizing their legal rights to forest land and resources.
- It ensures their participation in sustainable forest management, but effective implementation and addressing challenges are essential for its success.

Source :TH

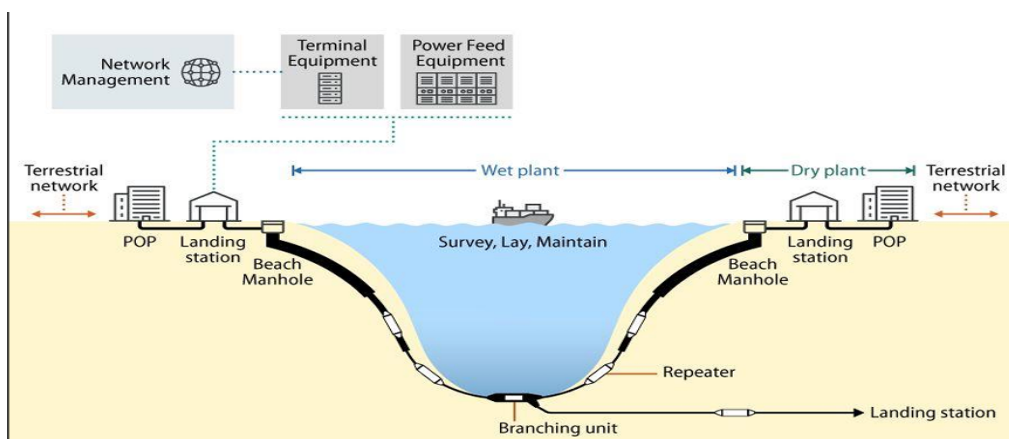


Fig1: Undersea Telecommunication Cable System

UNDERSEA CABLES

Context

- India is currently experiencing a significant boost in its **digital backbone with the landing of new undersea cable systems**, marking a pivotal step in enhancing its international **bandwidth capacity and global internet connectivity**.
 - Two major systems**—2Africa Pearls, backed by Meta, and SEA-ME-WE-6 (Southeast Asia-Middle East-West Europe-6)—have made their landing in India in 2024, specifically at Chennai and Mumbai.

The SEA-ME-WE 6

- It is a **21,700km submarine cable system** between **Singapore and France (Marseille)**, crossing Egypt through terrestrial cables.
- The **SMW6 (SEA-ME-WE 6) consortium** includes **telecommunications companies from countries like** Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the UAE, Djibouti, Egypt, Turkey, Italy, France, Myanmar, and Yemen

What Are Undersea Cables?

- Undersea cables** connect **global internet networks**, providing **vast data transfer capacity via fiber optic strands**.
 - These cables land at **designated points and are linked to terrestrial networks**.
 - They connect internet service providers and telecom operators everywhere with those in other countries.
- These cables are a few inches thick and are heavily padded** to withstand the hostile environment of the sea floor.
- Importance of Undersea Cables:** About 90% of global data, 80% of world trade, and key financial and government transactions rely on undersea cables.

India's Cable Infrastructure

- India has two main cable hubs, **Mumbai and Chennai**, with 17 cable systems landing there.
- **India also has two domestic cable systems** — the **Chennai Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI) cable** to provide high-speed connectivity to the islands, and the Kochi Lakshadweep Islands project.

Project Waterworth by Meta:

- Meta introduced its subsea cable project, Project Waterworth, which will span 50,000 km, becoming the longest subsea cable project in the world.
- The project aims to enhance global connectivity, focusing on locations such as the U.S., India, Brazil, South Africa, and others.
- The investment for the project involves billions of dollars and is set to span multiple years, with a focus on providing AI access to users worldwide.

Impact on India:

- Project Waterworth will help accelerate India's digital infrastructure growth and support the country's plans for its digital economy.

Technical Details:

- The cables will be laid at depths of up to 7,000 meters.
- Special measures will be implemented to protect cables in high-risk areas where damage is more likely.

Concerns

- **Capacity and Future Demand:** While current capacity is adequate, the increasing data traffic may outgrow existing infrastructure, prompting concerns over future sufficiency.
- **Risks of Cable Disruptions:** 570 global subsea cables handle 90% of world data and 80% of trade.
 - ♦ If there's a disruption at the Red Sea, 25% of India's internet is affected.
 - ♦ India lacks local vessels for cable repairs, leading to delays.
- **Challenges in Cable Deployment:** Excessive regulatory permissions slow down the process.

International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC):

- Founded in 1958, it is a global forum for governments and commercial entities in the submarine cable industry.
- Its mission is to improve the security of undersea cables by providing a platform for sharing technical, legal, and environmental information.

Improvement Suggestions:

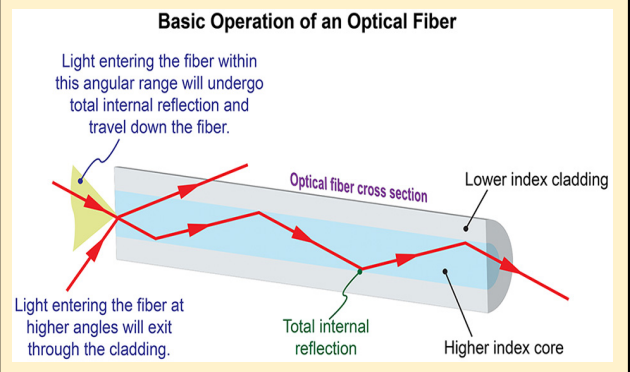
- Streamlining the regulatory process and investing in local cable repair infrastructure are essential to improving India's subsea cable capabilities.
- The government should categorize subsea cables as critical telecom infrastructure to secure tax exemptions and encourage investment.
- There's a call for better regulatory clarity and the establishment of a separate cable corridor to prevent damage from fishing activities.

What are Optical Fibers?

- They are incredibly thin strands of very pure glass or plastic. They transmit information in the form of light pulses.

How do they work?

- They work on the principle of Total Internal Reflection (TIR). An optical fiber has a central core surrounded by a cladding layer. The core has a slightly higher refractive index than the cladding.
- When light enters the core at a certain angle, it keeps bouncing off the cladding due to TIR, traveling down the fiber with minimal loss.



Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

TIPITAKA

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was presented with **'The World Tipitaka: Sajjhaya Phonetic Edition'** by his Thai counterpart, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, in a diplomatic exchange.

About Tipitaka

- The term Tipitaka means **"Three Baskets"** in **Pāli**, representing the **three primary divisions of the Buddhist scriptures**.

- The Three “Baskets” of the Tipi aka includes:
 - ♦ **Vinaya Piṭaka (Basket of Discipline):** Contains rules and procedures for monastic life and the discipline of monks and nuns.
 - ♦ **Sutta Piṭaka (Basket of Discourses):** Comprises the Buddha’s teachings, presented in the form of discourses or sermons.
 - ♦ **Abhidhamma Piṭaka (Basket of Higher Doctrine):** Offers a systematic and philosophical analysis of Buddhist teachings.
- Compiled after the **Buddha’s death** (5th century BCE) at the **First Buddhist Council in Rajagaha (Rajgir), India.**

Source: TH

BHARANI FESTIVAL

Context

- Known as the **Kodungalloor Bharani**, one of Kerala’s most famous and intense celebrations.
 - ♦ It occurs during the **Malayalam month of Meenam** (March-April).

About

- Kodungalloor Bharani is the **annual festival of Sree Kurumba Bhagavathy Temple** at Kodungalloor in Thrissur.
- The festival offers a mystical experience with the presence of a **multitude of Oracles (Komaram or Velichappadu) clad in red attire.**
- The Bharani festival celebrates the **birth of Bhadrakali (Hindu Goddess)** who as per legend was born from the third eye of Lord Shiva and was the one who went to destroy the demon Darika.



Source: TH

PARLIAMENT ADOPTS STATUTORY RESOLUTION CONFIRMING PRESIDENT’S RULE IN MANIPUR

In News

- Parliament has adopted a **Statutory Resolution** confirming the imposition of the **President’s Rule in Manipur.**

About President’s Rule

- **Article 356:** Union govt can take direct control of the state machinery if a state government is unable to function according to the Constitution.
 - ♦ Valid for **six months** & can be extended up to **three years in phases.**
 - ♦ Can be revoked by the President at any time without Parliamentary approval.
 - ♦ **44th Amendment Act, 1978:** President’s rule can only be extended over a year every 6 months only after certification of Election Commission or in case of National Emergency.
- **Article 365:** President’s Rule can be proclaimed if a state fails to comply with directions given by the Union.
- It was imposed for the **first time in PEPSU state (1954) and then in Kerala (1959).**
- The term ‘**President’s Rule**’ is **not mentioned** in the Constitution.
- **Major Cases:** S R Bommai vs Union of India (1994); Buta Singh case (2005).

Relevant Committees

- **Sarkaria Commission (1987):** Rare use of Article 356; No dissolution of Assembly.
- **National Commission for Reviewing the Working of Constitution (2002):** Warning to the errant State; Wide publicity in media before imposition of President’s Rule.
- **Justice V Chelliah Commission (2002):** Very sparing use of Article 356.
- **Punchhi Commission (2008):** Localised emergency for less than three months.

Source: AIR

BAKU TO BELEM ROADMAP

In News

- India called upon BRICS nations to unite behind the ‘**Baku to Belem Roadmap**’, aimed at mobilizing **USD 1.3 trillion to support the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** of developing countries.

What is the Baku to Belém Roadmap?

- The **Baku to Belém Roadmap** is a strategic framework adopted at COP29 (2024) to guide negotiations and actions on:
 - ♦ Defining a new collective quantified goal (NCQG) on climate finance post-2025.
 - ♦ Ensuring greater predictability, adequacy, and accessibility of climate finance.

- ♦ Supporting low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways in developing countries.
- ♦ Enabling the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Why BRICS Matters for Climate Action?

- The **BRICS bloc—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa** (recently expanded to include 6 new members)—represents **47% of the global population and 36% of the global GDP (PPP)**.
- These emerging economies face similar environmental challenges and developmental aspirations, making their cooperation vital for achieving a just and equitable climate transition globally.

Why is it important?

- The current climate finance goal of **\$100 billion/year (set in 2009)** has consistently fallen short.
- Studies show that **developing countries need over \$1.3 trillion annually by 2030** to meet their NDC targets.

Source: PIB

GI TAG TO CHAPATA CHILLI

In News

- The **Warangal Chapata chilli, or as it is called Tomato chilli**, from Telangana has been granted the Geographical Indication tag by the GI Registry.

About Chapata Chilli (Tomato Chilli)

- Chapata Chilli is known for its flaming red colour but **low pungency**.
- It is in demand due to its natural colouring agent “**paprika oleoresin**”.
- There are three fruit types existing in the **Warangal Chapata chilli**, namely the single **patti, double patti and odalu**.



Source: TH

AXIOM-4 MISSION (AX-4)

In News

- Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla will pilot the **Axiom-4 mission (Ax-4) to the International Space Station**.

Do you know?

- **Axiom Mission 1** was the **first all-private mission to the ISS**, followed by Axiom Mission 2, which launched the **first Saudi female astronaut**, and Axiom Mission 3, which included the **first Turkish astronaut and first ESA astronaut on a commercial mission**.
- **In 2024**, Axiom Space has announced a partnership with India (through ISRO), Poland (with ESA support), and Hungary for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4).

Axiom space mission

- Ax-4 is the fourth crewed mission (to the ISS organized by Axiom Space, a private company based in Houston).
 - ♦ It will include Shubhanshu Shukla, former NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson (commander), and astronauts Sławosz Uznański-Winiński (Poland) and Tibor Kapu (Hungary).
- The crew will spend 14 days aboard the ISS, conducting around 60 scientific experiments as part of the mission.

ISRO's Role

- ISRO's research will focus on microgravity studies, including investigating the effects of space on human health (e.g., physical and cognitive impacts of computer screens, skeletal muscle dysfunction), plant growth, and crop seed germination in space.

Importance

- The mission underscores the global significance of the research, with collaboration between ISRO, NASA, and the European Space Agency (ESA) to advance microgravity research.

Source :TH

GI TAG FOR KANNADIPPAYA

In News

- Kannadippaya has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, ensuring market protection and global recognition.

Kannadippaya

- **Kannadippaya**, meaning “mirror mat,” is made from the soft inner layers of reed bamboo.



- ◆ It is a traditional tribal handicraft from Kerala.
- The best-quality mats are woven from reed bamboo (*Teinostachyum wightii*) and other bamboo species like *Ochlandra* sp.
- It has unique properties of providing warmth in winter and a cooling effect in summer.
- It is mainly preserved by Oorali, Mannan, Muthuva, Malayan, and Kadar tribal communities, and artisans from Idukki, Thrissur, Ernakulam, and Palakkad districts.
- It was historically presented to kings as a mark of honor by tribal communities.

Source :TH

US TARIFF IMPACT ON SEAFOOD EXPORT

In News

- The US has imposed a 26% tariff on Indian seafood exports, compared to 10% for Ecuador, 46% for Vietnam, and 32% for Indonesia.

Do you know ?

- The U.S. previously banned Indian wild-caught shrimp imports, citing the lack of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) to protect turtles during shrimp fishing.

India's Market Share

- **India is the largest seafood exporter** to the U.S., holding a 35% share of the market.
- India exported 17.81 lakh tonnes of seafood in 2023-24, earning 60,523 crore. The bulk of these exports are frozen shrimp, with the U.S. being the largest importer, purchasing 2.97 lakh tonnes worth about \$488 million.
- Frozen shrimp makes up over 40% of the quantity and 66% of the value of Indian seafood exports.

Impact of Tariff

- The tariff increase will significantly impact India's seafood exports to the US, potentially reducing its competitiveness in the US market.

- **Ecuador may replace** India as the **largest supplier of shrimps** to the US due to its lower tariff rate (10%).
 - ◆ Ecuador currently holds an 18-19% share of the U.S. market.

Source :TH

POPE'S PIT VIPER VENOM

In News

- A new study has uncoded the mysteries of how the **venom of Pope's pit viper**, a snake species native to northern and northeastern parts of India, works.
 - ◆ The study can help establish the foundation for venom toxicity, pharmaceutical advancements, and enhanced antivenom compositions.

Why Does It Matters?

- Currently, no species-specific antivenom exists for **Pope's Pit Viper**.
- Commercial antivenoms in India only target the **"Big Four" snakes (Russell's Viper, Saw-Scaled Viper, Spectacled Cobra, and Common Krait)**, leaving bite victims from pit vipers like **Pope's Pit Viper vulnerable and untreated**.

About Pope's Pit Viper (*Trimeresurus popeiorum*)

- **Naming:** Named after American herpetologist Clifford H. Pope.
- **Habitat:** Dense tropical and subtropical forests.
- **Distribution:** Northern and Northeastern India (including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, and Meghalaya), Bhutan, Myanmar, Northern Thailand

Source: PIB

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLAR AND OCEAN RESEARCH (NCPOR)

Context

- National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) Goa, has observed the **25th foundation day**.

About

- NCPOR is an **autonomous body** under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.
- It was created to **manage national expeditions and strategic interests in polar regions**.
- NCPOR operates **two remote stations in Antarctica - Maitri and Bharati**, one in the Arctic

- Himadri, and one in the Himalayas - Himansh.

- It also manages a **floating oceanographic platform called Sagar Kanya.**

Source: IE

HEARD AND MCDONALD ISLANDS

Context

- Trump's "Liberation Day Tariffs", imposed a baseline 10% tariff on all trade partners.
 - ♦ This included **Heard and McDonald Islands**, remote volcanic islands in the sub-Antarctic Indian Ocean, despite being uninhabited.

Heard and McDonald Islands:

- These islands are **Australian territory**, which led to their inclusion in the tariff list.



- **Location:** In the Southern Indian Ocean, about 1,700 km from Antarctica and 4,100 km southwest of Australia.
- **Volcanic Activity:** Only active sub-Antarctic volcanoes, including Big Ben (Heard Island) and the McDonald Island volcano.
- **Geological Importance:** Key site for studying crustal plates, ocean basins, volcanic activity, and climate change through glaciers and volcanic processes.
- **Unique Ecosystem:** No introduced species, making it one of the rare pristine ecosystems, with large populations of marine birds and mammals.
- **Wildlife:** Home to the Heard Island cormorant, endemic subspecies of sheathbill, and other endemic species; vital breeding site for seals, petrels, penguins, and albatrosses.
- **Protection:** Protected under the **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and World Heritage Convention**, with penalties for unauthorized actions.
 - ♦ They are listed as the **UNESCO World Heritage Sites.**

Source: IE