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NATURAL GAS DISCOVERY IN ANDAMAN BASIN

In News

- Oil India Ltd (OIL) has reported a significant natural gas discovery off the Andaman Islands, marking the first confirmed hydrocarbon occurrence in the region.

Hydrocarbon Potential of Andaman Basin

- Hydrocarbon Resource Assessment Study (HRAS):** Estimates 371 MMTOE (Million Metric Tons of Oil Equivalent) in the AN Basin.
- It is part of the **Bengal-Arakan sedimentary system**.
- Lies at the **tectonic boundary of the Indian and Burmese plates** lead to the creation of stratigraphic traps conducive for hydrocarbon accumulation.
- Previous gas finds in North Sumatra (Indonesia) and Irrawaddy-Margui (Myanmar) suggest similar potential in Andaman.

Strategic Importance for India

- Energy Security:** India currently imports 88% of crude oil and 50% of natural gas.
 - Major LNG import sources: Qatar, US, UAE.
 - Andaman discovery can help reduce import dependence.
- Economic & Industrial Impact:** Supports India's target of raising the share of natural gas to 15% in the primary energy basket by 2030 (currently ~6%).
 - Aligns with the vision of a Gas-Based Economy.
- Geostrategic Advantage:** Andaman Basin sits in the energy-rich corridor from Myanmar to Indonesia.
 - Strengthens India's position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Government Initiatives for Gas Exploration

- Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), 2016:** Uniform license for exploration and production; introduced Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP).
- National Deep Water Exploration Mission:** Focused on drilling a large number of deepwater wells to exploit offshore reserves.
- National Data Repository & National Seismic Program:** Enhance data access for explorers.
- FDI Policy:** 100% FDI allowed in the natural gas sector under automatic route.

Challenges Ahead

- Commercial viability yet to be confirmed** (size of reserves, ease of extraction, production costs).
- Environmental sensitivity** of the Andaman ecosystem.
- Ultra-deepwater drilling costs are very high;** technology and infrastructure requirements are significant.
- Balancing energy exploration vs ecological conservation** will be a key policy challenge.

Source: TH

FIRECRACKER BAN: BALANCING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Context

- The Supreme Court acknowledged that a complete firecracker ban could lead to illegal market capture by the mafia, citing a past example in Bihar's mining industry.

About

- The SC called for a **"balanced approach"**, a policy that would ensure that the **right to earn a livelihood** in the **firecracker industry** would co-exist with the **right to a clean environment** without suffering from the **after-effects of air pollution**.
- The Bench **directed the Environment Ministry** to find a **solution that would weigh in all the considerations**.
- Green Crackers Allowed:** Meanwhile, the court allowed manufacturers, who have been certified by NEERI and PESO to produce green crackers, to continue their operations.

Arguments in Favor of Ban

- Right to Clean Air:** The constitutional framework established through landmark cases like M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (1987) and Virender Gaur v. State of Haryana (1995) recognizes the right to live in a pollution-free environment as integral to Article 21.
 - This universality principle demands that environmental protection measures apply equitably across India.
- Health Hazards:** Polluted air triggers respiratory diseases, asthma, bronchitis, especially in children and elderly.
 - Noise pollution causes hearing loss, stress, and sleep disturbance.

- **Impact on Vulnerable Population:** The health impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.
 - ♦ The poor suffer most because they cannot afford air purifiers or seasonal migration to escape pollution.
 - ♦ This creates an environmental justice paradox where those least able to protect themselves bear the greatest burden of pollution exposure.

Arguments Against

- **Livelihoods:** Firecracker industry (esp. Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu) employs ~5 lakh workers, mostly from economically weaker backgrounds.
 - ♦ Ban risks pushing workers into poverty, child labour, or unsafe informal jobs.
- **Cultural & Religious Practices:** Diwali, weddings, festivals, and processions have longstanding traditions of using fireworks.
 - ♦ Blanket bans raise concerns about freedom of religion and cultural rights.
- **Economic Equity:** Large, mechanised industries may adapt to these concerns like shifting to green crackers, but small units lack resources.
 - ♦ This increases the risk of market monopolisation by bigger firms.

Judicial & Policy Stand

- **Supreme Court (2018, 2021, 2023 rulings):**
 - ♦ Complete ban on toxic firecrackers.
 - ♦ Allowed only “green crackers” with reduced emissions.
 - ♦ Limited timing for bursting crackers (e.g., 8–10 pm on Diwali).
- **National Green Tribunal (NGT):** Directed states to curb sales in areas with poor AQI.
- **MoEFCC & CSIR-NEERI:** Developed “green crackers” with reduced emissions.

Balancing Both Dimensions

- **Shift to Green Crackers:** The government may promote scaling up the production of green crackers.
- **Licensing & Monitoring:** There should be strict enforcement on toxic cracker sales, certification for eco-friendly variants.
- **Skill Diversification:** The government may promote retraining programs for workers from the firecrackers industries in renewable energy, LED, toy-making, packaging, etc.
- **Financial Support:** Mechanisms for soft loans, subsidies, and transition support for MSMEs can help businesses avoid losses.

Conclusion

- The firecracker ban highlights an environment vs. livelihood dilemma.
- While environmental protection and public health are constitutional obligations, social justice demands safeguarding vulnerable workers' rights.
- A middle path — promoting green crackers, regulating usage, and supporting alternative livelihoods — is essential to reconcile environmental sustainability with social equity.

Source: TH

WORLD TOURISM DAY

Context

- India celebrated World Tourism Day 2025, highlighting sustainable tourism and advancing the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

About

- World Tourism Day, observed annually on **September 27**, is an initiative of the **United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)**.
- It commemorates the adoption of the **UNWTO statutes** in 1970 and was celebrated for the first time in 1980.
- The **theme for 2025** is “*Tourism and Sustainable Transformation.*”

Status of India's Tourism Sector

- **Contribution in Economy:** India's economy is **\$4 trillion**, expected to **reach \$32 trillion by 2047**.
 - ♦ Tourism contributes **5–6% to India's economy currently**.
- **Tourist Footfall:** Till August 2025, India recorded about 56 lakh Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) and 303.59 crore Domestic Tourist Visits. However, outbound tourism from India stood at 84.4 lakh travellers in the same period.
- **Global Recognition:** India has **44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites** and a diverse range of cultural and natural attractions.
- **Global Ranking:** According to the World Economic Forum's **Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024**, India ranked **39th** among 119 countries.
- **Leading State and Tourist Attraction:** **Uttar Pradesh** leads in domestic tourism due to attractions such as the Taj Mahal and Varanasi.
 - ♦ The **Taj Mahal** remains India's most visited ASI ticketed monument, attracting 6.10 million domestic and 0.68 million foreign tourists in 2023.

Significance of Tourism Sector

- **GDP growth:** Travel and tourism is the largest service industry in India. It contributed 15.73 lakh crore to GDP in 2023–24, which was **5.22%** of the total economy.
- **Foreign exchange:** Tourism brought foreign exchange earnings of 51,532 crore as of June 2025.
- **Employment:** It generated **36.90 million direct jobs** and **47.72 million indirect jobs**, together accounting for **13.34% of total employment**.
- **Heritage Preservation:** Tourism encourages the restoration and maintenance of historical monuments, temples, forts, and other heritage sites, ensuring their preservation for future generations.
- **Soft Power Diplomacy:** Tourism acts as a powerful instrument of soft power diplomacy by showcasing India's rich culture, art, and history to the world.

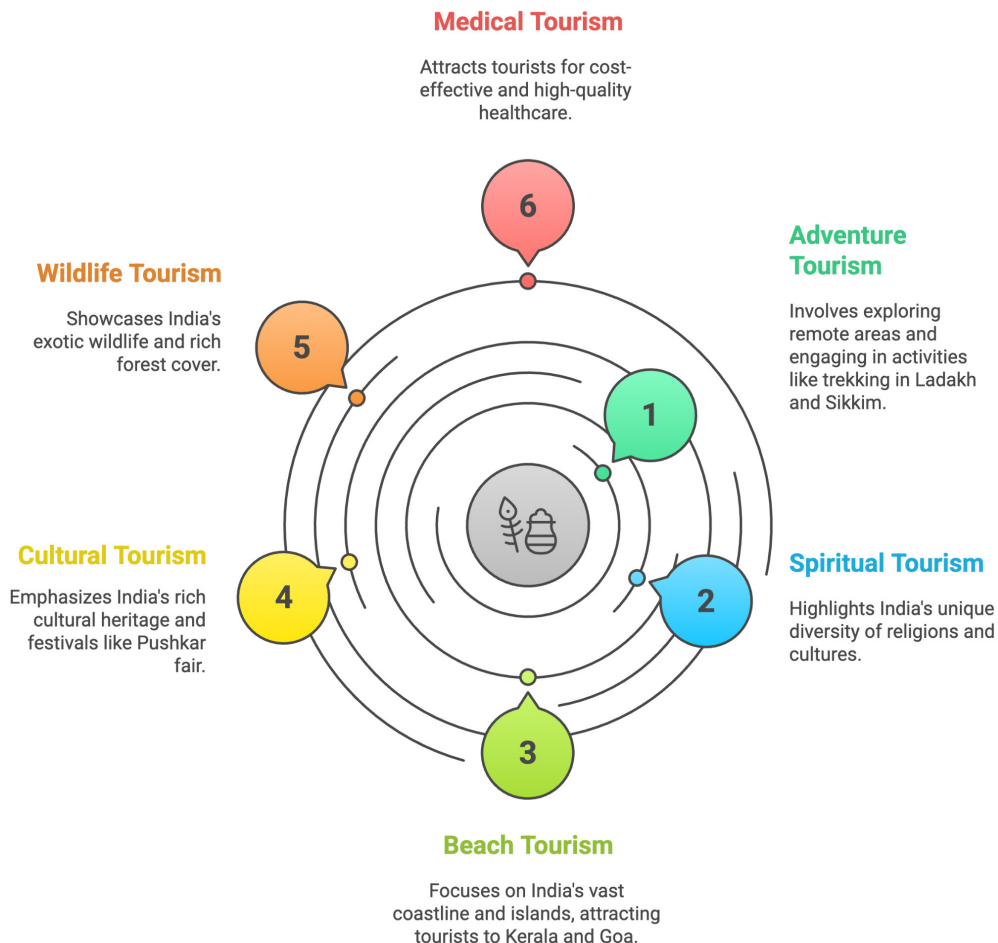
Challenges in Tourism Sector

- **High outbound vs low inbound tourism:** India records far more outbound travellers than inbound

visitors, leading to a tourism trade imbalance and loss of foreign exchange potential.

- **Infrastructure bottlenecks:** Limited last-mile connectivity, inadequate facilities, and overcrowding at popular destinations reduce the quality of the tourist experience.
- **Environmental degradation:** Over-tourism in ecologically sensitive areas, such as hill stations and coastal regions, leads to pollution, habitat loss, and resource strain.
- **Safety and hygiene concerns:** Issues of women's safety, scams, sanitation, and cleanliness affect India's global image and discourage foreign tourists.
- **Seasonality:** Many tourist destinations face seasonal fluctuations, with high tourist numbers during peak seasons and low numbers during off-seasons.
- **Global competition:** Despite its cultural and natural wealth, India ranks only 39th in the WEF Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024, highlighting untapped potential compared to global peers.

India's Diverse Tourism Landscape



Initiatives taken

- **Enhancing Connectivity and Investment:** In the 2025 budget, the Finance Minister announced a landmark initiative to develop **50 top tourist destinations** in partnership with states through a challenge mode.
- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** In 2014-15, the Ministry of Tourism launched the Swadesh Darshan Scheme (SDS) to develop thematic tourism circuits across the country. 76 projects worth 5,290.30 crore were sanctioned under identified themes, of which 75 projects have been physically completed.
- **PRASHAD Scheme:** The Ministry of Tourism launched the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) in 2014-15 to improve tourist convenience, accessibility, security, and cleanliness at pilgrimage centres.
- **Dekho Apna Desh Initiative:** The Ministry of Tourism launched the 'Dekho Apna Desh' initiative in 2020 to promote domestic tourism in the country.
- **Special Assistance to the States for Capital Investment (SASCI):** To develop an iconic tourist centre on a global scale, the SASCI scheme was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in July 2025.
- **Visa Reforms:** The introduction of e-visa facilities for citizens of many countries has simplified the process for obtaining a visa to visit India. This move aims to attract more international tourists.
- **Measures to Facilitate Employment-Led Growth in the 2025-26 Budget:**
 - ♦ Providing MUDRA loans for homestays;
 - ♦ Providing performance-linked incentives to states for effective destination management including tourist amenities, cleanliness, and marketing efforts and;
 - ♦ introducing streamlined e-visa facilities along with visa-fee waivers for certain tourist groups.

Conclusion

- The rise of tourism in India over the past few years has been remarkable, making a significant contribution to the nation's economy and its global image.
- From heritage sites to modern infrastructure, India's diverse attractions continue to draw millions of visitors annually.
- With a strong emphasis on 'Seva' and 'Atithi Devo Bhava,' India is set to redefine its tourism landscape and establish itself as a **world-class destination**.

Source: PIB

SURVEY ON R&D POSTPONED DUE TO WEAK RESPONSE FROM PRIVATE SECTOR

Context

- The Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) has postponed the publication of its latest science and technology analysis due to a **weak response from private Research & Development (R&D) firms**.
- ♦ The Ministry of Science and Technology conducts a **periodic National Science and Technology Survey** to gauge the **state of scientific research in India**.
- ♦ The last report was published in 2023, but it only included data up to 2021.

Findings of the 2023 Survey

- **In 2020–21**, India spent only **0.64% of its GDP** on scientific research – the lowest since 1996 (excluding defence research).
- **Industrially developed countries** such as the United States, China, Japan, Finland, South Korea, and Germany spend anywhere from 1.5% to 3.5% of their GDP on R&D.
- **Another concern is the funding mix:** About 75% of India's R&D spending comes from the public sector, whereas in most advanced economies, private firms contribute the major share.

Need for Funding in R&D

- **Economic Growth:** Drives new industries, improves productivity, and enhances global competitiveness.
- **Technological Advancement:** Facilitates breakthroughs in fields like AI, biotechnology, and renewable energy.
- **Social Challenges:** Helps address poverty, healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability issues.
- **Job Creation:** Innovation generates employment opportunities and stimulates entrepreneurship.
- **Global Positioning:** Positions India as a global leader in science, technology, and knowledge.
- **Attracts Investment:** Promotes foreign and domestic investments in research-driven sectors.

Reasons for Low Funding

- **High Dependence on Public Sector:** About 75% of India's R&D funding comes from the government.
 - ♦ Private sector contribution is weak compared to developed economies where industries lead R&D investment.

- **Low Private Sector Incentives:** Indian firms focus more on short-term profits than long-term innovation.
 - ♦ Limited risk appetite due to high cost of R&D vs. relatively cheaper technology imports.
- **Economic Structure of India:** India's economy is still service-dominated, while manufacturing-driven economies invest more in R&D.

Implications of Low Funding

- **Limited Research Output:** Slows down indigenous innovations.
- **Infrastructure Deficit:** Outdated labs, insufficient research facilities.
- **Brain Drain:** Talented researchers migrate for better opportunities.
- **Weak Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Stifles innovation ecosystems.
- **Skill Gap:** Lack of high-quality researchers and trained manpower.
- **Global Competitiveness:** India lags behind innovation leaders.

Government Initiatives

- **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme:** Approved with a 1 lakh crore corpus, this scheme aims to energise private-sector R&D and deep-tech startups.
 - ♦ It offers long-term, low- or zero-interest loans, equity investments, and funds a new Deep-Tech Fund of Funds via the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).
- **National Quantum Mission:** Allocated 6,003.65 crore for 2023–31, to advance quantum technologies through scientific and industrial R&D.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** To foster innovation at the grassroots level by providing support to students, startups, and entrepreneurs.
- **The National Mission on High-Yielding Seeds** will focus on strengthening the research ecosystem and developing high-yielding, pest-resistant, and climate-resilient seeds, aligning with DBT's efforts in agricultural biotechnology.
- **National Manufacturing Mission (NMM):** Aligned with the government's 'BioE3 Policy' for fostering high-performance biomanufacturing, the NMM announced in the Budget aims to accelerate technology development and commercialisation.
- **The Seaweed Mission and Learn & Earn Program** empower women entrepreneurs, supporting economic inclusion.

Way Forward

- To raise R&D spending, there is a need to have increased partnerships with the private sector.

- Efforts are being made to create better synergies between industry, research labs, and educational institutions to broaden both research activity and the funds to support it.

Source: TH

DESERTIFICATION IN INDIA & FARMING TECHNOLOGY

Context

- Recently, researchers from the Central University of Rajasthan (CUoR) have successfully **grown wheat on desert land** using an **innovative 'soilification technology'** powered by an **indigenous bioformulation**.

About Desertification

- **Desertification** is defined as land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas due to various factors including climatic variations and human activities.
- According to the **Space Applications Centre of ISRO**, about **30% of India's total geographical area** suffers from **degradation**, with nearly **25% affected by desertification**.

Extent of the Problem

- Nearly **96.40 million hectares** of land in India are degraded (*Space Applications Centre, ISRO, 2021*).
- Drylands in Rajasthan contribute to over **23% of desertified areas**, making it a hotspot for urgent interventions.
- India aims to restore **26 million hectares of degraded land** by 2030 (*India's National Action Programme to Combat Desertification, MoEFCC*).

Breakthroughs in Farming Technology

- **Soilification Technology in Rajasthan:** It lies in **modifying desert sand into fertile soil** using **polymers and bioformulations**. It involves:
 - ♦ cross-linking desert sand particles using eco-friendly polymers;
 - ♦ enhancing water retention capacity of sandy soil;
 - ♦ stimulating microbial activity through indigenous bioformulations;
 - ♦ creating a soil-like structure that supports crop growth;
 - ♦ Minimising the spread of desertification, particularly in vulnerable zones like **western Rajasthan's Thar Desert**;
- **Baramati Experiment in Maharashtra:** It was based on **AI and Precision Farming, supported by Microsoft and Oxford University**, that uses

AI-driven tools to optimize irrigation, pest control, and crop planning.

- ♦ Farmers reported up to 40% increase in yield;
- ♦ Reduced input costs and water usage;
- ♦ Real-time data helps manage climate risks.

Other Farming Technology in Combating Desertification

- **Precision Agriculture:** Use of drones, sensors, and GIS to monitor soil moisture and nutrient levels.
- **Micro-Irrigation Systems:** Drip and sprinkler irrigation reduce water wastage and salinity.
- **Soil Conservation Technologies:** Zero-tillage, contour bunding, and mulching help retain soil moisture.
- **Agroforestry:** Integration of trees with crops prevents erosion and enhances soil carbon sequestration.
- **Remote Sensing & Satellite Monitoring:** ISRO's *Desertification Atlas* provides data for planning at national and state levels.
- **Climate-Smart Farming:** Adoption of drought-resistant crop varieties (e.g., millets) promoted under the **International Year of Millets 2023** initiative.
- **Natural Farming:** It avoids chemical fertilizers and pesticides, restores soil health and water permeability, and promotes climate-resilient agriculture.

Government Initiatives to Combat Desertification

- **National Action Plan on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought:** It aligns with UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) commitments.
 - ♦ **Bonn Challenge Pledge:** Restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY):** It promotes efficient water use.
- **National Afforestation Programme & Green India Mission:** These aim to expand vegetative cover.
- **Soil Health Card Scheme:** It encourages balanced fertilizer use.
- **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA):** It fosters climate-resilient farming.
- **Technology Development and Transfer Programme: Desert Soilification Technology** is actively promoted and scale-up under it, with the aim to:

- ♦ Reclaim degraded land in desert-prone regions;
- ♦ Support climate-resilient agriculture;
- ♦ Reduce water usage in farming;
- ♦ Enable sustainable livelihoods for rural communities.

Source: TH

AFSPA EXTENDED IN PARTS OF MANIPUR, NAGALAND, ARUNACHAL

In News

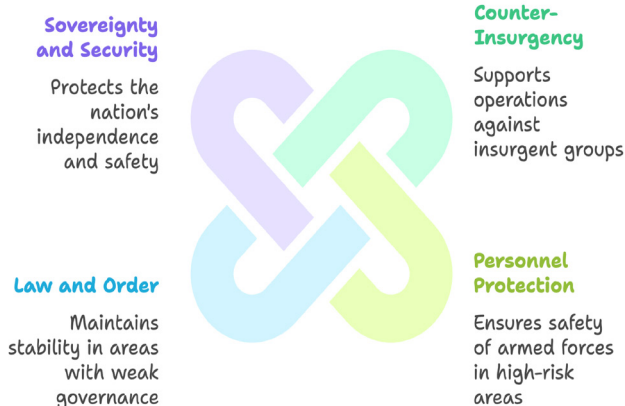
- The Ministry of Home Affairs extended the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act** in parts of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland for another six months.

What is AFSPA?

- **About:**
 - ♦ The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) is a powerful law enacted to empower the armed forces in counter-insurgency operations.
- **Important Provisions**
 - ♦ **Section 3:** The Governor of a State or UT can declare the whole or part of the territory as a "disturbed area".
 - ♦ **Section 4:** Empowers armed forces to search premises, arrest individuals without warrants, and use force (even to the extent of causing death) against those violating prohibitions.

Section 6: Arrested persons and seized property must be handed over to the local police promptly.

Rationale for Imposition



- ♦ **Section 7:** Provides immunity to armed forces—prosecution or legal proceedings can begin only with prior sanction of the Central Government.

Criticisms

- Alleged human rights violations including cases of extrajudicial killings, torture, and disappearances.
- Considered against democratic ethos, limiting fundamental rights such as life and liberty (**Article 21**).
- Limited success in addressing insurgency, often seen as fuelling resentment among local populations.

Committee Recommendations

- **Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee (2005):** Recommended repeal of AFSPA, suggesting incorporation of essential provisions into the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).
- **Santosh Hegde Commission (2013):** Reported misuse of AFSPA in Manipur, stating many "encounters" were fake.

Way Forward

- **Enhance transparency and accountability** by amending vague provisions.
- Ensure checks on human rights violations through **independent oversight**.
- Focus on socio-economic development of Northeastern states to address root causes of insurgency.
- Establish a balanced framework between security imperatives and protection of citizens' rights.

Source: TH

- Must be qualified to be appointed a judge of the Supreme Court (i.e., a Supreme Court judge or an advocate for at least 10 years, or an eminent jurist as per the President's opinion).
- AGI can participate in parliamentary debates but cannot vote.

Source: TH

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT (NSA)

In News

- The Ladakh administration has justified the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk under the **National Security Act (NSA)**.

National Security Act (NSA) of 1980

- It allows preventive detention to protect national security, public order, and essential services.
- It is a powerful tool that limits individual liberty and must be exercised sparingly and lawfully, ensuring due process and rights protection.
- **Key features:**
 - ♦ **Grounds for Detention:** NSA can be invoked if a person's actions threaten national defense, foreign relations, state security, communal harmony, or involve smuggling/disruption of essential services.
 - ♦ **Procedure:** Detention orders can be issued by the Central or State Government based on subjective satisfaction.
 - The detained person must be informed of the reasons, and an Advisory Board must be formed within 3 weeks to review the case.
 - ♦ **Period of Detention:** Initially up to 12 months, extendable in blocks not exceeding 12 months, with government approval.
 - ♦ **Safeguards:** The detainee has the right to legal representation and to make a representation before the Advisory Board.
 - The government must consider the Board's recommendation and can revoke or modify the order.
 - ♦ **Judicial Review:** The detention can be challenged in High Court through a habeas corpus petition if found unlawful.

Source: TH

H3N2 FLU

In News

- The H3N2 flu virus has triggered a major epidemic throughout the entire Delhi-NCR region.

NEWS IN SHORT

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF INDIA

In News

- Senior advocate R. Venkataramani is re-appointed as the Attorney General of India for two years.

About Attorney General of India

- The Attorney General of India (AGI) is the highest law officer and the chief legal advisor to the Government of India, appointed by the President under Article 76 of the Constitution.
- Represents the Union Government in the Supreme Court and High Courts in all cases where the government is a party.
- Appointed by the President and holds office during the pleasure of the President without a fixed tenure.

About H3N2

- It is a subtype of the **Influenza A virus**, affecting mainly those over 50 and under 15.
- It spreads through **respiratory droplets** and contaminated surfaces, with higher risk in crowded spaces like schools and nursing homes.
 - ♦ Frequent mutations in its surface proteins make vaccines less effective.
- H3N2 infection symptoms typically begin with sudden high fever, chills, sore throat, headaches, muscle, body aches, fatigue, abdominal pain and sometimes gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea and diarrhoea.
- H3N2 flu is usually treated at **home with rest, hydration**, and symptomatic care like steam inhalation and warm saline gargles.
 - ♦ Antiviral drug **oseltamivir** may be prescribed within 48 hours of symptom onset, especially for high-risk individuals, to reduce illness duration and complications.

Source :LM

MIG-21**Context**

- The **Mikoyan-Gurevich (MiG-21) fighter jets** were **decommissioned** by the Indian Airforce.

About

- It is the country's **first supersonic fighter jet**.
- It is of **Soviet-origin** inducted into the **IAF in the early 1960s**.
- **Design:** Lightweight, delta-wing, highly maneuverable, capable of speeds over Mach 2.
- The supersonic jets were the **dominant platforms during 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan**.
 - ♦ The aircraft also played a key role in the **1999 Kargil conflict as well as the 2019 Balakot airstrikes**.
- It provided India with a **low-cost, reliable supersonic fighter during critical phases of modernization**.
- **Phase-out Plan:** India has gradually retired MiG-21 squadrons to be replaced by **LCA Tejas and other modern jets**.

Source: TH

MUKHYAMANTRI MAHILA ROJGAR YOJANA**Context**

- Prime Minister Modi launched **Bihar's Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana**.

About

- **Aim:** Making women Aatmanirbhar and promoting women's empowerment through self-employment and livelihood opportunities.
- **Eligibility:** Every family will have at least one woman beneficiary under this scheme.
- **Benefit:** Each beneficiary will receive an initial grant of Rs. 10,000 via Direct Benefit Transfer, with the possibility of additional financial support of up to Rs. 2 lakh in subsequent phases.
- **The assistance can be utilized in areas of the choice of the beneficiary** including agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, tailoring, weaving, and other small-scale enterprises.
- **Implementation: The scheme will be community driven** in which, along with financial support, community resource persons connected to Self Help Groups will provide training to support their endeavour.
 - ♦ To support the sale of their produce, Gramin Haat-Bazaars will be further developed in the State.

Source: DD

ARTICLE 304 (A)**Context**

- The Supreme Court struck down a 2007 Rajasthan government notification that exempted Value Added Tax (VAT) on locally manufactured asbestos sheets and bricks, finding it discriminatory under **Article 304(a) of the Constitution**.

About

- The Supreme Court's ruling **struck down Rajasthan's notification as discriminatory under Article 304(a)**.
 - ♦ Taxation cannot be used as a **weapon to discriminate** between locally manufactured goods and similar goods imported from other states.
- **Constitutional Provision Involved:** Article 304(a) is found in Part XIII (Articles 301–307) concerning **Trade, Commerce and Intercourse within India**.
 - ♦ The Legislature of a State may by law impose on goods imported from other States or the Union territories any tax to which similar goods manufactured or produced in that State.
 - ♦ This is subject to a restriction that states cannot discriminate between goods imported and goods manufactured or produced.

Supreme Court's Key Observations

- **Tax differentiation vs discrimination:** Differentiation permissible if:
 - ♦ No similar goods are produced in the state.
 - ♦ Tax burden imposed equally on local and imported goods.
 - ♦ Discrimination arises when local goods get a favourable tax treatment.
- **Legitimate exemptions allowed:** Tax rebates/ incentives for limited periods, applied non-hostilely, to promote economically backward areas, are valid.

Source: IE

NATIONAL GEOSCIENCE AWARDS-2024

In News

- President Droupadi Murmu presented the **National Geoscience Awards-2024** at a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, recognizing **outstanding contributions in the field of geoscience.**

National Geoscience Awards

- They were instituted in 1966 by the **Ministry of Mines**, to **recognize excellence and innovation in the field of geoscience and mining.**
 - ♦ formerly known as the National Mineral Awards until 2009 .
- They are among the **country's oldest and most prestigious honors in the field of geosciences.**
- The Ministry of Mines presents the National Geoscience Awards annually under the following three categories: National Geoscience Award for Lifetime Achievement, National Geoscience Award and National Young Geoscientist Award.

Source :PIB

