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Time: 45 Min

Date: 17-10-2025

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INDIA AND BRAZIL TO EXPAND TRADE PACT WITH MERCOSUR

Context

- Recently, **India and Brazil** agreed to expand the scope of the existing **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) under MERCOSUR bloc**, aiming to include more sectors and products.

About MERCOSUR

- MERCOSUR**, established in 1991, includes **Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay** as founding members.
 - Bolivia's accession is pending** ratification.
- It is the fifth-largest economy.
- It counts Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname as **associate members**.
 - Panama** is the **first Central American nation** joined as an **associate member**.

India and MERCOSUR Relations: Historical Background

- India signed a **Framework Agreement with MERCOSUR in 2003**, followed by a **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in 2004**, which came into **effect in 2009**.
 - The PTA covers 450 product lines, offering mutual tariff concessions on items like pharmaceuticals, chemicals, textiles, and leather goods.
 - It marked **India's first formal trade pact with a Latin American bloc**, laying the groundwork for deeper economic integration.
- The **India-Mercosur PTA** currently provides **tariff concessions on around 450–452 tariff lines**, with reductions ranging from **10% to 100%**.

India-Brazil & MERCOSUR

- India and Brazil** have set an ambitious bilateral trade target of **US\$ 20 billion by 2030**, a significant rise from **US\$ 12 billion in 2024**.
- The enhanced PTA aims to operate under the **Mercosur bloc**, and Brazil has expressed intent **to collaborate closely with its Mercosur partners** to ensure a **swift and mutually beneficial expansion** of the agreement.
- Exports** between India and Brazil have **already grown by over 30% in 2025**.

Goals of the Expanded Pact

- Increase product coverage beyond the current 450 items.

- Facilitate investment flows in critical sectors like renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, and digital infrastructure.
- Promote sustainable development through technology transfer and green innovation.
- Strengthen regional supply chains between South Asia and Latin America.

Emerging Sectors of Cooperation

- The two sides identified several high-potential sectors for future cooperation, including *automotive and aerospace Industries; information technology and digital innovation; renewables and clean energy; healthcare and biotechnology; agriculture and food processing; semiconductors and advanced manufacturing etc.*
- Brazil proposed the launch of a **Brazil–India Digital Partnership**, focusing on **artificial intelligence, high-performance computing, and technology start-ups**.
 - It aims to promote **green growth, innovation, and job creation** in both countries.

Strategic Significance

- Economic Diversification:** MERCOSUR offers India access to a market of over 300 million people, helping reduce reliance on traditional Western partners.
- South-South Cooperation:** The partnership aligns with India's foreign policy vision of equitable global development.
- Supply Chain Resilience:** Strengthening ties with Latin America supports India's goal of building robust and diversified supply chains.

Challenges and Way Ahead

- Limited Product Coverage and Trade Volume:** India's trade with Brazil, its largest MERCOSUR partner, remains **far below Brazil's trade with China, the US, and Argentina**.
 - There's a **need to diversify trade baskets** and include high-value sectors like pharmaceuticals, digital technology, and critical minerals.
- Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers:** Both sides face regulatory hurdles, including complex customs procedures and inconsistent standards.
 - MERCOSUR's common external tariff structure can **limit India's flexibility** in negotiating bilateral terms.
 - Indian exporters have raised concerns about market access restrictions in sectors like agriculture and auto components.

- **Geopolitical and Strategic Misalignment:** India needs to navigate its strategic autonomy in a multipolar world, balancing ties with the US, China, and Russia.
 - ♦ MERCOSUR countries, especially Brazil, have their own geopolitical priorities, which may not always align with India's trade and security interests.
- **External Pressures and Trade Wars:** Trade tensions with the U.S. have pushed India and Brazil to seek alternative markets, but this **reactive approach** may lack long-term strategy.
 - ♦ There's concern that external shocks, like tariff hikes or global supply chain disruptions, could derail progress.

Source: TH

STRENGTHENING INDIA'S EXTRADITION FRAMEWORK: CALL FOR SPECIAL PRISONS AND COORDINATED ACTION

Context

- Union Home Minister, at a conference on "Extradition of Fugitives: Challenges and Strategies" organised by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), urged States to construct special prisons for fugitives in line with international standards.

Need for Special Prisons

- **Extradition Obstacles:** Many fugitives wanted by Indian authorities resist extradition in foreign courts, arguing that Indian prisons **do not meet international human rights and safety standards**.
 - ♦ Courts in several countries have, at times, delayed or denied extradition on humanitarian grounds citing concerns like **overcrowding, poor sanitation, and lack of medical care** in Indian jails.
- **Compliance with International Standards:** Constructing special prisons for fugitives in line with **UN Standard Minimum Rules** for the Treatment of Prisoners (**Nelson Mandela Rules**) would help India counter these objections and demonstrate its commitment to humane treatment.
- **Global Legal Standing:** Special prisons will improve **India's credibility before foreign courts** and strengthen its ability to bring back fugitives involved in terrorism, financial fraud, corruption, and other transnational crimes.

Existing Issues in Indian Prisons

- **Overcrowding:** As per the **Prison Statistics India 2023** report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India's prisons operated at an average occupancy rate of **120.8%**.
- **Poor Infrastructure and Hygiene:** Many prisons face challenges like inadequate ventilation, sanitation, and access to healthcare. Such conditions fail to meet international norms and are often cited as grounds to deny extradition.
- **Lack of Classification:** There is **no separate category of detention facilities** for economic offenders, foreign nationals, or high-risk fugitives.
- Reports from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), have highlighted cases of **custodial violence, delayed medical attention, and limited legal access**, further weakening India's position in international courts.

Reforming the Extradition Mechanism

- **Passport Coordination System:** The Home Minister highlighted the need for real-time coordination between the passport issuance process and law enforcement agencies.
 - ♦ Passports should be red-flagged, seized, or cancelled immediately after a **Red Corner Notice (RCN)** is issued by Interpol to prevent international travel by fugitives.
- **Blue Corner to Red Corner Notice Conversion:** A special campaign will be launched to convert Blue Corner Notices (issued for information) into Red Corner Notices (requests for arrest and extradition).
 - ♦ Each State will have a dedicated cell for monitoring and implementing this conversion.
- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** A joint task force under the Multi Agency Centre (MAC), involving the CBI and Intelligence Bureau (IB), will ensure seamless coordination in tracking and extraditing fugitives.

Related Developments and Progress Achieved

- **Global Operation Centre (CBI):** The CBI has established a Global Operation Centre to coordinate with international police agencies in real time.
 - ♦ Over **190 Red Corner Notices** were issued till September 2025, a record high in the CBI's history.
- **Asset Recovery:** Under the **Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (2018)**, the government has recovered nearly **\$2 billion** from assets of economic fugitives in the last four years.

- ♦ **The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)** has been further strengthened, with assets worth about **\$12 billion** attached between 2014 and 2023.

Way Ahead

- **Infrastructure Upgrade:** Establish model detention facilities meeting international norms.
- **Legal Reforms:** Streamline extradition procedures under the Extradition Act, 1962.
- **Diplomatic Engagements:** Strengthen bilateral treaties and mutual legal assistance agreements (MLATs).
- **Capacity Building:** Train State police and CBI personnel on international legal cooperation.
- **Public Transparency:** Regular updates on fugitive tracking and extradition outcomes to build public trust.

Source: PIB

INDIA FACES HIGHEST CBAM LEVY AMONG EU TRADE PARTNERS

Context

- According to European think-tank Sandberg, Indian iron and steel exporters face the highest **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** fees to the EU, estimated at **€301 million**.

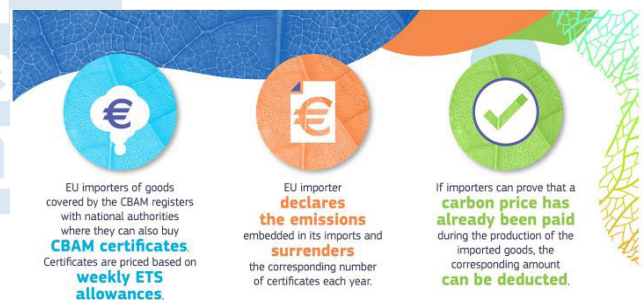
Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

- CBAM is the European Union's tool to put a fair price on the carbon emitted during the production of carbon intensive goods that are entering the EU, and to encourage cleaner industrial production in non-EU countries.
- CBAM is one of the elements of the **EU Green Deal**, the goal of which is to reduce **GHG emissions by 55% by 2030**.
- CBAM is aimed at **equalizing the price of carbon paid for EU** products operating under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) and imported goods.
 - ♦ It refers to a phenomenon where a **EU manufacturer moves carbon-intensive production to countries outside the region with less stringent climate policies**. Its primary objective is to avert 'carbon leakage'.

Implementation of CBAM

- The CBAM system is expected to come into force on **January 1, 2026**.

- The CBAM will initially apply to imports of **Cement, Iron and steel, Aluminium, and Electricity**, as these sectors have a high risk of carbon leakage and high carbon emissions.
- EU importers will have to **buy carbon certificates corresponding to the carbon price** that would have been paid in the EU, if the goods had been produced locally.
- The price of the certificates would be calculated according to the **auction prices in the EU carbon credit market**.
- Once a non-EU producer can show that they have already paid a price for the carbon used in the production of the imported goods in a third country, the **corresponding cost can be fully deducted for the EU importer**.
- **CBAM will apply on:** In principle, imports of goods from **all non-EU countries** will be covered by the CBAM. Certain third countries who participate in the ETS or have an emission trading system linked to the Union's will be excluded from the mechanism. This is the case for members of the **European Economic Area and Switzerland**.



Reasons India Faces the Highest Levy

- **High Export Volume to the EU:** EU imports of Indian iron and steel were about **US\$4.25 billion** in 2024.
 - ♦ Larger export volumes naturally lead to higher total CBAM charges, even if per-tonne emissions are comparable to other countries.
- **Higher Emissions Intensity:** Indian steel production emits roughly **2.6 tCO per tonne** of steel, compared with the global average of **~1.9–2.0 tCO per tonne**.
- **Production Technology and Fuel Mix:** Most Indian steel is produced using **blast furnaces—basic oxygen furnace (BF-BOF)** and **coal-based direct reduced iron (DRI)** methods.
 - ♦ Heavy reliance on coal and metallurgical coke increases **CO₂ intensity** compared with **EAF** or green-hydrogen-based routes used in the EU.

India's Stand on CBAM

- The CBAM undermines India's exports, especially in energy-intensive industries, and complicates FTA negotiations with the EU.
- India views CBAM as a **"non-tariff barrier"** that discriminates against developing countries.
 - ♦ It argues that developed nations, being historic emitters, must shoulder greater responsibility in combating climate change.

India's Preparedness and Mitigation Strategies

- **Domestic Carbon Trading:** India is developing a carbon credit trading system that could help offset CBAM liabilities by showing domestic carbon pricing compliance.
- **Renewable Energy Goals:** India aims to triple renewable capacity by **2030** and achieve net-zero emissions by **2070**.
- **Technological Transition:** The Sandberg analysis suggests Indian firms could reduce net CBAM costs by **€180 million** if they shift to cleaner production technologies, potentially increasing revenues by **€510 million**.

Concluding remarks

- The EU's CBAM represents both a challenge and an opportunity for India. While it risks adding costs to carbon-intensive exports, it also serves as a wake-up call to accelerate domestic decarbonization and carbon market reforms.
- A balanced policy, combining green innovation, strategic diplomacy, and domestic carbon pricing, can help India protect trade interests while advancing its climate commitments.

Source: TH

RESERVATIONS IN LOCAL BODIES

Context

- The Supreme Court declined to interfere with a Telangana High Court order that had stayed two Government Orders **enhancing the reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in municipalities and panchayats to 42%**.
- This move would have taken total reservations to **67%** — including 15% for Scheduled Castes (SCs), 10% for Scheduled Tribes (STs), 42% for OBCs (proposed).

About

- The Telangana High Court stayed the increase, citing the **50% ceiling** set by Supreme Court

precedents, but allowed elections to proceed with total reservations capped at 50%.

- **Supreme Court's Observations:** Dismissed Telangana's appeal; allowed elections to proceed without enhanced OBC quota.
 - ♦ Declined to stay the High Court order, stating it cannot take a view inconsistent with Constitution Bench rulings fixing the 50% ceiling.
 - ♦ Directed that the High Court can decide the matter on its own merits.

Reservation in India

- As per existing instructions, reservation is provided to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) at the rate of **15%, 7.5% and 27%, respectively**, in case of direct recruitment on all India basis by open competition.
 - ♦ In direct recruitment on an all India basis, other than by open competition, the percentage fixed is 16.66% for SCs, 7.5% for STs and 25.84% for OBCs.
- The **Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act 2019** enables the State (i.e., both the Central and State Governments) to provide **reservation to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the society**.

What is the 50% Rule?

- The Supreme Court has historically maintained that reservations, whether in jobs or education, **should not exceed 50%** of the total seats/posts.
- **Mandal Commission Case:** In **1992**, SC in the **Indra Sawhney case** had ruled that reservation should **not exceed 50%**, barring certain **extraordinary situations**.
 - ♦ Such as to provide reservations to communities which hail from far flung areas of the country and have been kept out of the mainstream of the society. This is not a geographical test but a social one.
- **EWS Judgement:** The Supreme Court upheld the **103rd Constitutional Amendment** which provides for **10% additional reservations** to the EWS.
 - ♦ This means, for the time being, that the 50% limit applies only to non-EWS reservations, and States are permitted to reserve a total of **60%** of the seats/posts including EWS reservations.

Reservations in Local Bodies in India

- **Reservation: Article 243D** of the Constitution provides for reservation of seats in Panchayats for Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, Backward Class of citizens and women.
- **Article 243T** of the Indian Constitution is a provision for the reservation of seats in municipalities to ensure representation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women.
 - ♦ Seats are reserved in proportion to their population in the local area.
 - ♦ 1/3rd of total seats (including those for SCs/ STs) are reserved for women.
 - ♦ Reservation of offices of Chairpersons (like Sarpanch/Mayor) is also mandated.
- **Reservation for OBCs in Local Bodies:** The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992) did not mandate OBC reservation in local bodies.
 - ♦ However, many States have extended it through state laws or ordinances, citing the need to ensure representation to backward classes.
 - ♦ It must follow the Supreme Court's "triple test" and not exceed a total of 50% of total reserved seats, including those for SCs and STs.
- ♦ Encourages women's involvement in local development issues like health, education, sanitation, and welfare.
- **Marginalized sections often have unique local problems** — land rights, caste discrimination, livelihood issues — that may be ignored otherwise.
 - ♦ Reservation ensures these issues are addressed within local governance frameworks.
- **Reduction of Elite Capture:** It prevents domination of local bodies by elite or dominant social groups.
 - ♦ Promotes fair resource distribution and equitable development outcomes.
- **Fulfilling Constitutional and Democratic Ideals:** Reflects the spirit of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments which aim at decentralization, inclusivity, and empowerment.
 - ♦ Strengthens India's commitment to "Equality, Justice, and Fraternity" — core principles of the Constitution.

Emerging Issues and Challenges of Reservations in Local Bodies in India

Constitutional Provisions Related to Reservation

- **Article 16:** It provides for **equality of opportunity** for all citizens but as an exception the State can provide for reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class that is not adequately represented in the state services.
- **Article 16 (4A):** Provides that the State can make any provision for reservation in matters of promotion in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes if they are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 335:** It recognises that special measures need to be adopted for considering the claims of SCs and STs to services and posts, in order to bring them at par.
- **103 Amendment of the Constitution of India:** Introduced **10% reservation** for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of society.
- **Proxy Representation and Lack of Real Empowerment:** In many cases, especially under women's reservation, elected representatives act as proxies for their male relatives (often called Sarpanch Pati or Pradhan Pati).
 - ♦ Real decision-making power remains with dominant family or community members.
- **Dominance of Local Elites:** Despite reservations, local elites manipulate electoral and administrative processes.
 - ♦ Economic and social hierarchies often continue to dictate decisions, undermining the autonomy of reserved category representatives.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure and Support Mechanisms:** Lack of proper training, funds, and institutional support for capacity building of elected representatives.
- **Legal and Constitutional Challenges:** Reservation beyond the 50% ceiling has been questioned by the Supreme Court.
 - ♦ States struggle to balance social justice and constitutional limits.
- **Inadequate Representation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs):** Absence of up-to-date empirical data on OBC population at local levels hampers fair seat allocation.

Need for the Reservations in Local Bodies in India

- **Strengthening Grassroots Democracy:** True democracy is participatory. Reservation ensures that governance reflects the diversity of society.
- **Women's Empowerment:** 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has led to increased female participation in public life.

Way Ahead

- **Genuine Empowerment of Reserved Representatives:** Ensure real authority for elected representatives, particularly women, by preventing proxy participation.
- **Data-Driven Reservation Planning:** Conduct regular socio-economic surveys to ensure accurate seat allocation for OBCs, SCs, STs, and women.
 - ♦ Use evidence-based approaches to review and adjust reservation policies periodically.
- **Legal Clarity and Policy Harmonization:** Ensure compliance with the 50% reservation ceiling while exploring ways to extend affirmative action without violating constitutional limits.
- **Monitoring:** Establish independent oversight bodies to prevent misuse and ensure accountability.
- **Promoting Inclusive Governance:** Encourage collaboration across communities to reduce caste- or gender-based tensions.

Source: TH

NAM SHOULD ADVANCE GOALS OF GLOBAL SOUTH

Context

- The Minister of State for External Affairs said that the **Members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** should **harness the initiative to advance the aspirations of the Global South**.
 - ♦ He made the statement at the **19th NAM mid-term ministerial meeting** and said the members of NAM should “re-purpose” the movement.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

- **Bandung Conference (1955):** The concept of non-alignment was formulated during the Bandung Conference, where newly independent nations sought to **avoid entanglement in the Cold War’s ideological divide**.
- **It was inspired by three world leaders:** Nehru of India, Tito of Yugoslavia and Nasser of Egypt.
- **Belgrade Summit (1961):** The first NAM summit in Belgrade formalized the movement, emphasizing support for self-determination, national independence, and opposition to colonialism and imperialism.

- **Ten Bandung Principles:**

- ♦ Respect for fundamental human rights, and the Charter of the United Nations.
 - ♦ Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
 - ♦ Recognition of the equality of all races and nations.
 - ♦ Non-interference in internal affairs of another country.
 - ♦ Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, singly or collectively.
 - ♦ Abstention from the use of arrangement of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers.
 - ♦ Mutual non-aggression.
 - ♦ Peaceful coexistence and settlement of disputes.
 - ♦ Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation; and Respect for justice and international obligations.
- **Governance:** It has an **informal governance structure**, lacking a permanent secretariat, constitution, or budget.
 - ♦ Its governance is based on rotational leadership and decisions are made by consensus.
 - **Expansion and Structural Changes:**
 - ♦ **Membership Growth:** Starting with 25 members in 1961, NAM has expanded to include over 120 member states, representing nearly two-thirds of the United Nations.
 - ♦ **Jakarta Declaration (1992):** The 10th NAM Summit in Jakarta adopted the Jakarta Declaration, which laid out future priorities, including enhancing South-South cooperation and addressing common issues like poverty, foreign debt, and population growth.

Relevance of NAM

- **Platform for the Global South:** NAM represents developing countries, giving them a collective voice in international forums like the UN, WTO, and climate negotiations.
- **Addressing North-South Divide:** NAM highlights issues of economic inequality, foreign debt, poverty, and technology access.
 - ♦ Encourages South-South cooperation to reduce dependency on developed countries.
- **Maintaining Strategic Autonomy:** Even in a multipolar world, NAM allows member states to avoid being forced into military or strategic blocs.

- ♦ Supports independent foreign policy and non-alignment with major power rivalries.
- **Promoting Peace and Conflict Resolution:** NAM continues to advocate for disarmament, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and decolonization.
- **Economic and Development Cooperation:** NAM's focus has shifted from purely political to economic development, trade, and technology sharing.

Challenges and Limitations

- **Declining Relevance Post-Cold War:** After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bipolar global structure disappeared, reducing NAM's original strategic purpose.
- **Diverse Membership:** Includes over 120 member states with varying political, economic, and strategic interests.
 - ♦ This diversity often makes consensus difficult, especially on critical issues like conflicts or global policies.
- **Limited Enforcement Capacity:** NAM decisions are non-binding, based on consensus and moral authority rather than legal obligations.
- **Relevance in a Multipolar World:** In today's multipolar global order, new alliances like BRICS, G20, and regional blocs play a larger role.
 - ♦ NAM's traditional political influence has diminished, especially in security and defense matters.

Significance of NAM for India

- **Strategic Autonomy:** NAM allows India to maintain an independent foreign policy without being tied to any major power bloc.
- **Platform for the Global South:** Provides India a forum to voice concerns of developing countries on global platforms like the UN and WTO.
- **Promoting Peace and Security:** NAM helps India advocate for disarmament, conflict resolution, and peaceful coexistence.
- **Support for Global Governance Reforms:** India leverages NAM to push for reforms in the UN Security Council and international institutions to enhance representation of developing nations.
- **Balancing Global Power Dynamics:** NAM provides India flexibility in engaging major powers without formal alignment.
- **Historical and Diplomatic Credibility:** India's founding role in NAM strengthens its diplomatic

influence and reinforces its image as a responsible leader of the Global South.

Conclusion

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has evolved in structure and purpose since its inception, but now faces an existential crisis due to emerging global coalitions and rapid technological changes.
- While NAM's Cold War-era role has changed, it remains relevant as a platform for the Global South, promoting economic cooperation, strategic independence, and addressing inequality in global politics.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

MOTION 042

In News

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has adopted Motion 042.

Motion 042

- It was passed at the **IUCN World Conservation Congress**.
- It calls for a global phase-out of coal, oil, and gas, a halt to new extraction projects, and a just transition for affected workers and communities.
- It is backed by civil society, Indigenous groups, and organisations like WWF and BirdLife International.
- It urges the exploration of international mechanisms such as a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Relevance

- IUCN became the first multilateral body to explicitly recognise fossil fuel production as a threat to nature.
- It signals a unified call ahead of COP30 to integrate climate and biodiversity goals by confronting fossil fuels as a root cause of environmental degradation.
 - ♦ Indigenous leaders and environmentalists hailed the move as long-overdue recognition of their realities, positioning the IUCN's stance as a turning point for global conservation and climate justice.

Source :DTE

PER DROP MORE CROP (PDMC) SCHEME

Context

The Government has introduced new flexibility under the Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme to promote efficient water use and boost farmer income.

Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme

- It is a **centrally sponsored** initiative launched in **2015–16**, aims to enhance farm-level water use efficiency through micro-irrigation methods like drip and sprinkler systems.
- Initially part of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), it has been implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PMRKVY) since 2022–23.

Importance

- A 2020 NITI Aayog evaluation affirmed Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme's role in boosting productivity, employment, and farmer incomes.

Latest Guidelines

- The new flexibility will empower States and Union Territories to take up micro-level water storage and conservation projects as part of Other Interventions (OI).
- States and UTs can now plan micro-level water management activities-such as digging construction and water harvesting systems-based on local needs.
- These systems are developed for individual farmers as well as community use, ensuring sustainable water availability for micro-irrigation.

Source :Air

INDIA ELECTED CO-CHAIR OF UN-GGIM ASIA-PACIFIC COMMITTEE

In News

India has been elected as Co-Chair of the Regional Committee of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP) for a three-year term till 2028.

United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP)

- It is a representative body of the National Geospatial Information Authorities of 56 countries and economies in Asia and the Pacific region.
 - It was established in 1995 and rebranded in 2012.

- It is one of the five regional committees of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM).

Objectives

- It aims to promote the use of geospatial information for identifying problems and finding solutions, so that the economic, social and environmental benefits of geospatial information will be maximized in Asia and the Pacific region.

Source :Air

CAPE VERDE

In News

Cape Verde made history by becoming the second-smallest country (after Iceland in 2018) to qualify for the FIFA World Cup

- In contrast, India suffered a humiliating loss to world-ranked 158th Singapore in Goa, failing to qualify for the 2027 Asian Cup.

Cabo Verde

- It is an archipelago of 10 islands in the Atlantic Ocean.
- It is an island nation located about 620 km off the west coast of Africa, named after the nearby Cape Verde in Senegal.
- It has a service-driven economy focused on trade, transport, tourism, and remittances, transitioning toward a market economy since the mid-1990s.
- Culturally, it blends Portuguese and African influences, evident in its arts and music. Mindelo, on São Vicente, hosts the largest port with a historic deepwater harbor.

Source :IE

PRIME MINISTER INTERNSHIP SCHEME (PMIS)

Context

- The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, interacted with interns of the Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) at Hampi, Karnataka.

About the Scheme

- Launched by the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)**, PMIS is part of the Prime Minister's package of five schemes and initiatives to facilitate employment, skilling and other opportunities for Indian youth over a **5-year** period.

- Targets youth aged **21–24 years** who are currently not enrolled in any full-time academic program or employment.
- The internship will have a duration of **12 months** and plans to provide opportunities to **one crore youth** in the top 500 companies across India over the next five years.
- Financial assistance: Rs. 5,000/month (Rs. 4,500 by the government + Rs. 500 by company via CSR). Additionally, a one-time grant of Rs. 6,000 for incidentals will be disbursed by MCA to each intern, upon joining the place of internship.
- **Insurance coverage:** Every intern is covered under **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)** and **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)**.

Source: PIB

PRIVATE SECTOR HOSPITALS DOMINANCE IN AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Context

- The Annual Report of the National Health Authority (NHA) has highlighted that under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) a majority of beneficiaries are utilising private-sector hospitals for treatment, leading to higher overall costs under the scheme.

Key Findings of the NHA Report

- **Treatment Utilisation:** Since its launch, over 9 crore treatments worth ₹1.29 lakh crore have been availed under Ayushman Bharat.
 - ♦ Although only **45%** of empanelled hospitals are private, **52%** of all hospitalisations and **66%** of the total treatment cost occurred in private-sector hospitals.
- **Commonly Sought Treatments:** The most frequently availed treatment was haemodialysis (14% of total treatments), followed by fever (4%), gastroenteritis (3%), and animal bites (3%).
- **The portability feature** of the scheme allows beneficiaries to seek treatment anywhere in India.
 - ♦ **Chandigarh (19%), Uttar Pradesh (13%), and Gujarat (11%)** were top destinations for patients seeking care outside their home state.
 - ♦ Conversely, **Uttar Pradesh (24%), Madhya Pradesh (17%), and Bihar (16%)** were top contributors to outbound patient flow.

Ayushman Bharat Scheme

- It was launched in **2018**, by the Government of India with the aim of achieving universal health coverage.
- It adopts a continuum of care approach, comprising of two inter-related components, which are -Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri- Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)

- **AB PM-JAY** is the largest publicly funded health assurance scheme in the world which provides health cover of **Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year** for **secondary** and **tertiary care** hospitalization.
- **Coverage:** It covers up to **3 days** of pre-hospitalization and **15 days** of post - hospitalization expenses such as **diagnostics and medicines**.
 - ♦ The beneficiary can visit any empanelled public or private hospital in India to avail cashless treatment.
 - ♦ There is **no restriction** on the **family size, age or gender**.
- **Eligibility:** The inclusion of households is based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) for rural and urban areas, respectively.
 - ♦ This number also includes families that were covered in the **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)** but were not present in the **SECC 2011** database.
- **Funding:** The funding for the scheme is shared by the Centre and the state in a **60:40 ratio**.
 - ♦ However, for North-Eastern states, Himalayan states (such as Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh), and Union Territories, the **ratio is 90:10**.

Source: IE

THE IMPACT OF DOPAMINE OVERLOAD IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Context

- Modern lifestyles, driven by technology and constant instant gratification, have led to a collective “dopamine overdose” that is fundamentally rewiring our brains.

Dopamine and the Brain's Reward Circuit

- Dopamine is a **neurotransmitter** responsible for feelings of **pleasure, motivation, and reward**.
- It operates primarily through the **mesolimbic pathway**, linking the **ventral tegmental area (VTA)** and the **nucleus accumbens**, both crucial in reinforcing behaviours that bring satisfaction or success.
- When we achieve a goal, receive praise, or enjoy a meal, dopamine is released, motivating us to repeat that action.

Impact on Young Minds

- Algorithms used by social media and other digital platforms are designed to maximize engagement by operating on an intermittent reward schedule, similar to a slot machine.
- **Impact:** Dopamine overload leads to **fatigue, demotivation, and loss of focus**.
 - ♦ The brain, overstimulated by quick dopamine hits, begins to find ordinary tasks unrewarding.
 - ♦ Over time, this contributes to **anxiety, sleep disorders, poor self-esteem, and even clinical depression**.
 - ♦ Modern lifestyles, characterised by **multitasking, constant scrolling, and digital comparison**, amplify this mental exhaustion, affecting productivity and creativity.

Way Ahead

- **Digital Detox and Mindful Usage:** Scheduled tech breaks, disabling unnecessary notifications, or using grayscale mode can reduce compulsive checking.
 - ♦ "Dopamine fasting" — consciously avoiding overstimulation — allows the brain to reset its reward baseline.
- **Good sleep and balanced diets** help regulate neurotransmitter activity and enhance cognitive performance.

Source: TH

THE PUNCH SPACE MISSION

Context

- The **PUNCH Space Mission**, launched by the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** has observed the solar winds.

PUNCH Mission

- PUNCH stands for **Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere**.

- **Aim:** To study the Sun's corona (outer atmosphere) and the solar wind as a unified system.
- **Features:**
 - ♦ PUNCH consists of four small satellites in low Earth orbit.
 - ♦ It will make 3D global observations of the inner heliosphere to understand how the Sun's corona becomes the solar wind.
 - ♦ The satellites will map the transition zone where the Sun's corona turns into solar wind.
- **Key Achievement:** The mission is "making the invisible visible" by imaging the solar wind, which is normally hard to detect.
- **Scientific Significance:** Understanding and forecasting space weather is critical because solar events like solar wind and coronal mass ejections (CMEs) can affect Earth and other parts of the solar system.

Solar Wind and the Corona

- The corona is the Sun's outermost atmosphere, extremely hot and tenuous.
- Solar wind is a continuous flow of charged particles released from the corona, spreading throughout the solar system.
- Both the corona and solar wind influence space weather, which can impact satellites, communication systems, power grids, and astronauts.

Source: TH

CELL2SENTENCE-SCALE 27B (C2S-SCALE)

Context

- Google unveiled a family of artificial intelligence tools that **proposed a drug combination for detecting cancer** that human experts did not know about, which seemed effective in laboratory conditions.

About

- **AI Model and Purpose:** Google unveiled Cell2Sentence-Scale 27B (C2S-Scale), a 27-billion-parameter foundation model designed to understand the language of individual cells.
 - ♦ C2S-Scale generated a novel hypothesis on cancer cell behavior, validated experimentally in living cells.
- **Task:** The problem that researchers set out to solve was **how to detect an emerging tumour when the immune system itself was unaware of it**.

- ♦ A strategy was to force such nascent tumours to display immune-triggering signals through a process called antigen presentation.
- **Scientific Significance:** It is a rare example of AI actively contributing to scientific discovery rather than just analyzing data.
 - ♦ Could lead to new pathways for developing cancer therapies.
- It requires **pre-clinical and clinical testing before confirming its therapeutic potential.**

Source: TH

SU-57 FIGHTER JETS

Context

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is now considering a proposal from Russia to procure the **Su-57 fifth-generation fighter jets**, which may also involve manufacturing them locally in India.

About the Su-57:

- Developed by Russia's **Sukhoi Company**, the Su-57, also called Felon, is a **twin-engine, single-**

seat, fifth-generation stealth multirole fighter.

- **Role:** Air superiority and strike missions; capable of engaging both **aerial and ground targets.**
- **First flight:** 2010.
- **Top speed:** Mach 2 (~2,136 km/h).
- **Combat range:** ~1,900 km.
- **Maximum takeoff weight:** ~35 metric tons.
- **Stealth & survivability:** Low radar cross-section, reduced infrared and electro-optical signatures; designed for covert operations.

Do you know?

- Among friendly countries, only the **US and Russia** currently operate **fifth-generation fighter aircraft.**
- The **US F-35**, though more advanced and stealthy, is **not offered under the Make in India route.**
- The **Su-57** is significantly cheaper, with an estimated unit cost of **\$35–40 million**, less than half the price of an F-35.

Source: TH

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