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SC URGES UNION GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE A “ROMEO-JULIET” CLAUSE IN POCSO ACT

In News/Context

- The Supreme Court of India has flagged the **misuse of the POCSO Act** in cases of **consensual adolescent relationships** and urged the Union Government to examine the feasibility of introducing a “**Romeo–Juliet clause**”.

Core Issue Highlighted by the Court

- Criminalisation of Consensual Adolescence:** Under current law, even if two individuals are in a consensual romantic relationship, the moment one is below 18 years (even by a day), stringent POCSO provisions apply.
- Harmful Impact of Criminal Process:** Adolescents are drawn into police investigation, arrest, trial and incarceration, causing long-term psychological and social damage.
- Misuse and Weaponisation of POCSO:** The Court noted that POCSO has been “weaponised” against young couples.
 - Common practices include misrepresentation of age to attract POCSO provisions and use of the law by families to punish or disrupt relationships they disapprove of (inter-caste, inter-faith, or non-conforming relationships).

What is a Romeo–Juliet Clause?

- A legal exception, developed in the US and parts of Europe, named after Shakespeare’s teenage lovers.
- It does not lower the age of consent, but shields adolescents close in age from criminal liability for consensual intimacy.
- It seeks to retain a robust child protection framework while recognising the realities of adolescence.

Limitations of the Romeo–Juliet Approach

- Any age-based exemption merely redraws the line, rather than resolving the core issue.
- This clause raises difficult questions like if 16–18-year-olds are exempted, what about those just below 16 or on what principled basis does the same conduct become criminal again?

About the POCSO Act, 2012

- Purpose:** Enacted to protect children (below 18 years) from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
- Gender-Neutral Law:** Defines a child as any person below 18 years, irrespective of gender.

- Applies to both male and female victims and offenders.
- Categorisation of Offences:** Covers penetrative and non-penetrative sexual assault, sexual harassment, and aggravated offences.
 - Prescribes stringent punishments, ranging from imprisonment to life sentence.
- Special Courts and Child-Friendly Procedures:** Establishes Special Courts for speedy, in-camera trials.
 - Ensures protection from hostile questioning, exposure to the accused, and provides for compensation and rehabilitation.

Source: IE

INDIA’S MARITIME POLICY

Context

- India’s maritime policy** has undergone significant evolution, intricately linked to its historical and geographical context, as explored in ‘The Routledge Handbook of Maritime India’.

About

- The handbook delves into **India’s rich maritime history and strategic relationships across the Indian Ocean**.
- It comprises five essays by different scholars**, traces the historical evolution of India’s outward reach, focusing on the **Cholas, the Marathas, Europeans and Indo-Arab maritime trade**.

Maritime History of India

- Early Days:** The beginning of India’s maritime history dates back to **3000 BC**. During this time, the inhabitants of the **Indus Valley Civilisation** had maritime trade links with **Mesopotamia**.
- The Southern Dynasties: The Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas** were powerful peninsular Indian dynasties with strong maritime trade links to **Sumatra, Java, the Malay Peninsula, and China**.
- Arabs:** By the 8th Century AD, Arabs began to come to India by sea in great numbers as traders. Over the time, many parts of modern-day West Asia became nodal points for business between **Europe, Southeast Asia and India**.
- Arrival of Europeans:** Arrival of the Portuguese explorer **Vasco da Gama** at Calicut in **1498**, opened a new and direct sea route from Europe to India.
- Maritime Prowess of the Marathas:** The Marathas gave the strongest resistance to British control along the Indian coasts.

- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was the **first to recognize the need for a powerful navy**, building coastal forts like Vijaydurg and Sindhudurg and strengthening defences against the Siddis and Portuguese.
- Under his leadership, the Maratha navy grew to over 500 ships, holding off both the Portuguese and British for over 40 years.
- Post Independence:** On 22 April 1958, Vice Admiral R.D. Katari became the **first Indian Chief of Naval Staff**.
- Following India's Republic status on 26 January 1950, the Navy dropped the "**Royal**" prefix and was renamed the **Indian Navy**.

India's Maritime Zone

- India's maritime zone refers to the **maritime boundaries and areas under its jurisdiction** in the surrounding seas and oceans.
 - India's **coastline stretches over 11,000 kilometers** including island territories.
- Indian Ocean Region:** The Indian Ocean covers approximately **one-fifth of the total ocean area of the world**.
- The Indian Ocean is bounded by Iran, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh to the **north**; the Malay Peninsula, the Sunda Islands of Indonesia, and Australia to the **east**; the Southern Ocean to the **south**; and Africa and the Arabian Peninsula to the **west**.



- Maritime Security:** It involves **protecting the nation's sovereignty** from threats arising from the oceans and seas.
 - Threats include protecting coastal areas, safeguarding the available ocean resources such as fish, offshore oil and gas wells, port facilities, etc.

Significance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- Geostrategic Importance:** The Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean, linking the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.
 - It is home to **crucial maritime chokepoints** — Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Malacca Strait, Lombok Strait — which together handle a bulk of global energy and trade flows.
 - The IOR acts as a **bridge between the East and the West**, making it a central theatre for power competition among India, China, the U.S., and other major players.
- Economic Significance:** The region carries nearly 50% of global container traffic and 80% of seaborne oil trade.
 - It is a hub of blue economy activities: shipping, fisheries, seabed mining, and tourism.
- Energy Security:** The IOR is the lifeline of global energy flows: oil and gas from West Asia transit to East Asia via its sea lanes.
 - Countries like India, China, Japan, and South Korea are energy-import dependent, making stability of the IOR vital.
- Blue Economy Potential:** The IOR offers opportunities in fisheries, seabed minerals, renewable energy, and tourism—requiring secure seas for sustainable exploitation.

Need to Strengthen Maritime Security in IOR

- Indo-Pacific Construct:** The Indo-Pacific combines the Indian and Pacific Oceans into one strategic theatre and highlights the centrality of IOR in shaping new global maritime order.
 - This geographical reimagination enhances IOR's visibility in global diplomacy and security.
- Implications for Global Order:** Control over the IOR can shape:
 - Trade flows (especially oil & gas),
 - Strategic maritime chokepoints (like the Strait of Hormuz, Malacca, Bab el-Mandeb),
 - Military posturing and base logistics.
- Geopolitical contestation:** Major-power activity (notably China's expanding presence and infrastructure investments) alters the strategic balance.
- Fragmented maritime governance:** Many littoral states lack capacity for surveillance, law enforcement, and HADR (humanitarian & disaster response).
- Diverse asymmetric threats:** Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, trafficking, piracy resurgence and attacks on commercial shipping complicate security.

Challenges in IOR

- **Expansion of Chinese Naval Power in IOR:** Increased naval vessel deployments in the region in terms of both number and duration.
 - ◆ Deployment of Chinese research and survey vessels to gather sensitive oceanographic and marine data under the guise of scientific research.
- **Piracy hotspots** near the Horn of Africa and in the Malacca Strait threaten shipping.
- **Terrorism, arms smuggling, and trafficking networks** exploit porous maritime borders.
- **Strategic Port Development Near India:** China is actively involved in developing ports and infrastructure in littoral states of the IOR, including those close to India's maritime boundaries.
 - ◆ The objective aligns with China's long-term goal of becoming a maritime power.

Government Initiatives

- **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.
- **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.
- **Launch of MAHASAGAR** (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth for All in the Region) reflects India's strategic rebranding in the IOR.
- **Naval Modernisation and Indigenous Development:** India is modernising naval capabilities:
 - ◆ Commissioning indigenous warships (e.g., INS Vikrant, INS Visakhapatnam).
 - ◆ Boosting maritime domain awareness and power projection.
 - ◆ This strengthens India's force posture and maritime deterrence in the IOR.
- **India's Response and Regional Diplomacy:** India is working with regional partners to raise awareness about the long-term implications of Chinese infrastructure projects.

- ◆ Emphasize the risks to internal and regional security from China's military use of these assets.
- **India on Militarisation of the IOR:** India asserts that Militarisation of the Indian Ocean Region is not desirable and will adversely impact security in the Indian Ocean and the wider Indo-Pacific.
 - ◆ This reflects India's stance against military usage of Chinese-funded infrastructure in the IOR.

Conclusion

- India's maritime security initiatives reflect a blend of military capability, infrastructure readiness, regional partnerships, and legal-institutional frameworks.
- Initiatives such as Act East Policy, Indo-Pacific Vision, and Blue Economy strategy reinforce India's centrality in the IOR.

Source: TH

FASTER, DEMAND-LED APPROACH NEEDED FOR PSES PRIVATISATION: CII

Context

- Recently, the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**, in its recommendations for the **Union Budget 2026–27**, has urged the government to adopt a faster, demand-led approach to the privatisation of **Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs)**.

About Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs)

- These are **government-owned corporations** or **state-owned enterprises having majority stake (51% or more)**.
 - ◆ These include sectors like energy, steel, telecommunications, transportation, and finance.
 - ◆ They are categorized into:
 - Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs);
 - State Level Public Enterprises (SLPEs)
- They are primarily overseen by the **Department of Public Enterprises (DPE)** under the **Ministry of Finance**.
- **Classification of CPSEs:**
 - ◆ **Maharatna:** Large, highly profitable CPSEs with significant global presence (e.g., ONGC, NTPC).
 - ◆ **Navratna:** CPSEs with operational autonomy and strong financials (e.g., BEL, HAL).
 - ◆ **Miniratna:** Smaller CPSEs with consistent profits and operational flexibility.

Disinvestment of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs)

- It refers to the process by which the government reduces its stake in state-owned enterprises, **either partially or fully**.
- It aims to infuse market efficiency, attract private investment, and reduce the fiscal burden on the government.

Historical Context

- Former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru envisioned PSEs as '**temples of modern India**'.
 - However, by the 1980s, issues of **inefficiency, overstaffing, and financial non-viability** plagued many PSEs.
- The **disinvestment policy** formally took **shape in 1991** under the New Industrial Policy, allowing private participation in state-owned enterprises.
 - The **objectives** were to modernize PSEs through capital infusion; reduce the fiscal deficit; encourage wider share ownership by the public; and introduce competition and efficiency through market discipline.

Policy Framework and Mechanisms

- The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) under the Ministry of Finance manages India's disinvestment programme.
- Key mechanisms include:
 - Minority Disinvestment:** Government retains majority control while selling small equity stakes.
 - Strategic Disinvestment:** Transfer of management control along with equity sale (e.g., Air India sale to Tata Group, 2021).
 - Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs):** Government equity pooled in investment funds (e.g., CPSE ETF).
 - Buyback of Shares:** PSEs buy back their own shares from the government.

Economic Rationale and Benefits

- Fiscal Consolidation:** Disinvestment receipts provide non-tax revenue to bridge fiscal deficits.
- Operational Efficiency:** Private management brings modern governance and market responsiveness.
- Market Development:** Expands the depth and liquidity of India's capital markets.
- Resource Optimization:** Frees government resources for social and infrastructure spending.
- Strategic Benefits:**
 - Mobilise non-tax revenues to support infrastructure and social sector spending.

- Improve operational efficiency of enterprises by leveraging private sector expertise.
- Attract global capital, especially in sectors like logistics, energy, and manufacturing.
- Reduce fiscal burden by offloading loss-making or non-strategic assets.

Challenges and Concerns

- Valuation Concerns:** Critics argue that assets are sometimes undervalued during sale.
- Employment Impact:** Fear of job losses due to private restructuring.
- Political Opposition:** Privatization of strategic or culturally sensitive sectors (e.g., railways, oil) often faces protests.
- Execution Delays:** Bureaucratic processes slow down strategic disinvestment.

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)'s Recommendations

- Calibrated Disinvestment to Unlock Market Value:** CII's analysis suggests that reducing the government's stake to **51% in 78 listed PSEs** could unlock close to **₹10 lakh crore** in value.
 - A **phased reduction** of the government's stake to 51%, and later to 33–26%, would preserve strategic control while freeing up productive capital for **infrastructure and social investment**.
 - Phase 1:** Target 55 PSEs with government holdings of **75% or less**, potentially mobilising **₹4.6 lakh crore**.
 - Phase 2:** Disinvest 23 PSEs with **over 75% government stake**, raising an additional **₹5.4 lakh crore**.
- Rolling Three-Year Privatisation Pipeline:** This predictable and transparent roadmap would:
 - Enable **better investor engagement and valuation**.
 - Facilitate **realistic price discovery**.
 - Accelerate execution by aligning investor expectations with government timelines.
- Demand-Driven Selection of Enterprises:** CII urged a **reversal of the existing privatisation sequence**, highlighting current procedural bottlenecks.
 - Instead of identifying PSEs first and seeking buyers later, the government should:
 - Gauge investor interest** across a wide set of enterprises.
 - Prioritise those attracting stronger demand** and meeting valuation thresholds.

- **Institutional Framework for Oversight and Governance:** CII proposed the creation of a **dedicated institutional framework** to enhance transparency and professional management of the disinvestment process. It comprises:
 - ◆ **A Ministerial Board** for strategic direction.
 - ◆ **An Advisory Board** of industry, financial, and legal experts for independent benchmarking.
 - ◆ **A Professional Management Team** to oversee due diligence, execution, and market engagement.

Road Ahead

- The government's National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) and Strategic Disinvestment Policy (2021) signify a structured, long-term approach.
 - ◆ The focus has shifted from mere **revenue generation** to '**asset recycling**' where proceeds from disinvestment are reinvested in infrastructure.
- The Economic Survey 2023–24 underscores the need for transparency, strong valuation frameworks, and social safeguards to make privatization both efficient and equitable.
- The India Vision 2036–37 **report** emphasizes sustained reform through:
 - ◆ Improved asset valuation mechanisms.
 - ◆ Broader retail participation in disinvestment.
 - ◆ Strengthened governance frameworks for privatized entities.
 - ◆ Reintegration of disinvestment proceeds into welfare and infrastructure development.

Source: TH

INDIA TIGHTENS REGULATORY OVERSIGHT OF CRYPTOCURRENCY EXCHANGES

Context

- The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), has issued revised Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) guidelines for cryptocurrency exchanges.

Regulatory Status of Cryptocurrencies in India

- Cryptocurrencies are **not recognised as legal tender** in India.
- Transactions involving **crypto assets are taxed** under the Income-tax Act.
- Cryptocurrency exchanges are classified as **Virtual Digital Asset (VDA)** service providers.
 - ◆ All VDA service providers are regulated under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)**.

- Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) acts as the **regulator** for crypto exchanges operating in India.

Guidelines for cryptocurrency exchanges

- **Identity Verification:** The exchanges have been directed to **collect one more identity** and address document of the client-- either passport, driving licence, proof of possession of Aadhaar etc. apart from verifying their mobile number and email through a **one-time password (OTP)**.
- **A verification of the client's bank account** shall be done through the '**penny-drop**' mechanism to confirm the ownership and operational status of the account.
- **Liveness Detection:** Crypto exchanges must capture a **live selfie** of the user at the time of onboarding, with liveness detection technology, such as **eye blinking or head movement**.
 - ◆ This measure ensures that the individual submitting the credentials is physically present and personally initiating the account creation process.
- **Geo-Location:** Exchanges are required to record the **latitude and longitude of the onboarding location**.
 - ◆ The date, timestamp and Internet Protocol (IP) address must also be captured.
- **Restrictions on High-Risk Crypto Activities:**
 - ◆ The guidelines strongly discourage **Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs)** and **Initial Token Offerings (ITOs)**. They are viewed as posing heightened risks of money laundering and terrorist financing.
 - ◆ Transactions involving **anonymity-enhancing crypto** tokens are not to be facilitated.
- **Record-Keeping:** Exchanges must preserve customer identity and address details.
 - ◆ Transaction records must be maintained for a minimum period of **five years**.

What Is C(ryptocurrency)?

- Cryptocurrency is a **digital form of money** that **uses cryptography for security and operates on decentralised blockchain networks** instead of central banks.
- **Key Features**
 - ◆ **Digital and Decentralised:** Exists only online and is not controlled by any single authority.
 - ◆ **Cryptography-Based Security:** Uses encryption and public-private keys to secure ownership and transactions.

- ♦ **Blockchain Technology:** Transactions are recorded on a distributed, tamper-resistant public ledger.
- ♦ **Peer-to-Peer System:** Allows direct transfer of value between users.
- **Examples:** Bitcoin, Ethereum and Altcoins.

Blockchain technology

- Blockchain technology is a **decentralized, distributed ledger system** that records transactions across many computers in a way that ensures security and transparency.
- Blockchain networks rely on **consensus algorithms to validate transactions** and maintain network integrity.
 - ♦ These mechanisms ensure that **only legitimate transactions are added** to the chain.

Significance of the New Guidelines

- The revised guidelines bring India's cryptocurrency regulatory framework in closer alignment with **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** standards on virtual digital assets.
- They **strengthen India's ability** to prevent money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing risks associated with crypto assets.

Way Ahead

- Greater inter-agency coordination among the FIU, RBI, SEBI and law enforcement agencies is essential to address cross-border crypto risks.
- The use of **regulatory technology (RegTech) and supervisory technology (SupTech)** should be expanded to improve real-time monitoring and risk assessment.
- **Capacity building** of enforcement agencies and judicial authorities is necessary for effective investigation and prosecution of crypto-related offences.

Source: BL

GOVT TO MERGE AGRICULTURAL SCHEMES, LINK FUNDS TO STATE REFORMS

Context

- The Union Ministry of Agriculture has proposed **to merge three separate ongoing schemes** with its flagship **Pradhan Mantri-Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVVY)**.

About

- The **schemes to be merged with PM-RKVVY** are Krishonati Yojana (KY) to boost farmers' income, National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) and National Bee and Honey Mission (NBHM).
- ♦ **PM-RKVVY, KY and NMNF** are **Centrally sponsored** with implementation done by the state governments using funds jointly provided by both, while **NBHM is a Central sector scheme** that is funded and implemented by the Centre.
- **Time Period:** To be implemented over the next five years during the **16th Finance Commission cycle** beginning April 2026 and ending March 2031.
- **Fund Allocation:** It will be funded in the Centre-state ratio of 60:40 for most states, 90:10 for the Northeastern and Himalayan states, and 100% for Union Territories.
- **The proposed merger** is in line with the **NITI Aayog's recommendations**.
 - ♦ The Aayog had earlier revived the **15th Finance Commission's idea** of providing **performance-based financial incentives** to states to encourage them to implement agriculture reforms.
- **Parameters for Allocation:** The allocation of funds to states will be linked to five key parameters, with maximum weightage (30%) proposed for "assessment based on reform initiative and milestones achieved by the state".
- **Rationale Behind the Merger:** The merger aims to reduce fragmentation of schemes, improve administrative efficiency, and ensure better targeting of resources.
 - ♦ Linking funds to reform performance is intended to encourage states to adopt structural and sustainable agricultural reforms, including natural farming and diversification.

Pradhan Mantri-Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVVY)

- It was initiated in **2007** as an umbrella scheme for **ensuring holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- It allows **states to choose their own agriculture and allied sector development activities** as per the district/state agriculture plan.
- **Funding:** Ratio of 60:40 between Centre and States (90:10 for North Eastern States and Himalayan States).

- ♦ For Union Territories the funding pattern is 100 % central grant.
- **Objective:** RKVY scheme incentivizes States to increase public investment in Agriculture & allied sectors.
- **Implementation:**
 - ♦ States have been provided **flexibility and autonomy** for selection, planning approval and execution of projects/programs under the scheme as per their need, priorities and agro-climate requirements.
 - ♦ The funds are released to the State Governments/UTs on the basis of **projects approved in the State Level Sanctioning Committee Meeting (SLSC)** headed by the Chief Secretary of the concerned State.

Source: IE

NATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2026

In News

- Recently, National Youth Day was observed to mark the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

National Youth Day or Rashtriya Yuva Divas

- It is celebrated on **12th January every year** in commemoration of the great spiritual leader, philosopher and thinker **Swami Vivekananda**, whose unwavering belief in the potential of youth continues to resonate deeply with young citizens of the country.
- His inspiring life and empowering message urge the youth to nurture their dreams, unleash their energies, and shape a future worthy of his envisioned ideals.
- The youth, defined as those within the age group of **15-29 years**, make up nearly 40% of India's total population.

Importance

- National Youth Day highlights the aspirations and responsibilities of India's youth, who make up over 65% of the population under 35 and are key to achieving Viksit Bharat 2047.
- The government has created a comprehensive youth empowerment framework covering civic engagement, skill development, entrepreneurship, health, fitness, and national service, led by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in collaboration with other ministries, aiming to involve youth as active partners in nation-building.

Related Steps

- **Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat)** : It is an autonomous, technology-driven platform under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports that empowers youth by connecting them with volunteering, skill development, leadership, and experiential learning opportunities.
- **National Service Scheme (NSS)**: It is a scheme under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and aims at instigating social consciousness of the student youth with an overall objective of personality development of the youth through community service.
- **Agnipath Scheme**: The Government launched the Agnipath scheme in 2022.
 - ♦ Under the scheme, both male and female aspirants are recruited into the '**below the officer's rank**' cadre of the three services for a four-year period as Agniveers.
 - ♦ The program aims to **recruit youth aged 17.5–21 as Agniveers** for four years of military service.
- **Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU)**: In October 2025, the Government launched PM-SETU and it is a flagship, centrally sponsored scheme to modernise India's network of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and align vocational training with global industry standards.
- The **Skill India Mission (SIM)** : Launched in 2015 on World Youth Skills Day, it provides training to skill, re-skill, and up-skill individuals through a wide network of centres and institutes.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**: It was launched in 2015 to provide short-term skill training and upskilling or re-skilling, including through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), to youth across India.
- **The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme**, initially launched as Shramik Vidyapeeth (SVP) in 1967, aims to provide skill training in a non-formal mode.
- **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)**: The scheme launched in August 2016, promotes apprenticeship by offering financial support for apprentice stipends.
- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**: Launched in 2014 and is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.

- **Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETIs):** Launched in January 2009, the scheme provides free, quality residential training to rural youth, along with post-training support and credit linkage to encourage entrepreneurship.
- **Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana:** In 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana with an outlay of ₹1 lakh crore.
 - ◆ It will offer financial incentives of up to ₹15,000, disbursed in two installments, to newly employed youth. In addition, employers will receive support of up to ₹3,000 per month for each new employee, encouraging the creation of new job opportunities.
- **Startup India:** Launched in 2016 to foster a robust ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY):** It is aimed at Funding the Unfunded micro enterprises and small businesses.
- The **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKS)** was launched in 2014 by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to address the holistic health needs of adolescents aged 10–19 years across India.

Conclusion

- National Youth Day 2026 highlights the vital role of India's youth in shaping the nation's future through education, startups, service, and leadership.
- Inspired by Swami Vivekananda, the day underscores that youth are not just inheritors but architects of India's journey toward 2047.

Swami Vivekananda

- He was born Narendra Nath Datta in Kolkata on January 12, 1863, was a key figure in introducing Hindu philosophies of Yoga and Vedanta to the West.
- He was a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and he devoted himself to spiritual and social reform in India, traveling across the country to educate people on economic improvement and spiritual knowledge.
- He gained **global recognition** with his **1893** address at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, advocating universal tolerance, acceptance of all religions, and pride in Indian traditions.
- After returning to India, he founded the **Ramakrishna Mission in 1897** and **Belur Math in 1899**, promoting the integration of spirituality with material progress.

- Through his teachings, lectures, and writings—including **Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Karma Yoga**—he spread the practice of yoga and the principles of 'neo-Vedanta', leaving a lasting legacy as a messenger of Indian wisdom and a visionary for social and spiritual upliftment.
- **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose** had called him the "maker of modern India."

Source :PIB

NEWS IN SHORT

HOW STUPAS FOUND IN ZEHANPORA HIGHLIGHT KASHMIR'S RICH BUDDHIST PAST?

Context

- Archaeologists have unearthed **ancient Buddhist stupas** and settlements at Zehanpora based on a century-old photograph discovered in a French museum.

About

- The mounds are located along an **ancient Silk Route leading to Kandahar and beyond**.
- **Zehanpora has yielded Buddhist stupas**, an urban settlement complex (could be chaityas and viharas), Kushan-era pottery shards, copper artefacts and walls, with more finds expected in subsequent excavation phases.



- **The Kushans** were a powerful ancient Indo-Greek dynasty that ruled large parts of north India and Central Asia between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE.

- They played a major role in promoting trade, urban centres and the spread of Buddhism in India and beyond.
- Significance:**
 - The Zehanpora discovery places Kashmir within the 2,000-year-old Gandhara Buddhist network.
 - It bolsters claims that Kashmir was a central hub of Buddhist learning and monastic activities.
- The northern part of Kashmir has many known sites with Buddhist affiliations**, like Kanispura, Ushkur, Zehanpora, and Parihaspora, while Harwan represents a **major Buddhist complex in Srinagar** in central Kashmir.
- South Kashmir** is dotted with archaeological sites like Semthan, Hutmur, Hoinar and Kutbal with strong Buddhist affiliations.
- These sites collectively represent **Kashmir's Buddhist heritage** in the form of structural and artistic evidence.

Core Teachings of the Buddha

- The Four Noble Truths**
 - Dukkha:** Life is suffering or unsatisfactory.
 - Samudaya:** Suffering is caused by craving and attachment (tanhā).
 - Nirodha:** The cessation of suffering is possible by letting go of craving.
 - Magga:** The path to the cessation of suffering is the Eightfold Path.
- The Noble Eightfold Path:** Grouped into three categories: wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline.
- The Three Marks of Existence**
 - Anicca (Impermanence):** All things are in constant change.
 - Dukkha (Suffering):** Existence is filled with dissatisfaction.
 - Anattā (Non-self):** There is no permanent, unchanging self.
- The Goal: Nirvana (Nibbāna)**
 - A state beyond suffering and rebirth.
 - Achieved through wisdom, ethical living, and mental discipline.
 - Nirvana is the ultimate liberation and peace.

Source: IE

WESTERN DISTURBANCE

In News

- Inadequate precipitation in the Himalayas is primarily due to the weakened state of Western Disturbance patterns.
- About Western Disturbance**
 - It is an **extra-tropical storm** that originates in the **Mediterranean region**.
 - The disturbance travels from the **“western” to the eastern direction and** gradually travels across the middle-east from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan to enter the Indian subcontinent.
 - Disturbance means an area of **“disturbed” or reduced air pressure**. Equilibrium exists in nature due to which the air in a **region tries to normalize its pressure**.
 - In the term “extra-tropical storm”, the storm refers to low pressure.
 - “Extra-tropical” means outside the tropics (as WD originates outside the tropical region).

Impacts

- It brings **rainfall, snowfall, and fog** to northern India.
- WD is important for the **agriculture of the Rabi crop in the Northern subcontinent**.
- The WD is **not always the harbinger of good weather** and sometimes, they can cause extreme weather events like floods, flash floods, landslides, dust storms, hail storms and cold waves killing people, destroying infrastructure and impacting livelihoods.
- WD brings **winter and pre-monsoon rain** and is important for the development of the Rabi crop in the **Northern subcontinent**.

Source: TOI

HPV VACCINATION

Context

- A large population-based study has shown that high HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination coverage can reduce precancerous cervical lesions even among unvaccinated women, highlighting a strong herd-protective effect.

About Human papillomavirus (HPV)

- HPV is a common **sexually transmitted infection. Most infections are asymptomatic and self-limiting**.
- Nature:** HPV is a DNA virus from the **Papillomaviridae family**.

- Diseases Caused by HPV:**
 - Cervical cancer (over 95% of cases linked to HPV).
 - Other cancers: anal, vaginal, vulvar, penile and oropharyngeal cancers.
 - Genital warts (non-cancerous).
- HPV vaccination:** It prevents infection from the most dangerous HPV types. Most effective when given before sexual debut (ages 9–14 years).

Source: IE

CENTRE SEEKS ACCESS TO PHONE SOURCE CODES

In News

- The government is planning strict smartphone security rules under the Indian Telecom Security Assurance Requirements

Indian Telecom Security Assurance Requirements

- The 2023-drafted smartphone security standards are under review for potential legal enforcement, with the IT ministry set to meet tech executives for further discussions.
- Key measures include**
 - Requiring manufacturers to share source code for government analysis.
 - Allowing pre-installed apps to be uninstalled.
 - Blocking apps from using cameras and microphones in the background to prevent misuse.
 - Meeting 83 security standards and alerting the government to major software updates.

Objectives

- It is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to boost security of user data as online fraud and data breaches increase in the world's second-largest smartphone market, with nearly 750 million phones.

Concerns raised

- Tech companies like Apple, Samsung, Google, and Xiaomi oppose the proposals, citing lack of global precedent and risks to proprietary information.
 - Previous government rules, such as a mandatory state-run cyber safety app, faced pushback, though some security measures, like testing for Chinese-made cameras, were enforced. In India, Xiaomi, Samsung, and Apple hold 19%, 15%, and 5% of the market, respectively.

Source :IE

EXERCISE SANJHA SHAKTI

In News

- The Indian Army conducted **Exercise Sanjha Shakti**, a **Military–Civil Fusion exercise**, at the Dighi Hills Range under the aegis of the **Southern Command**, specifically the **Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa Area**.

About

- The exercise aimed to strengthen **civil–military coordination**, enhance rapid response capabilities, and ensure public safety in rear areas, especially during disasters, internal security challenges, and other emergency situations in the hinterland.
- More than 350 personnel participated, involving the Indian Army and 16 civilian agencies, including Maharashtra Police, Force One, and fire and emergency services, highlighting the importance of integrated planning and joint execution.
- Exercise Sanjha Shakti underlined that rear area security is a key responsibility of the armed forces and requires close cooperation with civilian institutions during both peace-time emergencies and security contingencies.

Source: TOI

BHAIRAV BATTALIONS TO DEBUT IN ARMY DAY PARADE

Syllabus: GS3/Defence

In News

- The Army's newly raised Bhairav Battalions will participate in the Army Day Parade in Jaipur for the first time.

Bhairav Battalions

- They are raised by Army headquarters by drawing lessons from global conflicts as well as India's own operational experience, including the recent Operation Sindoora.
- They are designed as high-speed, offensive units capable of executing Special Forces' tasks at multiple levels, depending on operational requirements, the officer added.
- They are intended to bridge the gap between Para Special Forces and regular infantry units, enabling them to conduct special operations from tactical to operational depth.
- They focus on modern warfare, including drone operations.
- The Army plans a pool of over 1 lakh drone operatives.
- Currently, 15 Bhairav Battalions exist, with plans to raise 25 in total.

Other Related Developments

- The Army has also formed **Rudra Brigades**, combining infantry, mechanised units, tanks, artillery, special forces, drones, and support elements.
- Artillery, mechanised infantry, and armoured corps are being upgraded with modern battlefield systems for enhanced operational effectiveness.

Source : TH

PARAM SHAKTI

Context

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched '**PARAM SHAKTI**', a supercomputing facility hosting the indigenous **PARAM RUDRA system**, at the IIT Madras.

About

- The system has been developed and implemented by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)** under the **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)**.
- PARAM SHAKTI** is powered by the **PARAM RUDRA** supercomputing cluster, built using **C-DAC's indigenous RUDRA series of servers**.
- The system delivers a **peak computing capacity of 3.1 petaflops**, meaning it can perform over **3.1 quadrillion calculations per second**.
- The facility has been **fully developed and manufactured in India** and runs on open-source software.
- Significance:** The system enables large-scale simulations that reduce dependence on prolonged experimental trials and accelerate research timelines.

National Supercomputing Mission

- The National Supercomputing Mission was launched in **2015** with the aim of building **supercomputing capabilities in the country**, both in terms of **manufacturing and usage**.
- The NSM planned to install **37 supercomputers** across the country's educational institutions, like IITs, NITs, IISER, and IISc for use by researchers.
- PARAM Shakti in IIT Madras marked the **37th supercomputer installed**.
- Currently, the strongest supercomputer in the country is the **PARAM Siddhi AI**, which has a capacity of 5.2 petaflops and is housed in **C-DAC, Pune**.
 - However, the computer is a global design and not entirely indigenous.

Source: IE

NV CENTRES IN DIAMONDS

In News

- Researchers have discovered that tiny defects in diamonds, called **nitrogen-vacancy (NV) centres** can be harnessed for powerful quantum technologies.

Nitrogen-vacancy (NV) centres

- All diamonds are made of a rigid grid of carbon atoms.
- Nitrogen-vacancy (NV) centres occur when a carbon atom in a diamond is replaced by nitrogen, leaving an adjacent vacancy.
- These "perfect defects" act like single atoms trapped in a solid cage, retaining quantum spin coherence.
- NV centres are highly sensitive to magnetic and electric fields, making them precise quantum sensors.
- They can operate at room temperature, unlike most quantum systems requiring extreme cooling.

Latest Developments

- Researchers from Austria and Japan have demonstrated that by using around 9 trillion nitrogen-vacancy (NV) centres in a superconducting microwave cavity could generate a continuous microwave beam, creating a diamond maser—a microwave equivalent of a laser.
- The process relies on a "bucket brigade" mechanism, where energy is transferred between interacting spins through magnetic dipole-dipole interactions, sustaining continuous emission.
- This discovery shows that spin interactions, previously seen as disruptive, can be harnessed to develop quantum devices and enhance understanding of collective emission in many-body solid-state systems.

Potential applications

- Potential applications include highly stable superradiant masers with narrow linewidths, efficient narrow-band microwave amplifiers, ultra-stable frequency sources for quantum technologies and precision sensing, and enhanced quantum sensors, benefiting fields such as medical imaging, materials science, and environmental monitoring.

Source: TH

