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PRISONS IN INDIA CONTINUE TO BE OVERCROWDED BY UNDERTRIALS

Context

- The **latest Prison Statistics report** released by the **National Crime Records Bureau** shows that the **occupancy rate in Indian jails fell to a decade-low of 112.7% in 2024.**
  - However, **overcrowding remains a persisting problem** in Indian prisons driven largely by a high share of undertrials.

Major Highlights

- **Overcrowding in Jail:** At the end of 2024, India had about 1,333 jails with a capacity of 4.53 lakh inmates.
  - However, with an **inmate population of over 5.11 lakh,** prisons continued to be overcrowded.
- **Occupancy Rate in States:** More than half of the States had an occupancy rate of **over 100% in 2024. Delhi recorded the highest occupancy rate** in the country at 194% in 2024.
  - **Occupancy rate of any jail** is defined as the number of prisoners held against the sanctioned holding capacity of 100. If the occupancy rate is more than 100, the jail is called overcrowded.
- **High Number of Undertrials:** The overcrowding of prisons can be attributed to the disproportionately higher share of **undertrials who accounted for about 73% of the total inmate population in 2024.**
  - With over 87% of its inmates being undertrials, **Delhi and Bihar were the two major States/ UTs to have the highest share** of undertrial population in its prisons.

Reasons Behind Rising Prison Overcrowding in India

- **Judicial Delays:** Large pendency of criminal cases results in prolonged incarceration of undertrial prisoners.
- **Overcriminalization:** Excessive use of imprisonment for minor offences contributes to congestion in prisons.
- **Bail-Related Challenges:** Economically weaker sections often fail to secure bail due to financial constraints. Lack of awareness and inadequate legal assistance further prolong the detention.
- **Inadequate Prison Infrastructure:** Prison infrastructure expansion has not kept pace with the growing inmate population.

Concerns

- **Fails to meet Basic Needs:** Overcrowding undermines the ability of prison systems to meet the basic needs of prisoners, **such as healthcare, food, and accommodation.**
- **Against Basic Rights:** This also endangers the basic rights of prisoners, including the right to have adequate standards of living and the right to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health.
- **Security and Health Problems:** It not only creates security problems but also causes severe strain on the essential services, results in serious health hazards and disrupts penal reformation and rehabilitation programmes.
- **Administration Issue:** In an overcrowded prison segregation of hardened criminals and their separation from mild offenders become impossible.
- **International Standards:** Prison overcrowding compels prisoners to be kept under conditions unacceptable to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for treatment of offenders to which India is a signatory.

Committees on Prison Reforms

- **Justice A.N. Mulla Committee:** Formally the **All India Committee on Jail Reforms (1980–83)** recommended Separation of undertrial prisoners from convicts and improvement of prison conditions, nutrition, and sanitation.
- **Justice Amitava Roy Committee:** It recommended decongestion of prisons, speedy trials and legal aid reforms and use of technology for prison management.
- **Krishna Iyer Committee:** It advocated for separate jail facilities for women to prevent exploitation.

Judicial Interventions

- **Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar:** The Supreme Court held that the right to a speedy trial is a fundamental right under Article 21.
- **In State of Rajasthan vs. Balchand**, the Supreme Court of India, established the foundational legal principle that "bail is the rule and jail is the exception," reinforcing Article 21 regarding personal liberty.

Government Initiatives

- **The Ministry of Home Affairs** had prepared a '**Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act' in the year 2023.**

- The Model Act has appropriate provisions for reformation, rehabilitation and integration of prisoners in the society.
- It also has provision for **'Welfare Programs for Prisoners' and 'After-Care and Rehabilitation Services'**, as an integral part of institutional care.

- **Undertrial Review Committees (UTRCs):** It is established in every district following directions of the Supreme Court. It periodically reviews cases of undertrial prisoners eligible for release on bail or personal bonds and helps reduce prolonged detention and prison congestion.
- **e-Prisons Project:** It is a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan. It digitizes prison records and integrates prisons with courts, police, and legal services authorities.
  - It facilitates faster processing of bail, parole, and release orders, reducing delays.
- **Open Prisons/Open Correctional Institutions:** They encourage eligible prisoners to serve sentences in less restrictive environments.
  - Reduces pressure on conventional prisons while promoting rehabilitation and social reintegration.
- **Legal Aid and Bail Reforms:** Through the National Legal Services Authority and State Legal Services Authorities, free legal aid is provided to indigent prisoners.
  - The "Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme" assists prisoners who cannot afford bail bonds or fines, enabling their release.
- **Expansion of Prison Infrastructure:** Several states have initiated projects for new correctional facilities and modernization of existing prisons.

Way Ahead

- **Technology Integration:** Digital prison management systems must be implemented for better record-keeping, monitoring, and transparency.
  - Video conferencing must be expanded to facilitate court hearings and reduce delays.
- **Social reintegration of prisoners:** Prison systems must prioritize vocational training and skill development programmes to enhance employability of inmates after release.
- **Strengthening Legal Aid:** Legal aid mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure timely and effective representation for prisoners, particularly undertrials and economically weaker sections.
- **Alternatives to Imprisonment:** Community service, probation, and non-custodial punishments should be encouraged for minor offences.
  - Open prison models should be expanded across states to reduce congestion and support rehabilitation.

Source: TH

AI AND THE FUTURE EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

Context

- Recent surveys suggest that the **rapid adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping India's graduate employment landscape**, posing new challenges for employability and workforce development.

How AI is Transforming the Job Market?

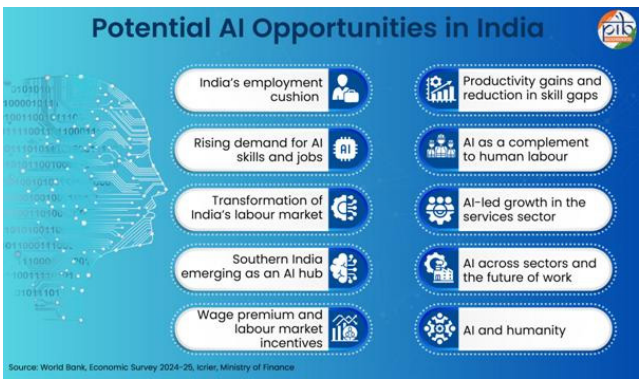
- **Shrinking Entry-Level Opportunities:** AI tools are increasingly capable of performing routine tasks that were traditionally assigned to fresh graduates.
  - Activities such as **data processing, basic coding, report preparation, market research, and presentation design** are being automated.
  - A report by Randstad Digital found that over **30%** of Indian organisations are planning to reduce graduate hiring as AI adoption expands.
- **Decline of the "Hire-and-Train" Model:** Earlier, organisations recruited large numbers of graduates and provided extensive on-the-job training.
  - Employers now prefer candidates who can contribute immediately in AI-enabled workplaces.
- **Growing Anxiety Among Graduates:** A large majority of graduates believe AI and automation may make job acquisition more difficult.
  - Professional certifications, internships, and practical learning experiences are increasingly being viewed as more valuable than traditional degrees alone.
- **Rising Importance of Continuous Upskilling:** Rapid technological change is making lifelong learning a necessity rather than an option.
  - AI-related skills, data analytics, machine learning, and digital competencies are witnessing growing demand across industries.

How AI Affects Different Jobs?

- **High-Skilled Jobs Face Greater Exposure:** Research suggests that highly skilled occupations currently face greater AI exposure than low-skilled jobs.
  - Professionals such as **software developers, consultants, analysts, researchers, lawyers, and managers** are increasingly seeing parts of their work automated.
  - **Generative AI** can perform many cognitive tasks that were previously considered difficult to automate.
- **Low-Skilled Jobs Remain Relatively Protected:** Many low-skilled occupations involve physical labour, interpersonal interaction, and context-specific decision-making.
  - As a result, jobs such as **construction work, caregiving, hospitality services, and agricultural labour** face lower AI exposure than many routine white-collar occupations.

Implications for India

- **Demographic Dividend Under Pressure:** AI-driven reduction in entry-level jobs could limit employment opportunities for India's large youth population, affecting the realization of its demographic dividend.
- **Challenge to India's Services-Led Growth Model:** Sectors such as IT, BPO, consulting, and financial services, which traditionally absorbed large numbers of graduates, are increasingly automating routine tasks.
- **Rising Skill and Income Inequality:** Workers with AI and digital skills are likely to benefit, while others may face job displacement and stagnant wages.



Initiatives taken by India

- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** The policy emphasizes digital and AI literacy as core competencies across all levels of education.
- **Skill India Mission:** Skill India Mission, led by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), is integrating AI and emerging technologies into its training ecosystem.
- **YUVAi (Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI):** The initiative, launched by MeitY and National e-Governance Division (NeGD), was designed to equip students from Classes 8 to 12 with artificial intelligence, technological, and social skills in an inclusive manner.
- **IndiaAI FutureSkills:** The initiative launched under the IndiaAI Mission (2024), seeks to build a strong ecosystem of AI-skilled professionals through targeted interventions across multiple education levels from undergraduate to doctoral studies.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthen Education-Industry Linkages:** Universities should align curricula with emerging industry needs and technological developments.
  - Industry partnerships should be expanded to provide practical exposure and workplace experience.
- **Promote Lifelong Learning:** A national framework for continuous reskilling and upskilling should be developed.
- **Improve Labour Market Intelligence:** India should develop detailed occupational databases and real-time labour market information systems, to track AI-driven changes in employment patterns.
- **Encourage Human-AI Complementarity:** Policy efforts should focus on sectors where human creativity, judgment, empathy, and problem-solving complement AI technologies.

Concluding remarks

- Artificial Intelligence is reshaping India's employment landscape by reducing demand for routine entry-level jobs while increasing the value of advanced skills and adaptability.
- To ensure inclusive growth, India must strengthen education, skilling, and labour market institutions to prepare its workforce for an AI-driven economy.

Source: BW

INDIA AND AUSTRALIA DISCUSS MARITIME SECURITY

Context

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Australian counterpart **co-chaired** the **second edition** of the **India-Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue in New Delhi.**

Major Highlights

- Both nations have agreed to **advance collaborative maritime domain awareness activities** using maritime patrol aircraft and to explore opportunities to enhance undersea domain awareness.
- Two sides discussed efforts to finalise the **Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap.**
- The two sides undertook to explore arrangements to enhance procedural interoperability for exercises and operations, building on the **2020 Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement.**
- The ministers announced that India and Australia would begin developing a MoU regarding the **Provision of Defence Articles and Defence Services** as the next step in deepening defence **industrial collaboration.**

Brief on India-Australia Ties

- India and Australia upgraded their bilateral relationship from a '**strategic partnership' in 2009 to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' in 2020.**
- **Bilateral mechanisms include:** 2+2 Defence and Foreign Ministers' Dialogue, Joint Trade & Commerce Ministerial Commission, Defence Policy Talks, Australia-India Education Council, Defence Services Staff Talks, Energy Dialogue, JWGs on different issues etc.
- **Bilateral Trade:** Bilateral trade reached $24.1 billion in FY25, with India's exports valued at $8.58 billion and imports at $15.52 billion. India ranks as Australia's 8th largest trading partner, while Australia is India's 14th largest.
  - Negotiations are underway for a more **comprehensive Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)** to further deepen trade relations.
- **Defence and Security:** The **'Quadrilateral Security Dialogue' (QSD)** is an **informal strategic forum** comprising four nations - **the United States of America (USA), India, Australia and Japan.**
  - Two Navies had signed the **'Joint Guidance for the India – Australia Navy to Navy Relationship' document in 2021.**
  - **Bilateral Exercises:** In 2020, Australia participated in the MALABAR naval exercise and thus **joined India, the U S and Japan**.
    - **AUSINDEX**: It is a naval exercise between the Royal Australian Navy and the Indian Navy
    - **The Pitch Black exercise**: The Indian Air Force joined Exercise Pitch Black in Darwin in 2018.
  - **Mutual Logistic Support Arrangement and Defence Science & Technology Implementing Arrangement 2020**: The pact enables complex military engagement and excellent collective receptiveness to regional disasters.
- **Critical Minerals and Technology:** Australia-India Critical Minerals Investment Partnership was signed in **2022,** establishing the Australia-India Critical Minerals Research Hub in late 2023.
  - The Hub aims to drive innovation in sustainable mining and processing, with government-approved funding of $5 million for collaborative research and scholarships.
- In 2023, Australia and India entered into a **Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA).**
  - It is a bilateral framework that supports migration and mobility between the two countries, while addressing issues pertaining to illegal and irregular migration.
- **New Roadmap for Australia's Economic Engagement with India:** Australia launched it in 2025, identifying nearly 50 targeted opportunities across defence, sports, culture, space, and technology.
  - **Clean Energy:** Leveraging Australia's renewable energy expertise to support India's sustainability goals, including the establishment of the India-Australia Rooftop Solar Training Academy in 2025 to train 2,000 women and young people as solar technicians.
  - **Education and Skills:** Strengthening academic partnerships and vocational training programs for knowledge exchange and workforce development.
  - **Agribusiness:** Expanding agricultural trade to meet India's increasing demand and improve food security.
  - **Tourism:** Promoting cultural exchanges and simplifying visa processes to strengthen people-to-people ties.

Significance of Australia for India

- **Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific:** Australia is crucial for maintaining a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific, aligning with India's maritime and regional security interests.

- **Key Source of Critical Minerals & Energy:** Australia supplies lithium, cobalt, rare earths, coal, and LNG, strengthening India's energy and industrial security.
- **Trade & Economic Partner:** Under the India–Australia ECTA (2022), bilateral trade is expanding with reduced tariffs, and negotiations toward a broader CECA are underway.
- **Education and Research Hub:** Australia is a major destination for Indian students, with growing collaboration in STEM, innovation, and mutual recognition of qualifications.
- **Geopolitical Convergence:** Close cooperation in QUAD, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), East Asia Summit (EAS), and other multilateral forums helps India diversify partnerships and balance China's regional influence.

Areas of Concerns

- **Trade Imbalance & Limited Diversification:** India's exports remain limited compared to Australia's resource-heavy exports, creating a persistent trade imbalance and slow progress on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).
- **Indian Diaspora & Safety Concerns:** Occasional incidents involving Indian students and community tensions raise concerns about safety and societal integration.
- **Visa, Mobility & Skill Recognition Issues:** Despite progress, challenges remain in mutual recognition of skills, work visas, and post-study opportunities for Indian students.
- **Agricultural Market Access Issues:** India faces barriers in exporting agricultural products due to Australia's stringent sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards.
- **Slow Progress in Defence Tech Collaboration:** While exercises are strong, cooperation in defence manufacturing, technology transfer, and joint R&D remains underdeveloped.

Way Ahead

- **Deepen Strategic & Defence Cooperation:** Expand collaboration in maritime security, intelligence sharing, joint defence production, and strengthen QUAD-driven initiatives in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Fast-Track CECA & Diversify Trade:** Conclude the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) and promote diversification in goods, services, critical minerals, and digital trade.
- **Strengthen Critical Minerals & Clean Energy Ties:** Build long-term supply chains for lithium, rare earths, and collaborate on green hydrogen, renewable energy, and climate resilience projects.

Source: IE

STRENGTHENING INDIA'S QUALITY ECOSYSTEM

Context

- India has significantly expanded its quality ecosystem through standards, certification systems, and quality control orders, however the country still faces challenges in ensuring global credibility and trust in its ecosystem.

India's Quality Ecosystem

- India has over **22,300 standards**, with around **94%** harmonised with international ISO and IEC standards.
- India ranked **11th** in the **Global Quality Infrastructure Index 2025**.
- More than **700 products** are under mandatory quality certification, while hundreds more are covered under **voluntary certification.**
- **India's quality ecosystem comprises;**
  - Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for standard-setting,
  - Quality Council of India (QCI),
  - National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL),
  - National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB),
  - Export Inspection Council (EIC),
  - Sectoral regulators such as FSSAI and CDSCO, conformity assessment and certification bodies, testing laboratories, and market surveillance mechanisms etc.

Why Existing Arrangements Are Inadequate

- **Fragmented Institutional Framework:** Responsibilities for standards, certification, regulation, accreditation, and enforcement are spread across multiple ministries and agencies.
  - **Lack of coordination** creates regulatory overlaps and accountability gaps.
- **Overlapping Roles of BIS:** The Bureau of Indian Standards performs standard-setting, certification, and some regulatory functions.
  - Such concentration of functions may **create conflicts between promotion, certification, and enforcement roles.**
- **Weak Market Surveillance:** Regulations become ineffective if non-compliant products continue to circulate in markets.
  - Surveillance capacities remain uneven across states and sectors.
- **Export-Quality Challenges:** Export quality regulation is fragmented among agencies such as Export Inspection Council, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, commodity boards, and other regulators.
  - Promotion and regulation often coexist within the same institutions, creating potential conflicts.
- **Limited International Recognition:** Compliance with Indian standards does not automatically ensure acceptance in foreign markets.
  - Indian certifications often require additional verification abroad, increasing export costs.

Government Initiatives Promoting Quality

- **Quality Control Orders (QCOs):** Introduced to ensure that products meet prescribed quality and safety standards. It covers sectors such as steel, chemicals, electronics, footwear, and toys.
- **Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) Scheme:** Encourages MSMEs to adopt quality manufacturing practices while minimising environmental impact.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** Supports domestic manufacturing while incentivising firms to achieve global quality benchmarks.
- **National Quality Mission:** Promotes quality consciousness across industries and public institutions.
- **One District One Product (ODOP):** Encourages standardisation, branding, and quality enhancement of local products.

Way Ahead

- **Improve Testing Infrastructure:** Expand accredited laboratories and certification facilities to strengthen quality assessment and compliance.
- **Establish a National Authority on Quality:** Create a dedicated apex body to provide a whole-of-government approach to quality governance by coordinating standards, certification, accreditation, regulation, and enforcement across sectors.
- **Streamline Export Certification:** Rationalise multiple export-certification agencies to reduce duplication and simplify compliance for exporters.
- **Separate Key Functions:** Standard-setting, certification, regulation, and enforcement should be handled independently to enhance transparency and accountability.
- **Enhance Global Integration:** Increase participation in international standard-setting bodies and pursue mutual recognition arrangements for Indian certifications.

Concluding remarks

- India's next phase of quality reforms should move beyond merely increasing the number of standards and certifications.
- The focus must shift toward building a **credible, trusted, and internationally recognised quality governance system** that supports consumer protection, export competitiveness, and the goal of becoming a global manufacturing hub.

Source: BS

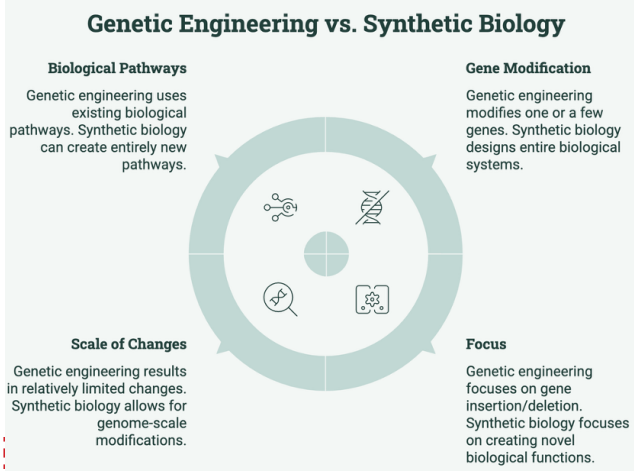
EMERGING POWER OF SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY

In News

- Recent advances in genome sequencing, gene editing, artificial intelligence, and DNA synthesis have accelerated the **growth of synthetic biology.**

About Synthetic Biology

- Synthetic Biology is the application of engineering principles to biology, where biological components are designed, assembled, and modified to perform specific functions.
- It involves engineering organisms to possess **new or enhanced abilities beyond those found in nature.**



Applications

- **Healthcare:** Engineered microbes now produce artemisinin (anti-malarial) and insulin without plant or animal extraction.
  - **CAR-T cell therapy** where immune cells are reprogrammed to attack cancers is a direct product of **SynBio techniques**.
- **Agriculture:** Nitrogen-fixing microbes are being engineered to deliver nutrients directly to plants, reducing dependence on chemical fertilisers.
- **Energy and Environment:** Designer microorganisms can convert greenhouse gases like methane into high-value compounds.
- **Forensics and Materials:** Synthetic DNA watermarking demonstrates how biological systems can carry encoded information.

Challenges and Concerns

- **Biosafety and Biosecurity:** Engineered organisms, if accidentally or deliberately released, could disrupt ecosystems.
- **Regulatory Gaps**: India currently lacks a comprehensive, standalone synthetic biology regulation. The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill has been pending for years (withdrawn).
  - Existing frameworks under the Environment Protection Act and the Recombinant DNA Safety Guidelines are inadequate for the scale of current SynBio activity.
- **Equity and Access**: SynBio heavily draws on biodiversity data often from megadiverse countries like India. Yet the benefits have historically flowed to labs and corporations in the Global North. This raises **Nagoya Protocol-linked questions around Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS).**
- **Ethical Concerns:** The possibility of engineering multicellular organisms or introducing designer genomes into fertilised eggs raises deep ethical questions. The line between therapy and enhancement remains contested.

India's Policy Response

- The **BioE3 Policy (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment)**, approved by the Union Cabinet in August 2024, is a central pillar. It identifies six thematic areas: bio-based chemicals, biopolymers, APIs and smart proteins, precision biotherapeutics, climate-resilient agriculture, and carbon capture.
- **India's bioeconomy, valued at just $10 billion in 2014**, crossed $165 billion in 2024 and is targeting $300 billion by 2030. India is among the first countries globally to have a dedicated bioeconomy policy framework.
- Under BioE3, "Moolankur" Biofoundry Hubs were launched to give startups, academia, and SMEs access to shared biomanufacturing infrastructure.

Way Forward

- India needs a dedicated **National Synthetic Biology Policy**, one that consolidates regulatory frameworks, establishes clear biosafety protocols, and protects India's biodiversity-linked data interests.
- Academic curricula must integrate **computational biology and AI alongside conventional bench science.**
- International engagement through forums like the **Cartagena Protocol and CBD-COP** must reflect India's interests as both a biodiversity-rich nation and an emerging SynBio power.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

MAJULI ISLAND

Context

- A recent study by scientists from the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences has reconstructed nearly 4,000 years of climate, vegetation, and river dynamics of Majuli Island.

About Majuli Island

- Majuli is located in the **Brahmaputra River system** in Assam and is recognized as the **world's largest inhabited river island.**

- Majuli is a **unique fluvial island** formed by the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries, covering about **875 sq. km.**
- It is bounded by the **Subansiri River** in the north, **Kherkatia Suti** in the northeast, and the **Brahmaputra River** in the south.
- Its landscape consists of alluvial plains, braided channels, **wetlands (Beels)**, and riverine sandbars known as **Chaporis.**
- The island is an important centre of **Neo-Vaishnavite culture** established by Srimanta Sankardeva.
  - It hosts around **30 Sattras (Vaishnavite monasteries),** which serve as centres of religion, culture, education, and community governance.
  - Major Sattras include **Auniati Satra, Kamalabari Satra, Garamur Satra, and Dakhinpat Satra.**
- It is home to several indigenous tribal communities, including the **Mising, Deori, and Sonowal Kachari tribes.**
- The island faces recurrent **floods, riverbank erosion, deforestation, and land loss.**

Source: DD News

AUKUS ALLIANCE

Context

- The AUKUS alliance between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States has completed five years and recently expanded cooperation in maritime defence and advanced technologies.

About AUKUS

- AUKUS was **launched in September 2021** as a trilateral strategic security partnership.
- It was launched amid growing geopolitical competition and security concerns in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Its objective is to strengthen defence capabilities, technological cooperation, and strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Two Pillars of AUKUS

- **Pillar I:**
  - Focuses on helping Australia acquire conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs).
  - The US will supply three Virginia-class submarines to Australia, with an option for two more.
  - It will make Australia the seventh country to operate nuclear-powered submarines.
- **Pillar II:**
  - Focuses on cooperation in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cyber capabilities, undersea technologies, and advanced weapon systems.
  - The alliance is also developing advanced uncrewed undersea vehicles (UUVs) and underwater drone systems for maritime security.

Source: TH

EMERGENCY CREDIT LINE GUARANTEE SCHEME (ECLGS) 5.0

Context

- The Government of India has received over 2.62 lakh loan applications worth 1.71 lakh crore under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0.

About

- **ECLGS 5.0** is the latest version of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, **originally introduced** during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- The scheme aims to provide **additional working capital support** to businesses facing temporary financial stress.
  - The scheme launched in **2026** addresses financial stress faced by MSMEs and the aviation sector due to disruptions arising from the ongoing West Asia conflict.
- It allows eligible borrowers to obtain additional loans of up to **20%** of their existing working capital limits.
- The scheme has a total credit support envelope of **₹2,55,000 crore (including Rs.5,000 crore for airlines).**

Credit Guarantee Structure

- **Guarantee coverage:** For MSMEs, the government provides a **100% guarantee** on the additional credit extended by banks. For non-MSME borrowers as well as the airline sector, the guarantee coverage is **90%.**
  - Guarantees are provided through the **National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).**

- **Tenure of Loan:**
  - **For MSMEs/Non MSMEs (except Airline sector): 5 years** from the date of first disbursement including a moratorium of 1 year.
  - **For the airline sector: 7 years** from the date of first disbursement including a moratorium of 2 years.
- **Tenure of Guarantee Cover:** Maximum period of guarantee cover shall be co-terminus with the tenor of the loan.

Source: IE

SEAFOOD EXPORTS HIT RECORD HIGH IN 2025-26

Context

- **India's seafood exports** reached an all-time high in **both volume and value during the financial year 2025-26.**

About

- With shipments touching **19.72 lakh metric tonnes (MT) worth USD 8.46 billion,** despite challenging global market conditions.
- **Frozen shrimp** continued to dominate India's seafood exports, accounting for **nearly two-thirds of total export earnings.**
  - **The United States** remained the largest importer of Indian frozen shrimp, followed by China.
  - **Other major destinations** included the European Union, Southeast Asia, Japan, the Middle East, and several other countries.
- **Frozen fish emerged as the second-largest export category,** while dried seafood products ranked third.
  - **Dried seafood exports** witnessed particularly strong growth, registering a 78.05% increase in rupee value terms.
- **Top export destinations include** the United States, followed by China and the European Union (EU).
- **Visakhapatnam, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), and Kochi** emerged as the **top three ports** handling seafood export cargo during FY 2025-26.

Source: PIB