

IMPORTANT NEWS

INS Sagardhwani: India's Oceanographic Research Vessel

Inside Story of the News:

The INS Sagardhwani recently commenced its **two-month-long Sagar Maitri (SM) Mission-4** from the Southern Naval Command (SNC) in Kochi.

- This marine acoustic research vessel was designed and developed by the **Naval Physical & Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of DRDO in Kochi**.
- It was constructed entirely within India by GRSE Ltd.
- It was launched in July 1994.
- Over the past 25 years, this ship has been actively involved in extensive oceanic observation missions and research endeavours.
- NPOL, which specializes in the study of the ocean environment and related fields, has been at the forefront of this important work.
- The vessel's latest mission is the SAGAR MAITRI (SM) Mission-2, which set sail from the South Jetty within the Southern Naval Command (SNC) in Kochi.

Sagar Mantri: Exploring the Meaning and Significance:

- Sagar Mantri is an innovative initiative led by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- It aligns with the objective of India's policy declaration, "**Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**," which seeks to foster enhanced cooperation in socio-economic aspects and more substantial scientific engagement, particularly in the realm of ocean research, with countries in the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR).
- Within the framework of this policy, DRDO has launched a scientific endeavour called "MAITRI" (Marine and Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative).
 - It is dedicated to establishing enduring partnerships with IOR nations in the sphere of "Ocean Research and Development."
- These missions are designed to facilitate enduring scientific collaborations with eight IOR countries: **Oman, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Myanmar**.
- The current mission, SM-4, involves scientific deployments aboard INS Sagardhwani in the Northern Arabian Sea.
- It also encompasses the initiation of collaborative research programs in conjunction with the Department of Marine Sciences & Fisheries at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman.
- These missions offer scientists an invaluable opportunity to collaborate and cultivate robust working relationships with their counterparts in IOR countries who are engaged in ocean-related studies.

Manipur to Undertake Census of Amur Falcon, the World's Longest-Traveling Raptors

Inside Story of the News:

The Manipur Forest Department is set to conduct a comprehensive census of **Amur falcons, which are renowned as the world's most far-ranging raptors**, within the Tamenglong district.

- These falcons, locally referred to as Akhuaipuina, usually arrive in Manipur, primarily in Tamenglong, in mid-October.
- They travel an astonishing one-way distance of roughly 20,000 kilometers from their **breeding habitats in Southeastern Siberia and Northern China**.
- Remarkably, these birds undertake this exhausting journey twice each year.
- Amur falcons are safeguarded by the **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972** and are classified under **Schedule IV of the act**.
- The hunting of these birds or possession of their meat is **subject to penalties**, which can result in imprisonment for **up to three years, a fine of up to 25,000, or legal bonds**.
- In 2018, the forest department initiated a conservation program aimed **at tracking these birds using radio tags to gain insights into their migratory routes**.

Operation Ajay: Understanding the Military Mission

Inside Story of the News:

The MEA spokesperson confirmed that India's "**longstanding and consistent**" policy regarding the Palestinian state remains unaltered. Simultaneously, Operation Ajay commenced, aiming to evacuate **230 Indian citizens from Israel**.

- After the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas conflict, India once again emphasized its support for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state.
- The Ministry of External Affairs also underlined the importance of upholding humanitarian principles.
- These statements coincide with India's launch of a chartered flight operation called "Operation Ajay," which is aimed **at repatriating Indian nationals from the region**.

Operation Ajay: A Military Endeavor:

- India has initiated Operation Ajay to facilitate the return of its citizens from Israel.
- This action comes amidst escalating conflict as Israel responds to Hamas's attacks.
- Israel has declared war on Hamas and established a war cabinet.
- Operation Ajay is primarily focused on repatriating Indian citizens from the region.
- It involves the use of special chartered flights.
- In case of necessity, Indian Navy ships may also be deployed.

- There are approximately 18,000 Indians in Israel and about 16 in Palestine, with roughly a dozen in the West Bank and 3-4 individuals in Gaza.

Enduring Policy: A Persistent Approach:

- On October 7, shortly after the unprecedented attack by Hamas on Israel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a statement on X.
- In this post, he conveyed his profound concern about the terrorist attacks and expressed India's solidarity with Israel during this challenging time.
- However, five days later, in its first official statement regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict, New Delhi aimed to introduce some nuances into this position.

MEA's Response: The Reaction from the Ministry of External Affairs:

- The Ministry of External Affairs stated that there is a universal obligation to adhere to international humanitarian law.
- This phrase is seen as directed at Israel, which is conducting aerial strikes in Gaza.
- The use of "**international humanitarian law**" also aims to **protect innocent civilians**.
- This pertains to Hamas, as they have been involved in the killing of civilians, including women, children, and the elderly.
- The targeted attacks against Israeli civilians have resulted in approximately 1,300 casualties on the Israeli side, while the death toll in Gaza due to Israeli airstrikes has risen to over 1,350.
- Additionally, the MEA emphasized a global responsibility to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- This statement is considered a strong signal of support for Israel.
- Furthermore, India has advocated for the resumption of direct negotiations.
- The goal is **to establish a sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine, living within secure and recognized borders and coexisting peacefully with Israel**.

Setu Bandhan Scheme: Bridging the Initiative

Inside Story of the News:

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has recently announced the approval of **seven significant bridge projects in Arunachal Pradesh**. These projects fall **under the Setu Bandhan Scheme** and are funded by the **Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF)**. They are scheduled for implementation in the fiscal year 2023-24 and have a total budget of Rs 118.50 Crores.

- In 2000, the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund, previously known as the Central Road Fund, was established **through the Central Road Fund Act, 2000**.
- The administrative jurisdiction of the CRIF is now under the Ministry of Finance, having previously been under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- The amendment resulted in the renaming of **the Central Road Fund to the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF)**.

- This change allowed for the utilization of the proceeds from the road cess under CRIF to **finance various infrastructure projects, including waterways, segments of railway infrastructure, and even social infrastructure like educational institutions and medical colleges.**
- The Setu Bandhan Scheme was introduced **to enhance inter-state connectivity**, particularly in rural border areas where state roads often lack sufficient attention.
- The "Setu Bandhan Scheme" is an initiative led by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, focused **on facilitating the construction of Rail Over Bridges (ROBs), Rail Under Bridges (RUBs), and Bridges on State Roads.**
- This program aims **to improve road safety by replacing existing level crossings with bridges, ultimately reducing accidents at these locations.**

Supreme Court of India Rejects Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage

Inside Story of the News:

A significant decision was reached by the **five-judge Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court**, with **Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud** at the helm. Unfortunately, this ruling has refused to legalize **same-sex unions, which has been a major disappointment for countless LGBTQ+ individuals who have been advocating for marriage equality.**

- This judgment had been eagerly anticipated.
- It was especially significant given the government's **strong opposition to the idea of a judicial declaration granting legal recognition to same-sex relationships.**
- In recent times, the government had proposed the formation of a committee.
- This committee, led by the Union Cabinet Secretary.
- It was tasked with assessing whether any "administrative measures" could be taken to address the daily challenges faced by same-sex couples.

Arguments in Support of Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage in India:

- The legalization of same-sex marriages plays a crucial role in advancing the principles of equality and non-discrimination.
- **Articles 14 and 15 of the constitution** explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sex.
- In the K.S. Puttaswamy case (2017), the Supreme Court recognized the right to privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
 - This right to privacy **includes the ability to make choices concerning one's body and intimate relationships.**
- Legalizing same-sex marriage would:
 - safeguard the right to privacy for homosexual couples.
 - extend legal protection to same-sex couples.
 - ensuring their rights in areas such as wages, gratuities, adoption, surrogacy, inheritance, joint property ownership, and healthcare.
 - provide a sense of significance, direction, and identity to same-sex relationships.
 - foster social acceptance of LGBT individuals and their relationships.
- It's worth noting that same-sex marriage is legally recognized in 34 countries worldwide.

Arguments Opposing the Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage in India

- Currently, Indian law governs succession and adoption separately through provisions under religious customary laws or codified laws specific to each religion in the country.
- These legal frameworks and customs primarily apply to heterosexual couples.
- They align with Indian religious and cultural beliefs, which do not traditionally recognize same-sex marriages.
- Legalizing same-sex marriages might **lead to legal complexities** in various areas, including adoption, child custody, inheritance, and taxation.
- Implementing such legalization would also **necessitate amendments to laws related to the age of consent, prohibition of bigamy, and various judicial and divorce acts.**
- Concerns have been raised that the introduction of same-sex marriages could **cause social unrest and challenge established societal norms and values.**
- It's important to acknowledge that in Indian society, where acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community is not universally prevalent.
- The potential societal stigma and discrimination could **negatively impact the mental health of children adopted by LGBTQIA+ couples.**
- Some argue that the demand for same-sex marriage is primarily limited to **urban and elitist demographics.**
- It does not represent the views and priorities of rural and semi-urban areas.

Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC): Regulating Broadcast Complaints

Inside Story of the News:

The Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC) has issued **guidance to entertainment channels concerning the representation of scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) in television programs.** The advisory underscores the importance of exercising "extreme caution" and displaying sensitivity in the portrayal of these communities to prevent any offense to their sentiments.

- The Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC) has issued guidelines to entertainment channels concerning the portrayal of stories related to SC (Scheduled Caste) and ST (Scheduled Tribe) communities in India.
 - Channels should convey the **narratives of SC and ST communities with sensitivity, avoiding insensitivity.**
 - Care must be taken to avoid the **depiction of violent scenes** that could harm or re-traumatize these communities.
 - When addressing issues like **untouchability and casteism**, channels should refrain from portraying individuals from SC and ST communities as victims or reinforcing harmful stereotypes.
 - Channels should exercise caution in their **use of language to prevent** any offense to these communities and should choose their words thoughtfully.

- The BCCC recognizes that discrimination against SCs and STs still persists in Indian society, including verbal and sexual abuse, despite the legal prohibition of untouchability.
- Television serves not only as a reflection of society but also as an influencer.
- It sets examples for behavior and can provide an escape from real life.
- Content creators should consider the impact of their portrayals.
- According to the 2011 census, 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent of the Indian population belong to the SC and ST communities, respectively.
- Given this substantial representation, it is imperative to ensure that derogatory and disparaging language targeting SC and ST groups is excluded from scripts, as stated in the advisory approved by BCCC Chairperson Justice Gita Mittal.

Understanding the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC):

- The Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC) is an independent self-regulatory organization established by the Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation (IBDF) in June 2011.
- BCCC's primary responsibility is
 - to enforce self-regulatory guidelines for non-news channels,
 - encompassing general entertainment channels,
 - children's channels, and
 - special interest channels.
- Any viewer can file a complaint related to **television programs, shows, non-news and current affairs TV channels, and other digital content** broadcast by members or associate members of IBDF India.
- The BCCC comprises **13 members**, including **one chairperson, four non-broadcast members, four members from national-level statutory commissions, and four members from the broadcast industry.**
- When a valid complaint is received, the respective channel is requested to provide their perspective on the disputed content within one working week upon receipt of a letter from BCCC.
- Following an assessment of the channel's response, if the BCCC committee remains unsatisfied, it possesses the authority to issue a directive requesting necessary modifications or the withdrawal of such content.
- If the channel does not comply, the BCCC promptly submits a detailed report to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting within 24 hours.

Details about the Indian Broadcasting & Digital Foundation (IBDF):

- The Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBDF) was founded in 1999 and serves as the leading organization representing broadcasters in India.
- IBDF plays a pivotal role in providing research-based legislative recommendations to the government.
- Additionally, it conducts advocacy efforts on a wide range of fiscal, regulatory, and business-related issues.
- These endeavors are aimed at fostering the formulation of favorable policies, resolving challenges, and implementing essential reforms within the broader broadcasting system.

Gaganyaan TV-D1 Test Flight Success: ISRO Declares Mission Accomplished

Inside Story of the News:

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is poised to conduct its inaugural **test flight, TV-D1**, a significant **milestone in India's pursuit of human spaceflight**.

- The TV D1 test vehicle lifted off from **the first launch pad at the Sriharikota rocket port**.
- Test Vehicle Abort Mission-1 (TV-D1) is designed **to assess the crew module's preparedness for the Gaganyaan mission**.
- It's a single-stage liquid rocket exclusively developed for this abort mission.
- The payload includes the Crew Module (CM) and Crew Escape Systems (CES) equipped with fast-acting solid motors, along with CM fairing (CMF) and Interface Adapters.
- This flight will replicate the conditions for an abort during the ascent trajectory, **equivalent to Mach 1.2 experienced in the Gaganyaan mission**.
- The abort and crew escape system operates on a principle akin to ejection seats found in fighter jets, with the primary objective of ensuring the safety of the crew in case of in-flight anomalies.
- The Crew Escape System is designed to operate automatically at different altitudes if any malfunctions are detected by the onboard computer.
- This test flight will simulate an abort scenario during the ascent trajectory.
- The objective is to assess a crucial system intended for deployment in the Gaganyaan mission.
- This system is vital for ensuring the safety of Indian astronauts should an emergency occur in the initial phase of the launch.
- The CES, together with the CM, will be separated from the test vehicle at an altitude of approximately 17 km.
- The test will conclude with the safe landing of the CM in the sea, approximately 10 km off the coast of Sriharikota.

APAAR Initiative: 'One Nation, One ID' to Be Implemented for Students

Inside Story of the News:

The Union Education Ministry has recently issued instructions to the States to initiate the implementation of the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry, known as 'APAAR'.

- APAAR, often referred to as **'One Nation, One Student ID'**, functions as an Education Ecosystem Registry, essentially an **'EduLocker'**.
- It is designed **to provide a unique identification number to every student, covering individuals from pre-primary to higher education**.
- This identification number will be separate from the existing Aadhaar ID that every individual possesses.
- As students enroll in APAAR, their identity will be verified using their Aadhaar ID or other officially recognized documents.

- Subsequently, a unique identification number will be generated for each student.

How 'One Nation, One ID' Benefits Students:

- The APAAR, or EduLocker, serves as a lifelong student identification number, facilitating the seamless tracking of their academic journey and accomplishments.
- Students can utilize this system to digitally store their exam results, learning outcomes, and co-curricular achievements, which may encompass accolades in Olympiads or specialized skill training, among other things.
- This digital repository allows for the convenient storage and retrieval of transcripts, certificates, and other academic milestones.
- It enhances students' **ability to apply for jobs, scholarships, or higher education opportunities**.
- For students transferring between schools, this system simplifies the admission process at new institutions across the country.
- Moreover, APAAR benefits educational authorities, boards, and institutions by offering a means to monitor student progress, assess performance, and evaluate the effectiveness of educational policies.
- The system also aids government agencies in tracking and addressing dropout rates.

APAAR: Addressing Challenges and Concerns:

- Given the ongoing apprehensions regarding data security concerning Aadhaar, coupled with several reported data breaches, there have been growing concerns regarding the launch of the APAAR registration process.
- School authorities have raised the concern that there are already pending Aadhaar verifications for students, and this process is currently optional.
- The introduction of the APAAR registry may potentially add to the administrative workload for teaching faculty.

Indian Army to Host the Chanakya Defence Dialogue

Inside Story of the News:

The Indian Army is preparing to initiate the Chanakya Defence Dialogue, a platform dedicated to addressing crucial security matters.

- As per the Indian Army, the dialogue will engage in a comprehensive assessment of security challenges in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, with a primary focus on formulating a collaborative security strategy for the area.
- The **Chanakya Defence Dialogue 2023** is a **collaborative effort between the Indian Army and the think tank Center for Land and Warfare Studies (CLAWS)**.
- Its objectives encompass:
 - the integration of intelligence, strategy, and expertise,
 - fostering discussions on topics such as the influence of neighboring forces,
 - the significance of the Indo-Pacific frontier, and
 - the evolving impact of emerging technologies on defense and security.

- This gathering will bring together participants from a diverse array of nations, including **Australia, France, Japan, and the United States.**
- Planned as a two-day conference, it will feature prominent speakers, military strategists, diplomats, and leading intellectuals within the domains of defense and strategic affairs.
- Additionally, the discussions will extend to issues related to cooperation **in defense technology, military exercises,** and concerns regarding **nuclear proliferation.**

PM Modi Launches India's First Nam0 Bharat Train

Inside Story of the News:

The Prime Minister of India is set to inaugurate the **first phase of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)**, India's **maiden mass rapid transit system** dedicated to regional connectivity.

- With the capability to operate at **speeds of up to 180 km/hour**, trains on the initial section are expected to **reduce the travel time between Delhi and Meerut to under an hour.**

The RRTS Project: An Overview:

- At its core, the RRTS is a **semi high-speed rail network and serves as an integrated mass transit system.**
- Its primary goal is to facilitate "**balanced and sustainable urban development**" by enhancing connectivity and accessibility across the National Capital Region (NCR).
- The project is executed by the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), **a joint venture company involving the Central government and the governments of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.**
- It is modeled after **transit systems like the RER in Paris, Regional-Express trains in Germany and Austria, and the SEPTA Regional Rail in the United States, among others.**
- RRTS trains will operate significantly faster than metro trains, with speeds of 160 km/hour, designed for a maximum capability of 180 km/hour.
- The project encompasses the development of eight corridors, with three under construction in phase I: the 82-km Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut, the 164-km Delhi-Gurugram-SNB-Alwar, and the 103-km Delhi-Panipat corridors.
- Compared to metro systems, the RRTS network offers higher speeds and caters to commuters seeking to cover relatively longer distances across the NCR in a shorter period.
- In contrast to the Indian Railways, while RRTS trains cover relatively shorter distances, they do so with higher frequency and provide a more comfortable travel experience than the average Railway coach.

Replication of Child-Rescue Initiative 'Nanhe Farishte' Nationwide

Inside Story of the News:

Operation Nanhe Farishte, a specialized child-rescue initiative by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of the Southwestern Railways (SWR), is set to **be implemented nationwide**. The initiative will retain its name and will feature dedicated child helpdesks operating at all designated A and A1 railway stations. This decision was reached during a recent Railway Board meeting.

- The Railway Protection Force (RPF) is entrusted with **the responsibility of ensuring the security of railway property, passenger areas, and passengers**.
- The RPF has effectively fulfilled its role in safeguarding the extensive assets of the railways throughout the country, employing preventive security measures, and making efforts to detect crimes against railway property as they occur.
- The Railways have recently entered a memorandum of understanding with the Association for Voluntary Action, also known as **Bachpan Bachao Andolan**, to collaborate in combating **human trafficking through railway networks**.
- This NGO is affiliated with Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi's Children's Foundation, as confirmed by the RPF in a statement.
- The RPF has also initiated Operation AAHT (Action Against Human Trafficking) and successfully rescued victims of human trafficking.

Reviving Tigers in the Sahyadri Region

Inside Story of the News:

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has granted approval for the **reintroduction of eight tigers into the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) in Maharashtra**. This decision is expected to rejuvenate a forest that was previously devoid of tigers.

- As per the NTCA's Status of Tigers-2022 report, the estimated **tiger population in Maharashtra stands at 444**.
- The Sahyadri Tiger Reserve encompasses the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary in its northern portion and the Chandoli National Park in its southern part, resulting from the merger of these two forest areas in 2007.
- The region of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve comprises the surroundings of the **Koyna Dam, the Warna River**, and various other small rivers and streams originating from the Western Ghats and flowing eastward.
- Sahyadri Tiger Reserve is unique in that it boasts ample **climax and near-climax vegetation**, with minimal prospects of significant human impact in the future.
- **Flora:**
 - The forest cover within the reserve encompasses moist evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist, and dry deciduous vegetation types.

- The reserve is rich in medicinal and fruit-bearing trees, as well as valuable hardwood trees.
- **Fauna:**
 - Key carnivores in the reserve include tigers, leopards, and various Lesser Cats, along with the presence of wolves, jackals, and wild dogs.
 - The large herbivores are represented by several deer species such as Barking Deer and Sambar, along with other large and small creatures like the Indian Bison, Sloth Bear, Mouse Deer, Giant Indian Squirrel, and Macaque.