

# IMPORTANT NEWS

## ASEAN's Strategic Role in Shaping Southeast Asia's Future

### Inside Story of the News:

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional organization established to foster political and social stability in response to increasing tensions among post-colonial states in the Asia-Pacific region. The guiding motto of ASEAN is "**One Vision, One Identity, One Community.**" Its inception took place on August 8, 1967, in **Bangkok, Thailand**, marked by the signing of the **ASEAN Declaration, also known as the Bangkok Declaration.**

- ASEAN comprises ten member states, namely **Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam.**
- Its primary objectives include promoting intergovernmental collaboration and facilitating integration across various domains, including economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural aspects, not only among its member states but also with other nations in Asia.
- The ASEAN Secretariat, headquartered in **Jakarta, Indonesia**, operates under the leadership of a secretary-general.
- This body plays a pivotal role in coordinating the activities and initiatives of ASEAN member states and affiliated entities.
- ASEAN operates on a rotational basis, with an annual chairmanship that circulates among its member states.
- Important decisions within ASEAN are typically arrived at through consultations and consensus, guided by principles that emphasize noninterference in the internal affairs of member states and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

### ASEAN's Mission and Goals: Charting the Objectives:

- Foster economic growth, advance social well-being, and cultivate cultural development within the region.
- Uphold regional peace and stability through unwavering commitment to justice, the rule of law, and adherence to the principles outlined in the United Nations Charter.
- Encourage active cooperation and mutual assistance in various areas of common interest, spanning economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific, and administrative domains.
- Enhance collaboration for the more effective utilization of agriculture and industries, the expansion of trade, the improvement of transportation and communication infrastructure, and the elevation of living standards for the population.
- Promote the study of Southeast Asian subjects.
- Cultivate close and mutually advantageous partnerships with existing international and regional organizations.

### India-ASEAN Cooperation: Strengthening Ties for Regional Progress:

- India's relationship with ASEAN constitutes a fundamental cornerstone of its foreign policy and serves as the bedrock of the Act East Policy.
- India maintains a distinct mission dedicated to ASEAN and the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Jakarta.
- The dialogue between India and ASEAN has spanned 25 years, with summit-level interactions for 15 years and a strategic partnership for 5 years.
- **Economic Collaboration:**
  - India-ASEAN trade and investment ties have experienced consistent growth, with ASEAN ranking as India's fourth-largest trading partner.
  - Bilateral trade between India and ASEAN amounts to US\$ 81.33 billion, representing approximately 10.6% of India's overall trade.
  - India's exports to ASEAN account for 11.28% of its total exports.
  - The ASEAN-India Free Trade Area has been successfully established.
  - The ASEAN India-Business Council (AIBC) was established in 2003 to facilitate engagement between key private sector entities from India and ASEAN nations.
- **ASEAN-India Centre (AIC):** Established to engage in policy research, advocacy, and networking initiatives in collaboration with organizations and think-tanks in both India and ASEAN.
- **Socio-Cultural Collaboration:** Initiatives aimed at enhancing people-to-people interactions with ASEAN, including programs such as hosting ASEAN students in India, offering specialized training for ASEAN diplomats, and facilitating exchanges between parliamentarians, among others.
- **Delhi Declaration:** This declaration underscores the maritime domain as a focal area of cooperation within the ASEAN-India strategic partnership.

### Introducing the 'One Nation, One Card' Initiative: Streamlining Access and Services

#### Inside Story of the News:

Recently, **the Prime Minister unveiled the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)**, which is developed within the country. This card enables **individuals to make payments for various transportation services, including metro rides and toll charges, throughout the nation.** Termed as '**One Nation One Card,**' this versatile transportation card permits **users to pay for bus fares, tolls, parking fees, shopping, and even make cash withdrawals.**

- Its primary goal is to enhance the commuting experience by offering a seamless and user-friendly way to pay for various transportation services, including metro rides, buses, water ferries, and parking, all with a single card.
- This card isn't just for transportation; it can also be utilized for making purchases in retail stores and online shopping.
- It operates using **RuPay and National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) technology.**
- The NCMC feature allows bank customers to use their Debit Cards as travel cards, permitting travel on Metro Rail and Buses where this feature is enabled.

- The concept of NCMC was initially proposed by the **Nandan Nilekani committee**, which was established by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- It provides a unified contactless solution for transportation via the RuPay platform, developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- NCMC serves as an automated fare collection system, effectively transforming smartphones into versatile transport cards that commuters can eventually use to pay for Metro, bus, and suburban railway services.
- It is an **Indian domestic card scheme**, conceived and launched by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- RuPay offers a cost-effective card solution and can be issued as credit cards, debit cards, and prepaid cards.
- RuPay's mission is to enable electronic payments across all Indian banks and financial institutions, promoting digital transactions throughout the country.

## Nakashi Art Unveiled: Exploring the Cheriyal Scroll Painting Tradition

### Inside Story of the News:

During their visit to the **Indian Agricultural Research (IARI) at Pusa campus**, first ladies or spouses of heads of state from various countries attending the upcoming G20 Summit will receive a curated collection of gifts. These gifts include a **Cheriyal scroll painting from Telangana**, a **handwoven Tussar silk stole**, and a **handcrafted bell metal figurine of a woman created by skilled artisans from Chattisgarh**.

- **Cheriyal scroll painting** is steeped in history, with origins dating back to the 15th century.
- This art form has been handed down through generations within a specific community of artists known as "Nakashi."
- Traditionally, Cheriyal scroll paintings served as a **storytelling medium**, particularly during performances of the traditional shadow puppetry theater called "Tholu Bommalata."
- The Cheriyal scroll painting, with its centuries-old heritage, portrays myths and legends in narrative scrolls, as explained by an unnamed senior official at the institute.
- These paintings draw inspiration from local motifs and are a testament to the region's rich storytelling traditions.
- Beyond traditional narratives, contemporary subjects and societal concerns are sometimes incorporated into Cheriyal paintings, adapting the art form to resonate with modern audiences.
- Typically, Cheriyal paintings are executed on scrolls crafted from materials like khadi cloth or treated paper.
- Contemporary artists also explore and experiment with the traditional style, infusing new themes and artistic approaches while preserving the essence of Cheriyal art.

## Discovering TRIFED's Artisan Treasures: Celebrating Indigenous Craftsmanship

### Inside Story of the News:

During the G20 Summit, **TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India)**, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, proudly displayed India's abundant tribal heritage and craftsmanship in a curated exhibition.

- Highlighted articles that garnered significant interest among the delegates include:
  - **Longpi Pottery:**
    - Originating from the village of Longpi in Manipur, the exceptional pottery style is practiced by the Tangkhul Naga tribes.
    - Unlike conventional pottery, Longpi artisans do not use a potter's wheel, relying instead on manual shaping and molds.
    - Longpi pottery is characterized by its distinctive gray-black cooking pots, sturdy kettles, charming bowls, mugs, and nut trays, often adorned with delicate cane handles.
  - **Chhattisgarh Wind Flutes:**
    - Curated by the Gond Tribe of Bastar in Chhattisgarh, the 'Sulur' bamboo wind flute stands out as a unique musical creation.
    - Unlike traditional flutes, it produces melodies through a simple one-handed twirl and serves utilitarian purposes for guiding cattle and warding off animals.
  - **Gond Paintings:**
    - Reflecting the Gond tribe's artistic brilliance, the intricate paintings depict their deep connection to nature and tradition, resonating with art enthusiasts worldwide.
    - Gond artists have ingeniously adapted to contemporary mediums, employing unique techniques.
  - **Gujarat Hangings:**
    - Curated by the Bhil & Patelia Tribe in Dahod, Gujarat, the hangings feature mirror work, zari, stones, and beads, blending tradition with contemporary fashion.
  - **Sheep Wool Stoles:**
    - Crafted by Bodh, Bhutia, and Gujjar Bakarwal tribes from Himachal Pradesh/Jammu & Kashmir, the stoles showcase their ingenuity with pure sheep wool, fashioning a diverse range of apparel.
  - **Araku Valley Coffee:**
    - Hailing from the picturesque Araku Valley in Andhra Pradesh, the coffee is renowned for its unique flavors and sustainable cultivation practices, ensuring a high-quality brew.

- **Rajasthan Artistry:**
  - **Glass Mosaic Pottery** captures mosaic art style, creating lamp shades and candle holders that illuminate spaces with a kaleidoscope of colors.
  - **Meenakari** is an art of decorating metal surfaces with vibrant mineral substances, introduced by the Mughals, resulting in intricate, enamel-adorned pieces.
  - **Metal Ambabari Craft**, curated by the Meena Tribe, embraces enameling on various metals, extending beyond gold to silver and copper.

## The African Union's Permanent Membership in the G20: A Milestone Achievement

### Inside Story of the News:

The 18<sup>th</sup> G20 Summit, held in New Delhi in September 2023, **marked a momentous event as it saw the African Union (AU) being granted permanent membership**, signifying a significant expansion of the group. Comprising **55 member states from across the African continent**, the AU now shares equal status with the European Union, which was previously the sole regional bloc enjoying full membership.

- The AU functions as an intergovernmental organization representing the 55 member states that constitute the African continent.
- This continental union pursues a wide array of objectives aimed at the strength of its member nations both individually and collectively.
- The inclusion of the AU within the G20 presents an opportunity to revamp global trade, financial, and investment structures.
- Furthermore, it affords African interests and viewpoints a platform for expression and visibility within the G20, potentially exerting influence over global policy decisions.

### The Significance of the African Union (AU) for India: Strengthening Bilateral Relations and Global Influence:

- The African Union (AU) strives to foster greater unity, coherence, and solidarity among African nations and peoples.
- Serving as a pivotal catalyst for the political and economic progress of the continent, the African Union's primary mission centers around the integration of Africa and the promotion of enhanced cooperation among its nations, all with the ultimate goal of attaining peace, security, and prosperity for the entire African population.
- India's historical engagement with Africa commenced in 2008, although China had preceded India in establishing contact with Africa in 2000.

- Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China's engagement with the African continent has undergone significant evolution, indicating China's evolving interests in Africa.

#### India's Gains from the African Union's Inclusion in the G-20:

- Affirms India's prominent role in global governance, portraying the nation as a proponent of inclusiveness and diversity on the global stage.
- India's support for the African Union goes beyond symbolism, representing a strategic evolution of their partnership.
- This development takes into account their extensive history of collaboration, spanning areas such as trade, education, healthcare, and technology.
- India's endorsement carries significant weight within the G20, particularly considering its rapidly growing economy and considerable geopolitical influence.
- India seizes a unique opportunity to shape a more diverse and representative platform, aligning seamlessly with its global aspirations to foster a multipolar world.
- Injects momentum into the drive for a more inclusive G20, exemplifying a broader shift in the world order.

## India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor: A New Frontier in Economic Connectivity"

### Inside Story of the News:

Following the inauguration of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, the Prime Minister of India extended a warm welcome to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia on an official state visit. During this momentous visit, the two countries engaged in discussions concerning multiple facets of their strategic partnership and concurred on establishing a collaborative task force to accelerate progress on the West Coast refinery project.

- The project encompasses **India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, the European Union, France, Italy, Germany, and the United States.**
- The primary objective of the project is **to facilitate increased trade among the participating nations, with a particular focus on energy products.**
- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is composed of two key components: an Eastern Corridor linking India to the Gulf region and a Northern Corridor connecting the Gulf region to Europe.
  - The comprehensive project will feature an extensive network comprising railways, ship-rail transit, and road transport routes.
  - The corridor's infrastructure will encompass various essential components, including a rail link, an electricity cable, a hydrogen pipeline, and a high-speed data cable.
  - In the future, it is poised to become a pivotal driver of economic integration connecting India, West Asia, and Europe.

- The rail and shipping corridor forms **an integral component of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)**.
  - Its primary aim is to enhance prosperity among the participating nations by facilitating the augmented flow of energy resources and digital communication.
  - Additionally, this initiative is expected to address the existing infrastructure deficits that hinder growth in lower- and middle-income countries.

#### India's Diplomatic and Economic Ties with Saudi Arabia: A Closer Look:

- Presently, Saudi Arabia ranks as **India's second-largest provider of crude oil**, with Iraq holding the **position of India's primary crude oil supplier**.
- India imports over 18% of its crude oil necessities, and a significant portion of its Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is sourced from Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi Arabia stands as **India's fourth most prominent trading partner**, following **the USA, China, and the UAE**.
- In 2021, India and Saudi Arabia initiated their inaugural **naval joint exercise, known as the Al-Mohed Al-Hindi Exercise**.
- The cultural ties between the two nations are underscored by **the Hajj pilgrimage and the ongoing digitization of Hajj-related processes**.

#### The Fruitful Outcomes and Agreements Arising from the Visit:

- The inaugural meeting of the **India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council (SPC)** was jointly chaired by **the Prime Minister of India and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia**.
- India's Prime Minister emphasized **the pivotal role played by Saudi Arabia as "one of India's most significant strategic partners."**
- Conversations encompassed a diverse range of sectors, including defense, energy, security, education, technology, transportation, healthcare, tourism, culture, space, and semiconductor industries.
- This underlines the all-encompassing nature of the economic cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia.
- The trilateral project, which **involves ARAMCO (Saudi Arabia's oil company), ADNOC (the United Arab Emirates' oil company), and Indian companies, is poised to attract a substantial investment of USD 50 billion**.
- To expedite the **West Coast refinery project**, a collaborative task force was established.
  - This project, situated in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, is anticipated to possess an annual production capacity of 60 million tonnes, positioning it among the world's largest refineries upon completion.
- Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its dedication to serving as a **"dependable partner and supplier of crude oil resources"** to India, ensuring energy security.
- Both nations made commitments to intensify their cooperation in defense and anti-terrorism endeavors, with a particular focus on preventing the misuse of "missiles and drones" for terrorist activities.

### India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council (SPC): Fortifying Bilateral Ties for Mutual Prosperity:

- The Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) was instituted in 2019 as a high-level mechanism designed to steer and bolster the bilateral ties between India and Saudi Arabia.
- India stands as the fourth country with which Saudi Arabia has established such a strategic partnership, following similar agreements with the UK, France, and China.
- The SPC serves as an all-encompassing platform dedicated to nurturing collaboration across a broad spectrum of sectors.
- It facilitates in-depth dialogues, policy formulation, and coordination at various levels to effectively implement joint initiatives.
- Joint Working Groups (JWGs) operating within each committee concentrate on specific areas of cooperation, ensuring a well-organized approach to bilateral relations.

## Advancing Talks on the India-Russia Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor

### Inside Story of the News:

Union Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal** has extended **an invitation for an Indo-Russian Workshop concerning the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) to be held in Vladivostok, Russia.**

- The Eastern Maritime Corridor represents a proposed sea route connecting Chennai, India, with Vladivostok, Russia, traversing the Sea of Japan, the South China Sea, and the Malacca Strait.
- An agreement between the two countries was formalized for this trade route in 2019.
- Over time, additional commodities, including oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and fertilizers, will be incorporated into the list of goods transported via the EMC.
- The corridor is anticipated to significantly reduce transportation time between Indian and Russian ports in the Far East Region by up to 40%, decreasing it from the current 40 days to 24 days.
- Currently, the trade route between Mumbai in India and St. Petersburg in Russia spans a distance of 8,675 nautical miles.
- In contrast, the EMC will cover a distance of approximately 5,600 nautical miles, making it notably shorter than the current route via the Suez Canal.
- Once operational, the EMC will expedite the transportation of goods from India to the Far East of Russia, reducing the time required from over 40 days to 24 days.
- For India, this corridor will establish a shorter and more efficient route for accessing markets in the Far East, including China and Japan.



## India and Saudi Arabia Accelerate \$50 Billion West Coast Refinery Project

### Inside Story of the News:

Following the inauguration of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, the Prime Minister of India extended a warm welcome to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud on an official state visit. During this momentous visit, the two countries engaged in **discussions concerning multiple facets of their strategic partnership and concurred on establishing a collaborative task force to accelerate progress on the West Coast refinery project.**

- As the name suggests, the project is intended to be established along **India's western coastline, specifically in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.**
  - Secretary (CPV and OIA) Ausaf Sayeed noted that both sides reached an agreement to expand and diversify their hydrocarbon relationship into a comprehensive energy partnership.
  - Conversations encompassed a diverse range of sectors, including defense, energy, security, education, technology, transportation, healthcare, tourism, culture, space, and semiconductors, underscoring the all-encompassing nature of economic cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia.
  - This trilateral initiative, involving **Saudi Arabia's oil giant Aramco, Indian Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), and Indian companies,** is poised to receive a **substantial investment of USD 50 billion.**

### Major Progress Made on India-Saudi Arabia Refinery Project:

- Situated in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, the project is anticipated to possess a **substantial production capacity of 60 million tonnes per annum.**
- Upon completion, it will rank among **the world's largest refineries.**
- The refinery is projected to generate **approximately 1.2 million barrels of oil per day (mb/d)** alongside a variety of petroleum products produced by associated petrochemical plants.
- Three prominent government-owned public sector enterprises in **India's oil and gas sector collaboratively established a joint venture known as RRPCL.**
- RRPCL, formed in 2017, operates as a 50:25:25 joint venture, comprising India's three national oil companies: **Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL).**
- In 2019, Saudi Aramco and the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) also became involved in the project, collectively acquiring a 50% stake.
- The project is estimated to have a set-up cost of approximately Rs 3 lakh crore.

## Charting the Goa Roadmap for Tourism: Future Plans and Initiatives

### Inside Story of the News:

G20 leaders have affirmed the significance of the '**Goa Roadmap**' for tourism as a means to advance the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

- **India's vision of 'Travel for LiFE'** (Lifestyle for Environment) has been integrated into the Goa roadmap.
- This initiative was launched through a collaboration between the Union Ministry of Tourism and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).
- The roadmap is centered around five interconnected priorities that were identified and endorsed by the G20 Tourism Working Group.
- These priorities - **Green Tourism, Digitalization, Skills, Tourism MSMEs, and Destination Management** - provide a strategic framework for countries to align their tourism policies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

### Exploring Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment): Key Insights and Initiatives:

- Mission LiFE, or Lifestyle for Environment, is a global mass movement led by India, aimed at encouraging individual and community actions to protect and preserve the environment.
- It was officially launched by the Indian Prime Minister during the 26<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) held in Glasgow in November 2021.
- The program's goal is to mobilize one billion Indians and individuals from other countries to adopt sustainable lifestyles, making the fight against climate change inclusive, with contributions from everyone based on their capacities. It promotes the spirit of the P3 model, i.e., Pro Planet People.
- Mission LiFE operates on the fundamental principles of '**Lifestyle of the planet, for the planet, and by the planet.**'
- It follows a three-pronged strategy to transform collective attitudes towards sustainability:
  - encouraging individuals to practice simple yet effective environmentally friendly actions in their daily lives (demand),
  - facilitating swift responses from industries and markets to meet changing demand (supply), and influencing government and industrial policies to support sustainable consumption and production (policy).

## Recognizing Excellence in Science: Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards

### Inside Story of the News:

During the inaugural session of the One Week One Lab (OWOL) program hosted by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy

Research (CSIR-NIScPR), the CSIR unveiled the names of the recipients of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) awards for the year 2022.

- Established in 1942, CSIR stands as the largest research and development (R&D) organization in India, with its headquarters situated in New Delhi.
- The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards hold the distinction of being the highest multidisciplinary science honors in India.
- These prestigious awards are named in honor of Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, the visionary founder and director of CSIR, who was also a renowned chemist.
- Each Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award includes a prize amount of Rs 5,00,000 (Rupees five lakh only).
- These awards are bestowed in recognition of noteworthy and exceptional research contributions, whether applied or fundamental, across the following disciplines: (i) Biological Sciences, (ii) Chemical Sciences, (iii) Earth, Atmosphere, Ocean, and Planetary Sciences, (iv) Engineering Sciences, (v) Mathematical Sciences, (vi) Medical Sciences, and (vii) Physical Sciences.

#### Eligibility Criteria for Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award:

- Eligibility for the Prize extends to any Indian citizen actively involved in research within the realm of science and technology, provided they are under the age of 45 as of December 31st in the year immediately prior to the Prize year.
- Additionally, Overseas citizens of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) engaged in research in India also qualify for consideration.
- The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize is conferred based on contributions made primarily within India during the five-year period leading up to the Prize year.

## Nipah Virus: A Lethal Zoonotic Pathogen

### Inside Story of the News:

The **Nipah Virus has resurfaced in Kerala, India**, resulting in two fatalities. This outbreak is the first occurrence of the Nipah Virus in India since 2021 when a case was reported in Kozhikode during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Nipah Virus is a **zoonotic virus, meaning it is transmitted from animals to humans**.
- The causative agent of Nipah Virus encephalitis is an RNA (Ribonucleic acid) virus belonging to the Paramyxoviridae family, Henipavirus genus.
- It is **closely related to the Hendra virus**.
- The virus initially emerged in Malaysia and Singapore in 1998 and 1999.
- It was first observed in domestic pigs and has been detected in various domestic animals, including dogs, cats, goats, horses, and sheep.

- Fruit bats, specifically 'flying foxes' of the genus Pteropus, serve as natural reservoir hosts for the Nipah and Hendra viruses, and they are responsible for the spread of the disease.
- The virus is found in bat urine and potentially in bat feces, saliva, and birthing fluids.
- Human infections with Nipah Virus typically manifest as encephalitis, with symptoms such as fever, headache, drowsiness, disorientation, mental confusion, coma, and sometimes resulting in death.
- Currently, there are no vaccines available for both humans and animals to prevent Nipah Virus infection.
- Treatment primarily involves intensive supportive care for infected individuals.

## Empowering Justice Through the E-Courts Mission Mode Project

### Inside Story of the News:

The Government of India has initiated the e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project across the nation to digitize District and subordinate courts, aiming to enhance access to justice through technology.

- The e-Courts Mission Mode Project is a comprehensive effort covering all of India, overseen and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, specifically focusing on District Courts.
- The E-committee is a body established by the Government of India in response to a proposal from the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India. Its purpose is to assist in formulating a National Policy for the computerization of the Indian Judiciary and provide guidance on technological communication and management-related changes.
- The project's objectives include:
  - Facilitating efficient and time-bound citizen-centric service delivery, in accordance with the e-Court Project Litigant's Charter.
  - Developing, installing, and implementing decision support systems within courts.
  - Automating processes to ensure transparency and accessibility of information for all stakeholders.
  - Enhancing judicial productivity both in terms of quality and quantity, making the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective, predictable, reliable, and transparent.
- The e-Courts Project has progressed through two phases:
  - Phase I, completed in 2015, computerized 14,249 Court sites.
  - Phase II has expanded the computerization to encompass 18,735 District and Subordinate courts thus far.

### Key Initiatives Unveiled as Part of the E-Courts Mission Mode Project:

- The Case Information Software (CIS) utilizes customized Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS) to streamline court processes.
- The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) project, initiated in 2015, serves as a flagship endeavour to monitor the status of pending and resolved cases in High Courts and Subordinate Courts.
- Virtual Courts have been established, with 20 of them located in 16 different States/Union Territories as of July 2022, leveraging video conferencing technology.
- An e-Filing system has been introduced to enable the electronic submission of legal documents.

- It includes advanced features such as online submission of Vakalatnama, e-Signing, and online video recording of oaths.
- eSewa Kendras have been launched to provide e-filing services to both lawyers and litigants, promoting inclusivity and bridging the digital divide.
- The National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes (NSTEP) facilitates technology-enabled process serving and summons issuance, currently operational in 28 High Courts.
- A user-friendly website called Secure, Scalable & Sugamya Website as a Service (S3WAAS) is now available in 13 regional languages, ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities who use assistive technologies.
- Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) initiatives have been implemented to educate Judicial Officers, lawyers, and the public about the available facilities.
- The Union Cabinet approved the third phase of the e-Courts Project on September 13<sup>th</sup>, with a budget allocation of ₹7,210 crore.
- Phase III, spanning four years, focuses on digitizing the entire court record, including legacy and pending cases, at an estimated cost of ₹2,038.40 crore.
- The project aims to enhance the digital infrastructure of courts, establishing 2500 new modern, virtual-friendly courts, 1150 virtual courts, and 4,400 e-Sewa kendras in all court complexes.
- Approximately 3,108 crore documents are slated for digitization as part of this phase.

## Spain Delivers First C-295 Aircraft to Indian Air Force (IAF)

### Inside Story of the News:

On September 13, 2023, India marked the reception of **its inaugural C-295 MW transport aircraft in a formal ceremony held in Seville, Spain**. The Chief of the Air Staff, **Air Chief Marshal VR Choudhari**, presided over the event, which witnessed the official handover of the first C-295 MW transport aircraft from Airbus to the Indian Air Force (IAF).

- The C-295 is classified as a transport aircraft with a carrying capacity ranging from 5 to 10 tonnes. It incorporates state-of-the-art technology.
- Renowned for its robustness and dependability, the C-295 is a versatile and highly efficient tactical transport aircraft capable of fulfilling various mission profiles.
- It is equally proficient at conducting missions during both daylight and nighttime hours, across diverse environments, from arid deserts to maritime zones.
- The aircraft is equipped with a rear ramp door that facilitates rapid troop deployment and cargo para-dropping.
- It can also execute short take-offs and landings on semi-prepared surfaces.
- Notably, the C-295 MW transport aircraft is poised to replace the Indian Air Force's aging fleet of Avro-748 planes.
- These Avro-748 aircraft are British-origin twin-engine turboprop military transport and freighter planes with a 6-tonne freight capacity.

### A Closer Look at the Aircraft's Capabilities:

- The C-295, with its advanced technology, is set to replace the aging Avro aircraft currently in service with the Indian Air Force.
- Its remarkable flight endurance of up to 11 hours ensures it can carry out a diverse range of operations in various weather conditions.
- The aircraft is adept at conducting both day and night combat missions, spanning from arid deserts to maritime environments.
- Its Short Take-off and Landing (STOL) capability enables it to operate from short, unprepared airstrips. Featuring a rear ramp door, it can swiftly respond to situations, including troop deployment and cargo para-dropping.
- Additionally, the aircraft can be transformed into an air tanker capable of delivering up to 6,000 kg of gasoline to fixed and rotary-wing receivers by attaching a detachable refueling kit.
- In its Airborne Early Warning (AEW) variant, it boasts an advanced radar system with 360-degree airspace coverage, offering a comprehensive aerial perspective.
- The C-295 is adaptable to serve as a formidable water bomber, capable of combatting forest fires with a capacity of up to 7,000 liters of water using a flexible roll-on/roll-off system.
- It is equipped for close-air support operations, employing Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) technology and a multi-mission radar that can be weaponized.

## Exploring the Name Game: Bharat vs. India

### Inside Story of the News:

"Bharat" is a name with historical and ideological significance for India, whereas "India" is the constitutional and international designation. The utilization of these names has gained political significance in light of the establishment of an opposition coalition known as INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance).

Recently, the present government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has opted for the term **"President of Bharat" instead of "President of India" on an invitation card for the recent G-20 Summit.** This shift in nomenclature has drawn attention and implies a political aspect to the choice of these names.

- Article 1 of the Constitution uses both names interchangeably: **"India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States."**
- This development has sparked a broader discussion regarding the nation's nomenclature and its historical implications.

### The Historical Background of the Name Bharat:

- The term "Bharat" has deep historical roots and is prominently featured in Hindu scriptures such as the ancient Indian texts, particularly the Puranic literature and the epic Mahabharata and Manusmriti.

- Within the Mahabharata, 'Bharat' denotes the legendary figure King Bharata, a central character in the epic. He was the son of King Dushyanta and Queen Shakuntala, symbolizing unity and strength.
- This name 'Bharat' is closely linked with the legendary ancient king 'Bharata,' recognized as the forefather of the Rig Vedic Bharata tribe.
- Historically, 'Bharat' has been employed to denote the entire Indian subcontinent, underscoring the concept of a shared cultural and national identity that transcends regional boundaries.

#### **The Historical Background of the Name India:**

- The term 'India' has its origins in the word 'Indus,' which specifically denotes the Indus River.
- During the European Age of Exploration, the designation 'India' was adopted to identify the subcontinent.
- European explorers, traders, and colonial powers began using the term 'India' to refer to the area.
- Following its liberation from British colonial rule in 1947, the newly established nation formally adopted the name 'India' as its official title.
- **India's Constitution, ratified in 1950, officially recognized the country as the "Union of India" in Article 1 and "Bharat" in Hindi.**