

## My Notes....

### NATIONAL

#### 5 MORE INDIAN SITES ADDED TO RAMSAR LIST

**Five more Indian sites -- three from Tamil Nadu and one each from Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh --** have been recognised as **wetlands of international importance** under the **Ramsar Convention**, taking the number of such sites in the country to 54, the Union environment ministry said on 26 July 2022.

#### Ramsar Sites in India

- The **five new wetlands** that have been added to the list are the **Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest and Pichavaram Mangrove** in Tamil Nadu, the **Sakhya Sagar in Madhya Pradesh** and **Pala Wetland in Mizoram**.
- India's tally of 54 designated wetlands** is the largest network of Ramsar Sites in South Asia.
- Of the 54 sites, 10 are in UP, 6 in Punjab**, 4 each in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Jammu and Kashmir, 3 each in Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, 2 each in Haryana, Maharashtra, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan and one each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Ladakh, Manipur, Tripura, Uttarakhand, among others.
- The **aim of the Ramsar list** is "to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands, which are important for the conservation of **global biological diversity** and for **sustaining human life**, through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits".
- India is aiming at getting a **Ramsar tag for 75 of its wetlands** on the **75th year of independence**.

#### Definitions of wetlands

- The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** defines wetlands as "**areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters**".
- However, the **Indian government's definition of wetland excludes river channels, paddy fields** and other areas where commercial activity takes place.

#### INDIAN ANTARCTIC BILL PASSED

Lok Sabha on 22 July 2022 passed the **Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022**, which seeks to extend the application of **domestic laws to research stations set up by India** in the Antarctic region. This was the first bill passed this session.

#### What

- The **Antarctic Treaty** was signed in 1959 and **India became a signatory in 1983**.
- The **main objective of the treaty** was that Antarctica is not used for military activity or there is no other misuse, **to ensure the demilitarisation of the area**.
- The other objective was to prevent nations from **indulging in mining activity** or any other illegal activity.
- This is more or less no man's land. No one should use that **land for nuclear explosion**. Basically its (treaty's) objective was to ensure that those countries that have institutions

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- there, they restrict themselves to research or experiments related **to climate and geography**.
- When **this bill is passed**, a committee will be formed headed by Earth sciences secretary and representatives from other ministries.
  - The Bill seeks **to extend the application of domestic laws** to research stations set up by India in the **Antarctic region**.
  - India has two active research stations in the Antarctic — **Maitri and Bharti** — where scientists are involved in research.
  - It also seeks to **constitute a fund for the welfare of Antarctic research work** and protection of the environment of the icy continent.

## OPIUM PRODUCTION OPENED TO PRIVATE PLAYERS

India has opened up the **highly regulated sector** of producing and processing **opium** to private players. **Bajaj Healthcare has become the first company** to win tenders for producing concentrated **poppy straw** that is used to derive **alkaloids** that are the **active pharmaceutical ingredient** in pain medication and cough syrups.

### When has opium been grown in India?

- India has been growing **poppy** at least **since the 15th century**, as per historical records.
- The **British East India Company assumed monopoly** on the cultivation of poppy when the Mughal Empire was on the decline, and **the entire trade was brought under government control by 1873**.
- After India gained independence, the cultivation and trade of opium passed on to the Indian government, with the activity being controlled by **The Opium Act, 1857**, **The Opium Act, 1878**, and **The Dangerous Drugs Act, 1930**.
- At present, the cultivation and processing of poppy and opium is controlled by the **provisions of The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and Rules**.

### What is the process of growing and processing opium in India?

- Due to the **potential for illicit trade and risk of addiction**, the cultivation of opium poppy is strictly regulated in the country, with the crops being allowed to be sown only in **tracts of land notified by the central government in 22 districts** in the states of **Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan**.
- The **cultivation of opium poppy** is strictly monitored — the government uses **satellite images to check for illicit cultivation**.
- The **opium produced in the country** is currently processed entirely at the **Government Opium and Alkaloid Factories** in Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur and Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch.

## SC VERDICT ON THE MONEY LAUNDERING ACT

The **Supreme Court 27 July 2022 upheld the constitutional validity** of the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002**. A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar, on 27 July 2022 read out the operative part of the verdict on a clutch of petitions challenging the law.

### SC verdict

1. The **Enforcement Directorate under the PMLA Act** is not considered “**police**” and hence does not follow provisions of the CrPC for search, seizure, arrest, attachment of properties.
2. The petitioners, arguing that the **ED effectively exercises police powers**, challenged the **constitutionality of provisions** that deal with arrest and seizure etc.
3. This is significant because since the **ED is not a police agency**, statements made by an accused to ED officials is admissible in court. A statement made before a police officer during investigation is inadmissible.
4. The **Supreme Court rejected** the argument that the **ED should be obligated to follow the CrPC** while conducting investigations.
5. The **PMLA Act** stipulates a **twin condition for bail** where the accused has to make a case that **she is prima facie not guilty of the offence** and also satisfy the court that they will not commit any further offence.
6. In a 2017, ruling **Nikesh Tarachand Shah vs Union of India**, the Supreme Court struck down this as unconstitutional.
7. However, in a **subsequent amendment in 2018**, Parliament inserted these provisions again, through the Finance Bill.
8. The petitioners had challenged the **amendments on two grounds** — the **passing of these amendments through a Money Bill**; and a **substantive challenge** that these provisions were essentially declared unconstitutional.

### 11TH AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 2021-22 LAUNCHED

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on 28 July 2022 launched the **eleventh agricultural census** to collect data on **various parameters**, including operational holdings. For the first time, the data will be collected through **smartphones and tablets**. The fieldwork of the **Eleventh Agricultural Census (2021-22)** will start in August 2022, the agriculture ministry said in a statement.

#### What

1. **Agriculture Census** is conducted **every 5 years**, which is being undertaken now after a delay due to corona pandemic.
2. The ministry is implementing an **agriculture census scheme from 1970-71**. The **tenth edition of the census** was conducted with the **reference year 2015-16**.
3. The **agricultural census** is the main source of information on a **variety of parameters**, such as the **number and area of operational holdings, their size, class-wise distribution, land use, tenancy and cropping pattern**, etc.
4. Most of the states have **digitised their land records and surveys**, which will further accelerate the collection of agricultural census data.
5. The **use of digitised land records** and the **use of mobile apps for data collection** will enable the creation of a database of operational holdings in the country.
6. On the occasion, the minister released the '**Handbook on Operational Guidelines for Census**' for the use of states/UTs, and launched the '**Data Collection Portal/App**'.

### FIRST ALL INDIA DLSA MEETING

**Prime Minister** on 30 July 2022 addressed the inaugural session of the **first All India District Legal Services Authorities** in New Delhi. The Prime Minister and DLSAs deliberated on **different aspects** relating to the **judiciary** and **ensuring justice for all**.

### What

1. This **forum** brings **together all DLSAs** to deliberate on different aspects relating to the judiciary and ensuring justice for all.
2. According to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the **first-ever national-level meeting of District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs)** is organised from July 30-31 at Vigyan Bhawan by **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)**.
3. The meeting deliberate on the **creation of an integrated procedure** in order to bring homogeneity and synchronisation across DLSAs.
4. There are a total of **676 District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs)** in the country.
5. They are headed by a **District Judge** who acts as Chairman of the authority. Through **DLSAs** and **State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs)**, various legal aid and awareness programmes are implemented by NALSA.
6. The DLSAs also contribute towards **reducing the burden on courts** by regulating the **Lok Adalats** conducted by **NALSA**.

### Flashback

1. The **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** has been constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** to provide **free Legal Services** to the **weaker sections of the society** and to organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes.
2. In every State, **State Legal Services Authority** has been constituted to give effect to the policies and directions of the NALSA and to give **free legal services** to the people and conduct **Lok Adalats** in the State.
3. In every District, **District Legal Services Authority** has been constituted to implement **Legal Services Programmes** in the District.

## KANGAROO COURT IS RISING

Chief Justice of India **N V Ramana** on 23 July 2022 said that “**rising number of media trials**” are proving to be hurdles towards doing justice, and “**kangaroo courts**” run by the media are causing **harm to the health of the democracy**. ‘**Kangaroo court**’, a phrase that often makes headlines, was also recently thrown around by former US President Donald Trump who called the 6 January committee hearings into his alleged role in the **Capitol Hill riot** as a ‘**kangaroo court**’ inquiry.

### What is a kangaroo court?

1. Oxford Dictionary defines it as “**an unofficial court held by a group of people** in order to try someone regarded, especially without good evidence, as guilty of a crime or misdemeanour”.
2. In a **less literal sense**, it is used to refer to proceedings or an activity where a judgement is made in a manner that is **unfair, biased, and lacks legitimacy**.
3. The **origin of the phrase is not clearly known**, but it is believed to have been used from the **19th Century onwards**. Why the word ‘kangaroo’ is used is also not clear, but there are several theories.
4. Some dictionaries say the **association with the animal could have a relation to Australians**, though the term probably **originated in America**.
5. The Collins Dictionary argues that it could be to evoke a sense that “**justice progresses by leaps and bounds**” in case of kangaroo court verdicts.

## INTERNATIONAL

### THE ICJ'S JUDGMENT OF MYANMAR GENOCIDE

Judges at the **United Nations' highest court** have dismissed **preliminary objections by Myanmar** to a case alleging the **Southeast Asian nation** is responsible for **genocide** against the **Rohingya ethnic minority**. The decision on 22 July 2022 clears the way for the highly charged case, **brought by Gambia**, to go ahead at the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, a process that will take years.

#### What

1. A **small group of pro-Rohingya protesters gathered outside the court's headquarters**, the **Peace Palace**, ahead of the decision with a banner reading: "Speed up delivering justice to Rohingya."
2. The **genocide survivors can't wait for generations.**" One protester stamped on a large photograph of Myanmar's military government leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing.
3. Myanmar's military launched what it called a **clearance campaign in Rakhine state** in 2017 in the aftermath of an attack by a **Rohingya insurgent group**.
4. More than **700,000 Rohingya fled into neighbouring Bangladesh and Myanmar** security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and torching thousands of Rohingya homes.
5. Amid **international outrage** at the treatment of the Rohingya, **Gambia filed the case with the world court** in November 2019, alleging that **Myanmar is breaching the genocide convention**.
6. The nation argued that both **Gambia and Myanmar** are parties to the convention and that all signatories have a duty to ensure it is enforced.
7. **The Gambia, a predominantly Muslim country**, is backed by the **57-member Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**.
8. So far, **only three cases of genocide worldwide have been recognised since World War II: Cambodia (the late 1970s), Rwanda (1994), and Srebrenica, Bosnia (1995)**.

### COVID OUTBREAK ON REMOTE PACIFIC ISLANDS

The **Federated States of Micronesia**, a **small island country in the Pacific** that is home to around **110,000 people**, is one of the latest places on Earth **to experience an outbreak of Covid-19**, after two and a half years of successfully protecting itself from the virus. **Micronesia** had earlier planned to lift **its quarantine restrictions** and open its borders on 1 August 2022.

#### Micronesia's geography

1. Located in the **Western Pacific**, in the **Micronesia sub-region of Oceania**, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) consists of **four island states, Yap, Chuuk, Kosrae and Pohnpei** (where the capital Palikir is located), all in the Caroline Islands.
2. Also known as the Carolines, it is a scattered archipelago of small islands that are divided between **Micronesia** and the **Republic of Palau**.
3. **FSM is composed of 607 islands** and islets with a **total land area of 702 square km**.
4. While this area is rather small, the islands stretch across an estimated **2,900 sq km of sea**, giving the nation the **14th largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** in the world. EEZs grant countries special right over marine resources **up to 370 km** from their coasts.



5. The **Federated States of Micronesia** shares its sea borders with other small island nations and territories in the Micronesia region like **Guam**, the **Republic of Marshall Islands**, **Palau**, **Kiribati**, and the Mariana Islands.
6. Its larger neighbouring states — separated by large swathes of the Pacific Ocean — include the **Philippines in the west**, **Hawaii in the east**, Papua New Guinea and Australia to the south, Japan to the north.

## WTO TRADING SYSTEM AMID FOOD WOES

**India** and **Egypt**, along with **around 90 other countries** have pushed to establish a fairer trading system at the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** and enhance domestic production amid the severe food and nutrition challenges being experienced by many **net food-importing developing countries** and least developed countries.

### What

1. At a meeting of the **Committee on Agriculture** at the WTO, India said that a permanent solution for **food security** is a long overdue mandate and insisted on a solution that the **General Council** can approve without waiting for the next ministerial conference of the multilateral trade body.
2. The **ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific countries) Group**, **G33 Group**, the **African Group**, and least developed countries demanded food security to be at the heart of the future agriculture negotiations.
3. They also stressed that more policy space is needed **to tackle food insecurity**, in particular a permanent solution on public stockholding for **food security** purposes along with a **special safeguard mechanism** to check sudden import surges and price drops.

## ECONOMY

### INDIA'S BIGGEST SPECTRUM AUCTION BEGINS

**India's biggest-ever auction of spectrum** that carries **telephone** and **internet data signals**, began on 26 July 2022 with a total of **72 GHz (gigahertz) of 5G airwaves** worth Rs 4.3 lakh crore on offer. It offers **speeds about 10 times faster than 4G**, **lag-free connectivity**, and can enable billions of connected devices to share data in real-time.

### What

1. Billionaire **Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio**, Sunil Mittal-led **Bharti Airtel**, **Vodafone Idea** and a unit of billionaire Gautam Adani's flagship Adani Enterprises are in the race to bid for 5G spectrum.
2. It powered **ultra-low latency connections**, which allow downloading full-length high-quality video or movie to a mobile device in a matter of seconds (even in crowded areas).
3. **Fifth Generation or 5G** would enable solutions such as **e-health**, **connected vehicles**, **more-immersive augmented reality** and **metaverse experiences**, **life-saving use cases**, and **advanced mobile cloud gaming** among others.
4. The auction is being held for **spectrum in various low** (600 MHz, 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz), **mid (3300 MHz)** and **high (26 GHz)** frequency bands.
5. A total **72 GHz (gigahertz) of spectrum** worth at least **Rs 4.3 lakh crore** has been put on the block for the auction, market watchers do not expect an intense bidding given that plenty of spectrums is on the block.

### What are spectrum auctions?

1. Devices such as **cellphones and wireline telephones require signals to connect** from one end to another. **These signals are carried on airwaves**, which must be sent at designated frequencies to avoid any kind of interference.
2. The **Union government owns all the publicly available assets** within the geographical boundaries of the country, which also include **airwaves**. With the expansion in the number of cellphone, wireline telephone and internet users, the need to provide **more space for the signals arise from time to time**.
3. To sell these assets to companies willing to **set up the required infrastructure to transport these waves** from one end to another, the central government through the DoT auctions these airwaves from time to time.
4. **These airwaves are called spectrum**, which is **subdivided into bands** which have varying frequencies.
5. **All these airwaves are sold for a certain period of time** after which their validity lapses, which is **generally set at 20 years**.

### INDIA'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL GOLD EXCHANGE

Prime Minister on 29 July 2022 launched **India's first International Bullion Exchange - International Bullion Exchange (IIBX)** - in the GIFT city (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City). India International Bullion Exchange Ltd (IIBX) is promoted by **five market institutional investor's** i.e., **CDSL, India INX, NSDL, NSE and MCX**.

#### More about IIBX

1. IIBX is **India's first International Bullion Exchange** set up at the GIFT City, Gandhinagar.
2. It offers a **diversified portfolio of products and technology services** at a cost which the exchange claims is far more competitive than the Indian exchanges as well as other global exchanges in **Hong Kong Singapore, Dubai, London and New York**.
3. This exchange will facilitate **efficient price discovery** with the assurance of responsible sourcing and quality, apart from giving impetus to the **financialisation of gold in India**.
4. The global gold exchange aims to create a **regional bullion hub** that will allow more jewelers to import the precious metal.
5. The bourse will allow **qualified jewelers** to directly import gold, a change from current rules where only some banks and nominated agencies approved by the central bank can do so.
6. Apart from qualified jewellers, **foreign bullion suppliers** who follow **OECD guidelines**, public, and private firms, and **Non-resident individual (NRIs)** are also eligible to become members of the IIBX.
7. **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)** is the regulator of IIBX.
8. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in **Union Budget 2020-21** had announced the setting up of IIBX at IFSCA.

### SCHEMES TO STRENGTHEN MSMES

The government on 21 July 2022 launched **three schemes to strengthen Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** in the **pharmaceutical sector**. The schemes envisage

**technology upgradation**, setting up of **common research centres** and **effluent treatment plants** in clusters for the pharma MSMEs.

#### What

1. The **chemicals and fertilisers ministry** rolled out the schemes under the banner of '**Strengthening Pharmaceuticals Industry**' (SPI).
2. The new schemes have many benefits that will go a long way in making the Indian pharmaceutical industry, **Atma Nirbhar, more resilient and future-ready**.
3. The schemes provide for **credit linked capital and interest subsidy** for technology upgradation of MSME units in pharmaceutical sector, as well as **support of up to Rs 20 crore** each for common facilities, including research centre, testing labs and ETPs, in pharma clusters. **SIDBI** will be the **project management consultant** for implementing the scheme.
4. The **Pharmaceutical Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (PTUAS)** would facilitate pharmaceutical MSMEs with proven track record to upgrade their technology.
5. The scheme has provisions for a **capital subsidy of 10 per cent on loans** up to a **maximum limit of Rs 10 crore** with a minimum repayment period of **three years** or interest subvention of up to 5 per cent (6 per cent in case of units owned by SC/ST) on reducing balance basis.
6. Similarly, **Assistance to Pharma Industries for Common Facilities Scheme (API-CF)** would strengthen the **existing pharmaceutical clusters' capacity for sustained growth**.
7. It provides for **an assistance of up to 70 per cent** of the approved project cost or Rs 20 crore, whichever is less.
8. In case of Himalayan and north-east region, the **grant-in-aid would be Rs 20 crore per cluster** or 90 per cent of the project cost, whichever is less.
9. **Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Promotion and Development Scheme (PMPDS)** would involve preparation of study reports on topics of importance for the Indian pharma and medical device industry. The scheme is aimed at creating a **database of pharma and medical device sectors**.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### INDIA INNOVATION INDEX 2021

**Karnataka, Manipur and Chandigarh** have **topped** in their respective categories in the **third edition of NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index** on 21 July 2022. **Karnataka** has topped again in the '**Major States**' category, followed by **Telangana and Haryana**. **Manipur is leading** the '**North East and Hill States**' category and **Chandigarh is the top performer** in the '**Union Territories and City States**' category.

#### What is the India Innovation Index?

1. **Prepared by NITI Aayog** and the **Institute for Competitiveness**, the India Innovation Index is a **comprehensive tool** for the evaluation and development of the **country's innovation ecosystem**.
2. It **ranks the states and the union territories** on their **innovation performance** to build healthy competition amongst them.
3. **States and Union Territories** were divided into '**17 Major States**', '**10 North-East and Hill States**', and '**9 Union Territories and City States**', for effectively comparing their performance.

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4. Niti Aayog's India Innovation index 2021 examines **innovation capacities** and **ecosystems** at the **sub-national level**.
5. The **third edition** highlights the **scope of innovation analysis** in the country by drawing on the framework of the **Global Innovation Index**.
6. The number of indicators has increased **from 36** (in the India Innovation Index 2020) **to 66** (in the India Innovation Index 2021).
7. The **indicators** are now distributed across **16 sub-pillars**, which, in turn, form **seven key pillars**.

## DECOMMISSIONING OF INS SINDHUDHWAJ

The **Indian Navy's dwindling submarine fleet** got further depleted on 17 July 2022 with the decommissioning of **INS Sindhudhwaj**, a **Kilo Class diesel electric submarine**.

### How many submarines are now in the Indian fleet?

1. There are now a total of **16 submarines in service** in the Indian Navy, including one **nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine** and seven Kilo Class submarines.
2. **All Kilo Class submarines** will be decommissioned in the next few years as they come to an end of their service life.
3. Apart from the **seven Kilo Class submarines**, **four** are **Shishumar Class submarines** of German origin named **INS Shishumar, Shankush, Shalki** and **Shankul** and **four Scorpene or Kalvari Class submarines** of French origin named **INS Kalvari, Khanderi, Karanj** and **Vela**.
4. **Two more Scorpene class submarines** are expected to be commissioned into service by 2023.
5. The Navy has **one Arihant Class ballistic missile submarine** and another one, **INS Arighat**, under production but its date of completion is not known.

### What is the life of a Kilo Class submarine?

1. **INS Sindhudhwaj** was in service of the Indian Navy **for 35 years**.
2. It was commissioned upon acquisition from the **Soviet Union in 1987** under a deal wherein ten Kilo Class diesel-electric submarines were purchased by the Indian Navy.
3. **Kilo Class submarines have a life of 30 years** though after refit they can remain in service for ten more years. At least **three Indian Navy Kilo Class submarines** got a second medium refit in a Naval shipyard in Russia a few years back.
4. The strength of the hull and the state of **repair of the propulsion system** are some of the elements which decide whether a submarine is still fit to be put out at sea after completion of its shelf life and refits.

## NOW GOOGLE STREET VIEW LAUNCHED IN INDIA

**Google Street View** is finally available for **ten cities in India** and is expected to roll out in about 50 more cities by the end of the year. The **360-degree interactive panorama feature of Google Maps** has been available in cities spread over 100 countries since 2007. **In India**, unlike in other markets, **Google Street View** is powered by images from third parties as per the **National Geospatial Policy, 2021**.

### What is Google Street View?

1. **Google Street View** is an **immersive 360-degree view** of a location captured using **special cameras mounted on vehicles** or on backpacks by data collectors moving around the city streets.
2. The images are then patched together **to create a 360-degree view** which users can swipe through to get a detailed view of the location. It is available to view on Android and iOS using the app, or as a web view.
3. **Street View in India is not allowed for restricted areas** like government properties, defence establishments and military areas.
4. **Google Maps gives users the ability to plot a route** and see the **satellite view of the same**, often this does not give a clear idea of the road conditions.
5. With Street View, **users will be able to see exactly how a new destination looks like**, and even explore local businesses before going there.

### Why was Street View not enabled in India?

1. **In 2011**, the Bangalore City Policy stopped vehicles capturing images for Google Street View.
2. Though there was no clarity on why exactly the policy stopped the capture of data, after that **Google did not proceed with the product in India**, even as local companies like **Wonobo** and **MapMyIndia** came up with their own versions of immersive visual maps of some Indian cities.

### How has Street View now been launched in India?

1. The **National Geospatial Policy, 2021** lets **Indian companies collect map data** and license it to others.
2. After this, **Google has tied up with Tech Mahindra and Mumbai-based Genesys International** to enable Street View for 10 Indian cities initially.
3. This is the **first time Google is working with partner data** to enable this feature. In India, the data will be collected and owned by these partners.

## INDIGENOUS AIRCRAFT CARRIER INS VIKRANT

The **Cochin Shipyard** on 28 July 2022 handed over to the Navy the **indigenous aircraft carrier Vikrant**, which was designed by the Navy's in-house Directorate of Naval Design and will likely be commissioned on 15 August 2022. It is named after **India's first aircraft carrier**, the **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Vikrant**, which played a significant role in the **1971 war**.

### More about the Vikrant

1. The **aircraft carrier** is powered by **four gas turbines** totalling 88 MW power and has a maximum **speed of 28 knots**.
2. Built at an overall cost of close to Rs 20,000 crore under a **contract between the defence ministry** and the **shipyard**, the project progressed in three phases ending in May 2007, December 2014 and October 2019 respectively. Its keel was laid in February 2009.
3. With an **overall indigenous content of 76 per cent**, the aircraft carrier is a perfect example of the quest for **Aatma Nirbhar Bharat** and provides a thrust to the government's **Make in India initiative**.
4. With the delivery of Vikrant, **India has joined a select group of nations** having the niche capability to indigenously design and build an aircraft carrier.

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5. **Vikrant** has been built with a **high degree of automation for machinery operation, ship navigation and survivability**, and has been designed to accommodate an assortment of fixed-wing and rotary aircraft.
6. The ship would be capable of operating an air wing consisting of **30 aircraft** comprising **MIG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31, MH-60R multi-role helicopters**, in addition to indigenously manufactured advanced light helicopters and **light combat aircraft**.
7. Using a novel aircraft-operation mode known as **STOBAR (Short Take-Off but Arrested Landing)**, the aircraft carrier is equipped with a ski-jump for launching aircraft, and a set of “**arrester wires**” for their recovery onboard.
8. The aircraft carrier has a **large number of indigenous equipment and machinery** from major industrial houses in the country such as **BEL, BHEL, GRSE**, Keltron, Kirloskar, Larsen & Toubro, Wartsila India etc as well as over 100 micro, small and medium enterprises.

## MONKEYPOX DECLARED A GLOBAL EMERGENCY

The **World Health Organization** said the **expanding monkeypox outbreak** in more than 70 countries is an “**extraordinary**” situation that now qualifies as a global emergency, a declaration on 23 July 2022 that could spur further investment in treating the once-rare disease and worsen the scramble for scarce vaccines.

### What

1. WHO previously declared emergencies for **public health crises** such as the **COVID-19** pandemic, the **2014 West African Ebola outbreak**, the **Zika virus** in Latin America in 2016 and the ongoing effort **to eradicate Polio**?
2. The **emergency declaration** mostly serves as a plea to draw more global resources and attention to an outbreak. Past announcements had mixed impact, given that the **U.N. health agency** is largely powerless in getting countries to act.
3. To date, monkeypox **deaths have only been reported in Africa**, where a more dangerous version of the virus is spreading, mainly in **Nigeria and Congo**.
4. **In Africa, monkeypox mainly spreads to people** from infected wild animals like rodents, in limited outbreaks that typically have not crossed borders.
5. **In Europe**, North America and elsewhere, however, monkeypox is spreading among people with no links to animals or recent travel to Africa.

### Flashback

1. **Monkeypox is a zoonosis**, that is, a disease that is **transmitted from infected animals to humans**. According to the WHO, cases occur close to tropical rainforests inhabited by animals that carry the virus.
2. **Monkeypox virus infection has been detected in squirrels**, Gambian poached rats, dormice, and some species of monkeys.
3. **Human-to-human transmission** is, however, limited — the longest documented chain of transmission is six generations, meaning the last person to be infected in this chain was six links away from the original sick person.

## CHINA LAUNCHES SECOND SPACE STATION MODULES

**China** launched on 24 July 2022 the **second of three modules** needed to complete its new space station, the latest step in **Beijing's ambitious space programme**. The **uncrewed craft**, named **Wentian**, was propelled by a Long March 5B rocket from the Wenchang launch centre on China's tropical island of Hainan.

### What

1. Earlier, **Beijing launched the central module** of its space station **Tiangong** -- which means "**heavenly palace**" -- in April 2021.
2. Almost **18 metres (60 feet) long** and **weighing 22 tons (48,500 pounds)**, the new module has three sleeping areas and space for scientific experiments.
3. It will dock with the existing module in space a challenging operation that experts said will require several high-precision manipulations and the **use of a robotic arm**.
4. This is the **first time China has docked such large vehicles together**, which is a delicate operation.
5. These are **all technical challenges** that the **USSR pioneered with the Mir station in the late 1980s**, but it's new to China.
6. **Wentian** will also serve as a **backup platform** to control the space station in the event of a failure.
7. The **third and final module is scheduled to dock in October**, and Tiangong -- which should have a **lifespan of at least 10 years** -- is expected to become fully operational by the end of the year.
8. **China** has been **excluded from the International Space Station** since 2011, when the **United States banned NASA** from engaging with the country.
9. While China does not plan to use its **space station for global cooperation** on the scale of the ISS, Beijing has said it is open to **foreign collaboration**.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### INDIA'S 15TH PRESIDENT

**Droupadi Murmu**, on 25 July 2022, **took oath** as the **15th President of India**. The **Chief Justice N. V. Ramana** administered the oath of office to Murmu. Hailing from **Odisha's Mayurbhanj district** and coming from a **tribal community**, Murmu started out as a teacher and then **entered into Odisha politics**.

#### More about the President

1. She was **Jharkhand's first female governor**. She was also the **first Odia woman and tribal leader to be named governor** of an Indian state and serve for the full term of her office.
2. A two-term former MLA from Rairangpur, Murmu held on to **her assembly seat in 2009** when the BJD had snapped ties with the BJP weeks ahead of the state elections which were swept by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik
3. Having been born into a **tribal family** that was battling with poverty in one of the **country's most remote and underdeveloped districts**, her childhood had been full of challenges.
4. Overcoming all odds, **she earned her Bachelor's degree in Arts** from Ramadevi Women's College in Bhubaneswar and served as a **junior assistant in the irrigation and power department** in the Odisha government.
5. She began her **political career as the vice-chairman of the Rairangpur NAC**. In addition, the **Odisha Legislative Assembly honoured her with its Best MLA** of the Year 2007 award.
6. She has diverse administrative experience having handled ministries such as **transport, commerce, fisheries** and **animal husbandry** in the **Odisha government**.

### RELOCATION OF TETRAPODS CREATES VIBRATIONS

Residents of **two buildings on Marine Drive**, the iconic 3-km promenade in south Mumbai, complained of “**unusual vibrations**” during **high tide**. The **unusual vibrations**, coinciding with high-tide times, were the result of the **relocation of tetrapods** as part of the **ongoing Coastal Road Project (MCRP)**.

#### What are tetrapods?

1. **Tetra pod in Greek means four-legged**. These are **four-legged concrete structures** that are placed along coastlines **to prevent erosion and water damage**.
2. **Tetrapods were first used in France** in the late 1940s to protect the shore from the sea.
3. They are typically placed together to form an **interlocking but porous barrier** that dissipates the power of waves and currents.
4. These are large structures, sometimes **weighing up to 10 tonnes**, and interlocked tetrapods act as a barrier that remains stable against the rocks when buffeted by waves.
5. **Tetrapods**, each weighing about **2 tonnes**, were placed along Marine Drive in the late 1990s to break and dissipate waves and maintain the reclaimed shoreline in South Mumbai.

### DOPING TEST OF COMMONWEALTH ATHLETES

Over the last decade, **doping has been in the news as many athletes** have landed in trouble after **testing positive for banned substances**. And ahead of the upcoming Commonwealth Games, **Indian sprinter Dhanalaksmi**, who was part of the 4x100m relay team, and **Aishwarya Babu**, the triple-jump national record holder, **failed their dope tests**. It's time to take a closer look at the dope test itself.

#### What is a dope test?

1. The test is conducted **to check the presence of psychoactive drugs** in biological specimens.
2. **Psychoactive drugs** are substances that **affect how the brain works and cause changes in mood**, awareness, thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
3. Doping control (testing) is one tool that **Anti-Doping Organisations (ADOs)** use to level the playing field and protect clean sport, as per the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**.
4. The test can be conducted using **body fluids** such as urine, saliva, sweat and blood or solid specimens like hair and nails. However, **urine is the most common mode** for sample collection in dope testing.
5. There are **two types of tests**. There is an **initial screening test** by an immunoassay, a procedure that's used for **detecting or measuring specific proteins** or other substances. This delivers quick results within a few minutes, similar to a pregnancy test.
6. Then, a **confirmatory test** - a **gas chromatography** and **mass spectrophotometry** one - is conducted. These tests are costly and complex.
7. These samples are collected from athletes and analysed in specialised laboratories as per WADA protocols.

### OUTBREAK CONFIRMED OF MARBURG VIRUS

The first two cases of the **Marburg virus**, a **highly infectious Ebola-like disease**, have been confirmed officially **by Ghana** after test results were verified by a Senegal laboratory. This outbreak is **only the second time** that the disease has been detected in **West Africa**.

#### What is the Marburg virus disease?

1. **Marburg virus disease (MVD)**, earlier known as **Marburg haemorrhagic fever**, is a severe, often fatal **hemorrhagic fever**, according to the WHO.



2. **Marburg**, like Ebola, is a **filovirus**; and both diseases are clinically similar.
3. **Rousettus fruit-bats** are considered the **natural hosts for Marburg virus**. However, African green monkeys imported from **Uganda** were the **source of the first human infection**, the WHO points out.
4. **It was first detected in 1967** after simultaneous outbreaks **in Marburg** and Frankfurt in Germany; and in **Belgrade, Serbia**.
5. The disease has an **average fatality rate of around 50%**. However, it can be as low as 24% or as **high as 88% depending on virus strain** and case management, says the WHO.
6. After the onset of symptoms, which can begin anytime between 2 to 21 days, **MVD can manifest itself** in the form of **high fever, muscle aches and severe headache**.

## NEERAJ CHOPRA SCRIPTS HISTORY AGAIN

Olympic champion **Neeraj Chopra scripted yet another history** as he became **only the second Indian** and **first male track and field athlete** to win a medal in the World Championships by **clinching silver** in the javelin throw final at Hayward Field, Eugene, Oregon, U.S.

### What

1. The **24-year-old Chopra**, who had come into the showpiece as a hot medal favourite, produced a best throw of 88.13m to finish second.
2. The legendary long jumper **Anju Bobby George** was the **first Indian** to win a **medal -- bronze** -- in the World Championships in the 2003 edition in Paris.
3. Chopra began with a **foul throw** and **had 82.39m and 86.37m** to be at fourth after three rounds. He got his **rhythm back with a big fourth round throw of 88.13m**, his fourth career-best effort, to jump to second place, which he held on to till the end. His fifth and sixth throws were fouls.
4. **Chopra had topped the Group A qualification round** and qualified for the final at second place behind Peters by sending his spear to 88.39m for his third career-best throw. **Peters had topped Group B with an effort of 89.91m**.
5. **Chopra had won Indian athletics' maiden gold** in the **Tokyo Olympics** last year.
6. He is **only the second Indian to have won an individual gold in the Olympics**, after shooter **Abhinav Bindra**, who clinched the **yellow metal in 2008 Beijing Games**.

## INDIA AT THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

After a spectacular opening ceremony with **PV Sindhu** and **Manpreet Singh** carrying **Indian flag** at the **2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games**, the medal hopefuls will start their campaign on 29 July 2022 with a host of events lined up. Several Indian athletes will be action in various disciplines including **lawn bowl, gymnastics, table tennis, cycling, swimming**, track and field (triathlon), cricket, squash, hockey, badminton and boxing.

### Facts involving India in Commonwealth Games

1. **India's first CWG medallist** was **wrestler Rashid Anwar** at the 1934 edition of the event in **London**. That was also **India's maiden entry** at the Games. **Only six Indian athletes** participated in the 1934 Commonwealth Games.
2. The **six-member Indian contingent** at the **1934 Commonwealth Games** took part in **only athletics and wrestling disciplines**.
3. **India had to wait until 1958 for its first gold** at the Games when the legendary **Milkha Singh** clinched the yellow metal in Cardiff.
4. So far, **India has bagged a total of 503 medals** in its Commonwealth Games history.
5. **India returned home medal-less** from the CWG only on two occasions -- **1938 (Sydney)** and **1954 (Vancouver)**.

6. The **most successful Indian athlete at the CWG** to this date is **shooter Jaspal Rana**, who has **won 15 medals** in the multi-sport extravaganza.
7. A **strong 322-member Indian contingent** is taking part in the **Commonwealth Games in Birmingham**.
8. The **country's biggest contingent** was during the **Delhi Games in 2010** when a total of **495 athletes** took part in it.

## INDIA SECOND GOLD WITH GAMES RECORD

India's 19-year-old weightlifter **Jeremy Lalrinnunga** on 31 July 2022 won **gold medal** at the **Birmingham Commonwealth Games** adding a **second yellow metal** to India's tally. The **2018 Youth Olympic champion** dominated the **men's 67kg competition** with a total lift of **300kg (140kg+160kg)**, finishing ahead of **Samoa's Vaipava Nevo Ioane**, who managed a total of 293kg (127kg +166kg).

### What

1. This was **India's fifth medal** from the **weightlifting arena** with **Mirabai Chanu (gold)**, **Sanket Sargar (silver)**, **Bidyarani Devi (silver)** and **Gururaj Poojary (bronze)** earning podium finishes on 30 July 2022.
2. The **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** lauded record-breaking weightlifter **Mirabai Chanu** on winning the **country's first gold medal** at the ongoing Birmingham Commonwealth Games.
3. **Chanu**, who won **silver at the Tokyo Olympic Games** last year, defended her Commonwealth gold from the 2018 edition with a record-breaking total of **201kg (88kg + 113kg)** in the 49kg category of women's weightlifting.
4. Her gold took **India's medal tally to three**, with fellow **weightlifters Sanket Sargar** and **Gururaja Poojary** winning a silver and bronze earlier in the day in the men's 55kg and 61kg categories, respectively.
5. Later, **Bidyarani Devi won the silver medal** in the **women's 55kg** and sealed a fourth medal for the country.

## EARTH'S RECORD OF SHORTEST ROTATION

**Planet Earth recently hit a new record** - no, not just reaching **overshoot day**, effectively putting planetary resources at a deficit - but rather of having its shortest day thus far. The planet, whose **rotation is monitored by high-accuracy atomic clocks**, took **1.59 milliseconds less than 24 hours** to complete one rotation on 29 June 2022, followed by **another near-record of 1.5 milliseconds** on 26 July 2022.

### What

1. Now, a **millisecond doesn't seem like a lot in 24 hours**, which has **86,400 seconds** and consequentially, **86.4 million milliseconds**.
2. However, the reduction in time taken for Earth's rotations to complete indicates that the **planet has sped up**, if only a tiny bit.
3. The planet has seen **28 shortest days ever** since atomic clocks, high-accuracy clocks that measure time by monitoring radiation of atoms, **were introduced in the 1960s**. **In 2020**, the **shortest day recorded was 1.47 milliseconds less than 24 hours** on 19 July, while it fluctuated in 2021.
4. Scientists have speculated various possible causes for this differing in time, including **melting and refreezing of polar and mountainous ice caps**, Earth's climate, or the "**Chandler wobble**," a deviation of the planet's axis of rotation, which can be represented by the subtle wobbling seen on a toy as it spins.
5. To compensate for the change in **rotational speeds**, scientists **monitoring atomic clocks** have used the concept of '**leap seconds**' to ensure the **Universal Coordinated**

- Time**, the time standard used to adjust time zones around the world. It essentially involves adding, or '**leaping**' 1 second in the UTC.
6. The **leap second concept was first introduced in 1972** by the **International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service (IERS)** in an attempt to periodically update the UTC due to imprecise observed solar time (UT1) and the long-term slowdown in the Earth's rotation.
  7. But scientists are proposing a **negative leap second** to compensate for the **faster spin of the Earth**, which could potentially wreak havoc on IT systems around the world.

**FACT TO REMEMBER:**

1. **5 MORE INDIAN SITES ADDED TO RAMSAR LIST**
2. **OPIUM PRODUCTION OPENED TO PRIVATE PLAYERS**
3. **SC VERDICT ON THE MONEY LAUNDERING ACT**
4. **11TH AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 2021-22 LAUNCHED**
5. **THE ICJ'S JUDGMENT OF MYANMAR GENOCIDE**
6. **INDIA'S BIGGEST SPECTRUM AUCTION BEGINS**
7. **INDIA'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL GOLD EXCHANGE**
8. **INDIA INNOVATION INDEX 2021**
9. **INDIA'S 15TH PRESIDENT**
10. **EARTH'S RECORD OF SHORTEST ROTATION**

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