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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 19-12-2023

Table of Content

DEBATE AROUND PAID MENSTRUAL LEAVE

In Context

- Recently, **Union Women and Child Development Minister** Smriti Irani **opposed** a policy for **period leaves** in the Parliament.
  - The Minister was of the opinion that it may lead to women in the workforce being **discriminated** against.

About

- **Menstrual Leaves:** Menstrual leave or period leave refers to all policies that allow employees or students to take time off when they are experiencing menstrual pain or discomfort.
  - In the context of the workplace, it refers to policies that allow for both paid or unpaid leave, or time for rest.
- In the Lok Sabha, at least three attempts were made in recent years to bring in private member Bills to propose menstrual leave.

Arguments in Favour of Menstruation Leaves

- **Physical Health:** Menstrual cramps, fatigue, and other symptoms can significantly impact a woman's physical well-being.
  - Providing menstrual leave allows women to take the necessary rest and care for their bodies.
- **Gender Equality:** Menstruation is a biological function unique to women, and providing leave for it contributes to gender equality.
- **Inclusivity:** Menstruation leave fosters a more inclusive and diverse workplace by recognizing the needs of women.
- **Enhanced Productivity:** By allowing women to take leave during their menstrual periods, organizations may see increased productivity in the long run.
- **Destigmatizing Menstruation:** Offering menstrual leave helps break down the stigma surrounding menstruation, promoting open conversations about women's health in the workplace.
- **Examples from other Countries:** Soviet Union was the **first** to enact laws to protect the menstrual health of women workers in 1922.
  - Spain in Europe, Zambia in Africa, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Indonesia grant menstrual leaves.

- **In India,** Bihar (1992) and Kerala (2023) have a leave policy in place as do certain corporates.

Arguments Against Menstruation Leaves

- **Equality Concerns:** Opponents argue that providing special leave for menstruation may perpetuate gender stereotypes and undermine efforts to achieve gender equality in the workplace.
- **Risk of Discrimination:** There is a concern that providing menstrual leave could lead to discrimination against women in hiring decisions or promotions.
- **Operational Challenges:** Critics suggest that introducing menstrual leave policies might create operational challenges for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises.
- **Privacy Issues:** Women might prefer to keep their health-related matters private, and introducing a specific leave category for menstruation could infringe on personal privacy.

Conclusion

- Women are fighting hard for equity in their workplaces and leadership positions and menstruation leave could be held against them and reinforce their physical challenges.
  - Any day, a **flexi-hour provision** and ease of working environment will make them the most productive workforce.
- A broader approach to health and wellness policies, rather than specific menstruation leave policies, may be a more effective and inclusive way to address the needs of all employees.

Menstrual Hygiene and Health schemes in India

- **Menstrual Hygiene Scheme:** It was launched in **2011 for adolescent girls in the age group of 10-19 years** and focussed on the distribution of low cost sanitary napkins in communities through ASHAs.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:** Under it The Ministry of Jal Shakti and Education launched the National Guidelines on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) for rural areas.
- **The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers** implements the **Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janausadhi Pariyojna (PMBJP),** under which the Janaushidhi Kendras have been set up that provides **Oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins named Suvidha at Rs. 1/- per pad only.**

- **The School Health and Wellness Programme** launched jointly by the MoHFW and MoE includes a component on awareness generation on MHM through weekly interactive classroom sessions taken up by trained teachers in schools.

Source: *IE*

LANCET STUDY ON CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Context

- **One in five girls and nearly one in six boys are still married below the legal age of marriage in India(18)**, as per a new study published in the Lancet Global Health recently.

Key Highlights

- Although there have been dramatic declines in child marriage during the last three decades, **there is evidence of stagnation.**

- The all-India prevalence of child marriage in girls **declined from 49.4 per cent in 1993 to 22.3 per cent in 2021** while that among the boys declined from **7.1 per cent in 2006 to 2.2 per cent in 2021.**

- **Variation in the prevalence child marriages:** All states, **except Manipur,** experienced a decline in the prevalence of girl child marriage between 1993 and 2021.
  - Bihar (16·7%), West Bengal (15·2%), Uttar Pradesh (12·5%), and Maharashtra (8·2%) **– accounted for more than half of the total burden of child marriages in girls.**
  - **For boys,** Gujarat (29%), Bihar (16·5%), West Bengal (12.9%), and Uttar Pradesh (8.2%) accounted for more than 60 per cent of the burden.

About the Child marriage

- Child marriage is defined as **marriage in individuals younger than 18 years for men and women.**

- According to **National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) 2019-21,** women in the age group of 20-24 years who were married before they turned 18**, are **14.7% in urban and 27% in rural areas.**

Evolution of Marriage Age in India

- **Pre-Colonial Era:** No codified minimum age and marriage ages varied widely across castes, communities, and regions.

- **Colonial Period: The Sharda Act (The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929)** marked the first attempt to set a minimum age for marriage, initially at **14 for girls and 18 for boys.**

- **Post-Independence India:** The Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950 did not explicitly address child marriage.
  - **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) of 2006** set the **legal minimum age for marriage- 18 years for females, and 21 years for men.**

Recent Government Initiatives
• **Ms Jaya Jaitly Task Force, 2020:** to examine the correlation of age of marriage and motherhood with: health, medical well-being, and nutritional status of mother and child, etc.
• **The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021**: It was introduced for raising the age of marriage of women to **21 years** to make it at par with the men.

Impact of Child marriage on children

- **Health risks:** Early pregnancy increases the risk of complications and maternal mortality.

- **Limited education and opportunities:** Girls married young often drop out of school, hindering their education and future career prospects.

- **Psychological trauma:** Child marriage can lead to emotional distress, social isolation, and increased vulnerability to domestic violence.

- **Poverty and economic dependency:** Child brides contribute less to the household income, perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty.

Combating child marriage

- **Empowering girls:** Education, economic opportunities, and access to healthcare can equip girls to resist child marriage.
  - **National Commission for Women studies** have shown that **access to education has delayed the marriage age**.
- **Changing social norms:** Addressing community attitudes and promoting awareness about the negative consequences of child marriage are essential.
- **Strong legislation:** Raising the legal minimum age for marriage and enforcing laws against child marriage are crucial.
- **International cooperation:** Collaborative efforts are needed to share best practices and address cross-border issues.

Way Ahead

- There remains an urgent **need for strengthened national and state-level policy** to eliminate child marriage.
- The **Sustainable Development Goal target 5.3** aims to **end child marriage in girls by 2030**.
  - For girls, **the annual rate of reduction in the prevalence of child marriage must increase from 1.9 per cent to 23 percent** globally to meet the SDG target, as per the Lancet report.

Source: *IE*

REVISED CRIMINAL LAW BILLS

Context

- The Union Home Minister introduced three revised criminal reform Bills in Lok Sabha to replace the British-era criminal laws after withdrawing the three Bills that were introduced previously.

Background

- Earlier three Bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860; the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

- The IPC will be replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023; the CrPC of 1973 will be replaced by the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023 whereas the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 will be replaced by the Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023.

- The new Bills incorporate the changes recommended by a parliamentary committee.

Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023

- **UAPA's definition of 'terrorist act' adopted:** Section 113 of the revised Bill has modified the definition of the crime of terrorism to entirely adopt the existing definition under Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).
  - Damage to monetary stability of India by way of production or smuggling or circulation of counterfeit Indian paper currency, coin or of any other material has also been added as a terrorist offense.
  - The offense is punishable with death or imprisonment for life.

- **Cruelty defined:** The Bill proposes to define "cruelty" against a woman by her husband and his relatives, which is punishable with a jail term of up to three years. The newly inserted section 86 defines 'cruelty' as
  - Wilful conduct likely to drive a woman to commit suicide or cause grave injury or danger to the life, limb, or health (whether mental or physical);
  - Harassment of a woman to coerce her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for property or valuable security.

- **Unauthorized publication of court proceedings:** The newly inserted section 73 stipulates that those who print or publish 'any matter' concerning court proceedings in rape or sexual assault cases without permission would be punished with a two-year jail sentence and a fine.
  - The Explanation to this provision clarifies that reports on High Court or Supreme Court judgments would not amount to an offense within this provision.

- **Mental illness replaced by 'unsoundness of mind':** The revised Bill replaces the term 'mental illness' with 'unsoundness of mind' in a majority of the provisions.

- It has also added the term 'intellectual disability' along with unsoundness of mind in section 367.
- **Enhancement of minimum punishment for 'mob lynching':** The revised Bill has removed the minimum punishment of seven years and now penalises mob lynching at par with murder.
- **Petty organized crime:** The revised Bill includes a more precise definition; 'Whoever, being a member of a group or gang, either singly or jointly, commits any act of theft, snatching, cheating, unauthorised selling of tickets, unauthorised betting or gambling, selling of public examination question papers or any other similar criminal act, is said to commit petty organised crime.'

Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023

- **Community service defined:** The original Bill introduced the concept of 'community service' as a form of punishment for petty offences.
  - The redefined Bill defines it under Section 23 as, 'work which the Court may order a convict to perform as a form of punishment that benefits the community, for which he shall not be entitled to any remuneration.'
  - A Magistrate of the First or Second Class has been specifically empowered to impose this punishment, to encourage a more reparative approach to minor crimes.
- **Handcuffing:** It should be restricted to select heinous crimes like rape and murder instead of extending its usage to persons who have been accused of committing 'economic offences.'
  - In another significant change, the power of the police to use handcuffs has been expanded beyond the time of arrest to include the stage of production before court as well.
- **Proceedings via audio-visual means:** Certain types of proceedings mentioned in the earlier draft have been deleted, including inquiries, trials before court of sessions, trials in summary cases, plea bargaining, and trials before High Courts.
- **Preventive detention powers:** The detained person must be produced before the Magistrate or released in petty cases within 24 hours.

Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023

- **Admissibility of electronic evidence:** Section 61 of the original Bill allowed the admissibility of electronic evidence by underscoring that an electronic record shall have the same legal effect as a paper record.

- This provision has now been revised to state that the admissibility of an electronic record is subject to section 63 (corresponding to the requirement of a certificate under section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act).

Source: *TH*

TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL, 2023

Context

- Recently, the Telecommunications Bill, 2023, introduced in the Lok Sabha.

About the Telecommunications Bill, 2023

- It proposes the first comprehensive rewrite of telecommunications law, **consolidating spectrum rules, right of way, dispute resolution between service providers and the Department of Telecommunications or local governments**, and other aspects of telecom regulation into one fresh statute.
- It seeks to **repeal** the *Indian Telegraph Act (1885), Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act (1933) and The Telegraph Wire (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950*.
  - It also amends the *Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997*.

What are the purpose of the Bill:

- **Legal and Regulatory Framework:** It seeks to create a legal and regulatory framework for a safe telecom network.
  - It seeks **to remove Over The Top (OTT) apps** like WhatsApp, Telegram etc., from the definition of telecommunication.
- **On National Security:** It seeks to give the power to the **Government (Union or a State)** or **any officer** authorised by the Government **to suspend, take control of, or manage any telecommunication service or network** in case of a public emergency including disaster management, or in the interest of public safety or over **matters of national security**.
- **Spectrum Allocation:** It proposed that the government should be given the right to **administratively allocate satellite spectrum**.
  - Till now, telecom companies have taken part in auctions and have presented bids to win the spectrum.

> **The National Frequency Allocation Plan:**
>
> • It is an **administrative document** that sets aside airwaves for different purposes, and **has now been given statutory force**.
>
> • Auctions will be the **'preferred' mode of allotment of spectrum**, while administrative allotment will be used in cases such as satellite TV and broadband.

• **Promoting Competition:** The bill proposes that the government be given power to take steps such as entry fee waiver, licence fee, penalty etc., in order to ensure there is competition in the telecom sector.

• **Appointments to TRAI:** Bill seeks to allow appointment of **private sector corporate executives** for the role of TRAI chairperson.

   ◆ Individuals with **at least 30 years of professional experience** to serve as the **Chairperson;**

   ◆ Individuals with **at least 25 years of professional experience** to serve **as members**.

• **Right of way:** Facility providers may seek a right of way over public or private property to establish telecom infrastructure. It must be provided on a non-discriminatory and non-exclusive basis to the extent possible.

• **Digital Bharat Nidhi:** The Bill renamed the **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**, established under the **1885 Act** to provide for telecom services in underserved areas, as **Digital Bharat Nidhi** and allows its use for research and development.

• **Offences and Penalties:** Providing telecom services without authorisation, or gaining unauthorised access to a telecom network or data, are punishable with **imprisonment up to three years**, a **fine up to two crore rupees, *or both***.

   ◆ Breaching terms and conditions of authorisation is punishable with a civil penalty up to five crore rupees.

• **Adjudication process:** The Union government will appoint an **adjudicating officer** (must be of the rank of joint secretary and above) to conduct inquiries and pass orders against civil offences under the Bill.

   ◆ Orders of the adjudicating officer **may be appealed before the Designated Appeals Committee** (members will be officers of the rank of **at least Additional Secretary**) **within 30 days**.

   ◆ Appeals against the orders of the Committee, in connection to breach of terms and conditions, may be filed with the **Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** within 30 days.

What are the concerns?

• **Suspension of Internet Services:** The Telecom Bill (2023) proposes to empower the government **to 'take temporary possession'** of the network, **without clarifying the 'temporary possession'**.

   ◆ Governments have previously taken steps such as suspending internet services in areas marred by violence till peaceful conditions prevail.

• **Weakening TRAI:** The Bill may result in TRAI becoming just a rubber stamp, as it **considerably dilutes the regulator's powers**.

• **Privacy:** The Bill fails to articulate the spirit and essence of **judicial pronouncements on privacy (the K.S. Puttaswamy judgement)** and data protection.

   ◆ There are **threats against encryption**, especially end-to-end encryption after **removing Over The Top (OTT) apps** like WhatsApp, Telegram etc., from the definition of telecommunication.

Conclusion

• Telecommunication sector is a key driver of economic and social development. It is the gateway to digital services.

• The nature of telecommunication, its usage and underlying technologies have undergone massive changes, especially in the past decade.

• Security of our country is vitally dependent on the safety of telecommunication networks.

• Therefore, there is a need to create a legal and regulatory framework that focuses on a safe and secure telecommunication network that provides for digitally inclusive growth.

Source: *TH*
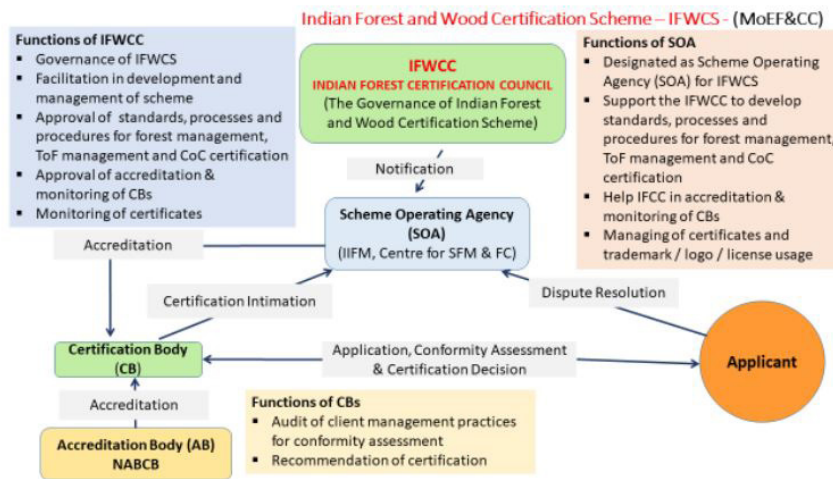
INDIAN FOREST & WOOD CERTIFICATION SCHEME (IFWCS)

In Context

- **The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** has launched the **Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS).**

About IFWCS

- **Aim:** It is the national forest certification scheme and is designed to promote **sustainable forest management and sustainable management of Trees outside Forests in the country.**

- **Voluntary:** It offers **voluntary third-party certification** designed to promote agroforestry in the country.
  - It will offer an **alternative to the private foreign certification** agencies that have been operating in the Indian market for the last two decades.
- **Scope:** IFWCS is applicable across the country, **both in forest areas and Trees outside Forests (TOF) plantations** on government, private, agroforestry and other lands.
  - The certification is applicable for **both timber and non-timber forest produce (NTFP).**

Overview of Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS)

- **Need:** Europe and the United States happen to be the largest export markets for India's forest-based products, particularly handicraft and furniture.
  - These markets have been tightening the rules for import of forest products because of greater sensitivity around deforestation on climate change concerns.
- **Significance:** The Scheme can provide **market incentives** to various entities that adhere to responsible forest management.
  - This includes state forest departments, individual farmers, or Farmer Producer Organizations engaged in agroforestry.
  - It will bring **greater trust and transparency** into the processes, and grant greater acceptability to Indian forest-based products in international markets.

- **Compliance and Legal Status:** The certification may be recognized by various regulatory authorities but in no way is intended to serve as legal advice on compliance with any law, regulation or requirement.
- **Basis:** The Forest Management certification is based on the **Indian Forest Management Standard,** which is an integral part of the **National Working Plan Code 2023,** launched this year.
- **Advisory Body:** It will be overseen by the **Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council,** which will act as a multistakeholder advisory body.
  - The Council is represented by members from eminent institutions such as Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Forest Survey of India, Indian Institute of Forest Management including representatives from the Ministries.

- **Operating Agency: Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal** will act as the scheme operating agency.
- **Certification Body:** The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies under the Quality Council of India will accredit the certification bodies which will carry out independent audits.

National Working Plan Code-2023

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate change released the "National Working Plan Code-2023" **for scientific management of forests** and evolving new approaches.
- National Working Plan Code **was first adopted in 2004** with a subsequent **amendment in 2014**.
  - It brought **uniformity and acted as the guiding principle** for the preparation of the working plan for scientific management of different forest divisions of the country.
- **National Working Plan Code-2023** deals in detail with the essentials of forest management planning, incorporating the principles of sustainable management of forests.
  - It has prescribed state forest departments to engage in continuous data collection and its updation in a centralized database.

Source: *IE*

USE OF MRNA AS MEDICINE

Context

- The therapeutic use of mRNA has fueled great hope to combat a wide range of incurable diseases.

What is mRNA?

- **mRNA,** stands for **messenger RNA**, is a form of nucleic acid which carries genetic information.
- mRNA, in cells, carries codes from the DNA in the nucleus to the sites of protein synthesis in the cytoplasm (the ribosomes).
  - Information in DNA cannot be decoded directly into proteins, it is first transcribed, or copied, into mRNA.
- Each molecule of mRNA encodes the information for one protein, with each sequence of three nitrogen-containing bases in the mRNA specifying the incorporation of a particular amino acid within the protein.

Benefits of mRNA- based medicine

- **Scalability:** scientists can make large amounts of mRNA in the lab as the method to make one mRNA is the same for all mRNAs, unlike typical drugs where each compound has its own unique chemistry and requires different manufacturing methods.
- **Meet the needs of the patient:** Cells have the natural ability to destroy mRNAs, when they aren't needed. Since mRNAs aren't permanent, doses can be easily changed to meet the changing needs of the patient.
- **Cure for a large number of diseases:** Many diseases arise from cells making the wrong protein, a mutant version of protein or too little of the normal protein. If scientists can deliver a corrected version of the mRNA to enough affected cells, then the mRNA will provide the means to make the proper protein.

Future of mRNA-based medicine

- mRNA-based medicine can be used to **treat heart disease, neurode- generative disease, bone loss** etc.
- mRNA drugs can increase the **formation of new blood vessels**, which can improve wound healing in diabetic patients who have poor blood circulation and higher amputation risks.
- It can also be used to treat **propionic acidaemia,** a disease where children have low levels of two liver proteins that normally prevent toxic by-products from building up in the body.

Way Ahead

- The ability to easily customize and produce mRNA increases their potential as effective, personalized therapies – with fewer side effects – that can help many people.
- However, therapeutics based on mRNA technology are still in their infancy and hurdles remain as mRNA is short-lived in cells and protein is only made for a short time. Increasing the lifespan of mRNA in cells would reduce the amount of mRNA required.

Source: *TH*

FACTS IN NEWS

SHREE MANDIRA PARIKRAMA PROJECT (SMPP)

In News

- The Shree Mandira Parikrama Project (SMPP) is poised to be unveiled in January 2024 .

About Shree Mandira Parikrama Project (SMPP)

- Being developed at an investment of Rs 943 crore,
- It will create an unobstructed 75-metre corridor around the outer wall of the **Jagannath Temple.**
- It abuts Meghanada Pacheri (grand boundary around Jagannath Temple) is basically the security zone plan.
  - It is broadly divided into nine zones on the northern, southern, and western side.
- **Features:** The SMPP includes a 7-metre green buffer zone and a 10-metre pedestrian-only Antar (inner) Pradakshina that will be used for parikrama (clockwise circumambulation) of the temple.
  - The eight-meter outer circumambulation path would be covered by trees on either side. There will be a 10-meter public convenience zone.

Shri Jagannath Puri Temple
- It is one of the most impressive monuments of the Indian State Odisha and It is one of the most revered Vaishnava sites of worship in India.
- It was constructed by a famous king of **Ganga Dynasty Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva** dating back to the **12th century** at the seashore Puri.
- The main temple of Shri Jagannath is an impressing and amazing structure constructed in **Kalinga architecture**, with a height of 65 meters placed on an elevated platform.
- It is one of the Dhamas (Holiest of the holy place) out of four Dhamas i.e. Puri, Dwarika, Badrinath & Rameswar, in India.
- It has been the epicenter of Jagannath cult and sees pilgrims flocking the temple town of Puri from all corners of the world throughout the year.
- There are so many festivals of Sri Jagannath during the year observed in Puri.
◆ The most important festivals are the World famous Rath Yatra (Car Festival) & Bahuda Yatra.

Source: *TH*

INDIA'S FIRST WINTER ARCTIC EXPEDITION

News

- **Raman Research Institute (RRI) from India** will participate in the **first winter Indian expedition to the Arctic region.**

About

- RRI said that this will be for the first time that **researchers will examine the characterisation of the radio frequency environment in the Svalbard region** of the Arctic.
- The survey **will help astronomers assess the suitability of this uniquely located region**, for carrying out precision astronomy measurements.

Do you know?
- India has its own research station- **Himadri** in the Arctic region since 2008.

SARAS

- RRI have been working on the development of **SARAS (Shaped Antenna measurement of the background Radio Spectrum)** series of experiments.
- SARAS aims **to study the faint cosmological signal** from **hydrogen**, commonly referred to as the '**21-cm signal',** emerging from the **Cosmic Dawn and the Epoch of Reionization.**
  - Cosmic Dawn denotes the **period when the first stars and galaxies were born in the universe.**
  - The "Epoch of Reionization" is a **period in the history of the universe that likely arose as a result of the arrival of the first stars and galaxies.**
    - Prior to this, the universe was dark, suffused with a dense, obscuring fog of primordial gas.

The Raman Research Institute
- **Founded in: 1948,** by the Indian physicist and Nobel Laureate, **Sir C V Raman**, to continue his studies and basic research after he retired from the Indian Institute of Science.

- In 1972, the RRI was restructured to become an aided **autonomous research institute receiving funds from the Department of Science and Technology** of the Government of India.
- **Main areas of research**: Astronomy & Astrophysics, Light & Matter Physics, Soft Condensed Matter, and Theoretical Physics.

Source: *TH*

INDIA'S FIRST-EVER HIMALAYAN AIR SAFARI

Context

- Tourists in Uttarakhand are able to fly in a gyrocopter enjoying the natural beauty of the Himalayas.

About:

- The Uttarakhand government aims to revolutionise state tourism with the launch of **India's first-ever Himalayan Air Safari** using **compact, agile aircraft known as gyrocopters.**
- Plans are underway to develop specialised airstrips across various locations in collaboration with the **Civil Aviation Department and district authorities**.

Himalayan Air Safari Scheme:

- It is a **part of the Breakfast Tourism initiative** started by the Tourism department of Uttarakhand.

Significances:

- It connects **tourists to the lesser-known places** in Uttarakhand.
- Tourists will fly from one place to another in a gyrocopter enjoying the natural beauty of the Himalayan peaks and rivers.

Gyrocopters:

- These are **introduced** by the **Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board**, in collaboration with **Rajas Aerosports and Adventures Pvt Ltd.**

- These are **equipped** with the latest technology and imported from Germany, are expected to revolutionise the way tourists experience the breathtaking landscapes of the Himalayan region.

Source: *IE*

KETAMINE

In News

- In recent years, ketamine has been a subject of widespread debate due to its growing use for treating depression and other serious mental health issues.

About Ketamine

- It is an **anaesthetic** that has been listed as a **hallucinogen** by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.
  - It's referred to as a **"dissociative anaesthetic hallucinogen"** because it creates a feeling of detachment from pain and the environment.
- In the US, ketamine was **first used as an anaesthetic** for animals in the 1960s.
  - Around a decade later, the US Food and Drug Administration approved it for humans.
- **Usage :** The drug's use for treating depression and other mental illnesses is recent.
- It is also used as a recreational drug, popularly known as K or Special K among clubgoers.
- **Effects :** Pleasant visualisations, sometimes accompanied by a sense of existing outside themselves and melding with the universe.
  - It affects brain receptors that traditional antidepressants do not target.
  - If taken in high doses, Some may find it difficult to move and may feel numb, and can experience more graphic hallucinations.

- **Safety :** ketamine is safe to consume and very effective in treating mental illnesses if taken only for medicinal purposes and in the right doses
  - ◆ The drug can be addictive and, when taken chronically in high doses, can cause severe bladder damage.
  - ◆ There are indications that abuse may also lead to cognitive impairment.

Source:*IE*

VALUE INVESTING

In Context

- **Value investing** is a widely used economic term.

About

- **Value investing** refers to a style of investing that involves **buying assets** such as stocks, bonds, real estate etc. at a price that is **below their intrinsic value** hoping to sell them at a higher price in the future.
- **American economist Benjamin Graham** is considered to be the father of this style of investing.

Difference between Philosophy of Value Investors and Efficient Market Theorists

- **Efficient market theorists** argue that the price at which an asset is traded in the market closely tracks its intrinsic value.
- Efficient market theorists believe that markets are so efficient that **all information that is relevant to an asset is quickly reflected in its price,** thus offering very little opportunity for value investors to purchase undervalued assets.
- Value investors, on the other hand, believe that price and intrinsic value can differ for long periods of time, thus offering investors opportunities to **make profits by buying assets below their intrinsic value.**

Source: TH

NATIONAL GEOSCIENCE DATA REPOSITORY PORTAL

Context

- The Ministry of Mines is to launch the National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) Portal in New Delhi.

About

- **NGDR** is a comprehensive online platform for accessing, sharing, and analyzing geospatial information across the nation.
- The NGDR initiative is spearheaded by the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** and **Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N)**.
- **Significance:** It represents a significant leap forward in democratizing critical geoscience data, empowering stakeholders across industries and academia with unprecedented access to invaluable resources.

Geological Survey of India

- **GSI** was set up in **1851**. It is an attached office of the **Ministry of Mines.**
- **Headquartered:** Kolkata
- **Functions:** Creation and updation of national geoscientific information and mineral resource assessment.
  - ◆ It also emphasizes on systematic documentation of all geological processes, both surface and subsurface, of India and its offshore areas.
- **Methods employed:** These objectives are achieved through ground surveys, air-borne and marine surveys, mineral prospecting and investigations, multi-disciplinary geoscientific, geo-technical, geo-environmental and natural hazards studies, glaciology, seismo-tectonic study and carrying out fundamental research.

Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N)

- **BISAG -N** is an Autonomous Scientific Society registered under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.
- **Mandate:** To undertake technology development & management, research & development, facilitate National & International cooperation, capacity building and support technology transfer & entrepreneurship development in the area of geo-spatial technology.
- BISAG is located at **Gandhinagar, Gujarat.**

Source: *PIB*