



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Autonomy of a woman to abort and the Legislative Framework

Syllabus: GS 2/Polity and Governance

In News

- The Supreme Court is hearing a married woman's request to end her 26-week pregnancy.
 - The case has travelled to two different Benches of the SC, raising crucial questions on the decisional autonomy of a woman to abort, and the legislative framework.

Laws on abortion in India :Evolution

- Before the enactment of the MTP Act in 1971, the medical termination of pregnancy was governed by the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**
- **In 1971, the MTP Act** was enacted by Parliament as a "health" measure, "humanitarian" measure and "eugenic" measure, to decriminalise abortion in certain defined circumstances and under due supervision of registered medical practitioners.
- **Need for Amendments :** The 1971 law failed to meet the needs of the changing times and advancements in medical science as several women, including rape survivors, mentally incapacitated and women undergoing unwanted pregnancies due to contraceptive failures, started approaching courts to seek approval for terminating their pregnancy beyond the prescribed gestational period of 20 weeks.

- **MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021:** It had introduced a key change in Section 3 by extending the upper limit for termination of pregnancy from **20 to 24 weeks**.
 - It allows termination of pregnancy in three stages.
 - Termination of pregnancy up to **20 weeks** is allowed on the advice of one doctor.
 - If a pregnancy is **20-24 weeks**, the right to seek abortion is determined by two registered medical practitioners as an exception, but only under certain categories.
 - **After 24 weeks**, a medical board must be set up in “approved facilities”, which may “allow or deny termination of pregnancy” only if there is substantial foetal abnormality.
- **Section 416 of CrPC** also provides for postponement of the death sentence awarded to a pregnant woman.

Court's observations

- The **landmark 1973 US Supreme Court verdict in Roe v Wade** that made abortion a constitutional right allows abortion up to the point of foetal viability, that is, the time after which a foetus can survive outside the womb.
 - Foetal viability in 1973 was pegged at 28 weeks (7 months), which is now with scientific advancement lower at 23-24 weeks.
- **In 2005, Rajasthan High Court in Nand Kishore Sharma versus Union of India** rejected a challenge to the constitutional validity of the MTP Act on the grounds that it violates the fundamental right to life of an unborn child.
- **In 2022**, The Supreme Court ruled that single and unmarried women with pregnancies between **20 and 24 weeks are entitled to access** the same safe and legal abortion care as married women
- There are also instances in which courts have overruled the decision of the medical board to allow termination.

Government's Stand

- The Union of India stepped in to emphasise that reproductive rights are subject to a legal regime and that a mother's right cannot be allowed an absolute march over an unborn child's right to life when the State was obligated and willing to provide all possible medical, psychological and social assistance, including adoption.

Challenges

- In India, besides patriarchal mindsets and social stigma, unmarried and single **women face greater hurdles** in exercising a right over their bodies, thus leading to higher risks and complications.
- Many women are forced to go to quacks when there are unwanted pregnancies.
 - unsafe abortions are a leading cause of maternal mortality.
- The National Family Health Survey 5 (2019) pegs spousal violence (physical and sexual) faced by women in the age group 18-49 years at 29.3%.
- The Indian legal framework on reproductive rights tilts to the side of the woman's autonomy to decide and choose more than towards the rights of the unborn child.

Suggestions and Way Forward

- We must also think of the rights of the unborn child. Women's autonomy is important of course.

- Women's has a right under Article 21...but equally, we must be conscious of the fact that whatever is done will affect the right of the unborn child
- As much as the court respected the woman's right to reproductive autonomy, it could not be oblivious to the rights of her unborn child.
- There is no doubt that our law is far ahead of other countries. We will not have a Roe versus Wade situation here.

Source:[IE](#)

First Edition of IndiaAI Report

Syllabus: GS3/ Economy, Employment, GS3/ Science & Technology, AI In News

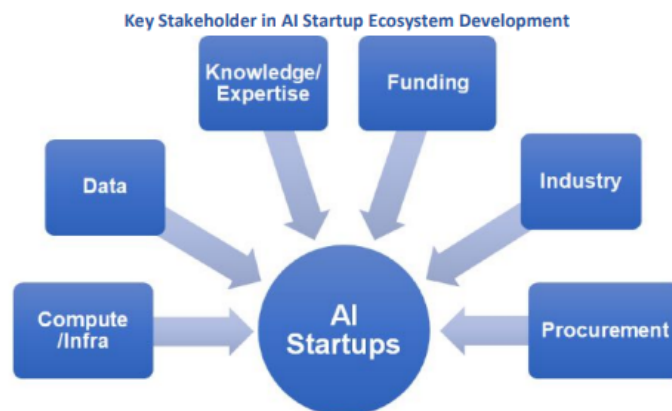
- Seven working groups of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) submitted the **first edition of IndiaAI report**.

More about the News

- The report is set to serve as **India's guiding roadmap for the development of its AI ecosystem**. Through this roadmap IndiaAI will work to be a kinetic enabler of the **1 trillion dollar digital economy**.

Background

- AI will be the kinetic enabler of **India's digital economy** and make Governance smarter and more data-led. AI is expected to add USD 967 Bn to the **Indian economy by 2035** and USD 450–500 billion to India's GDP by 2025, accounting for **10% of the country's USD 5 trillion GDP target**.
- The Program is in line with the inclusive development philosophy of '**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Prayas**'.
- India has **ranked 1st in AI Skill Penetration** and 1st in the Number of GitHub AI Projects as per the **Stanford AI Index report 2023**.



India AI program

- IndiaAI has a **mission-centric approach** which ensures a precise and cohesive strategy to **bridge the gaps in existing AI ecosystem** viz-a-viz Compute infrastructure, Data, AI financing, Research and Innovation, targeted Skilling and institutional capacity for Data to maximize the potential of AI for advancing India's progress.
- The India AI program will comprise **several key components**.
 - **India Datasets Platform:** It will be one of the largest collections of anonymized datasets that will be used by Indian researchers to train their

multi parameter models. The IDP is being developed as a federal structure to accommodate data providers from various ministries and departments.

- **India AI Compute Platform:** It is a public-private partnership project that will create substantial GPU (Graphics processing unit) capacity for our startups and researchers.
- **IndiaAI Centres of Excellence:** They will bring together experts from academia, industry, and research entities to work on cutting-edge research to create high-quality AI solutions and to develop scalable solutions across sectors.
 - The CoEs will play a **pivotal role in positioning India as a global leader** in a fast-evolving AI landscape through impactful research and innovative solutions to critical problems faced by the country.
- **Institutionalising NDMO:** A detailed mechanism to establish the NDMO as a non-statutory independent agency has been proposed. The NDMO will work like a regulator in several respects of its operations.
- **INDIAAI Future Design:** The objective of this working group is to assess and design funding mechanisms for AI startups to enhance AI innovation in India. The vision is to build the next 100 AI unicorns in the country through the India AI program.
- **INDIAAI Future Labs Compute:** The objective of this working group is to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of AI computational resources and their limitations in India. It also expands on the challenges and opportunities associated with intensifying AI compute capacity and its potential impact on AI applications in reshaping India's future.

AI Scenario (2023)

- Artificial Intelligence will occupy the centre stage across **all industries and sectors** from pharma to defence, automobile, environment and sustainability, healthcare, and IT to name a few. Consumer behaviour will drive brand experience using AI.
- According to IDC research, worldwide spending by governments and businesses on AI technology is expected to **top \$500 billion in 2023**.
- AI governance will become a board-level topic together with cybersecurity and compliance, which will include explainability, fairness audits of high-impact algorithmic decision-making, environmental impacts of AI, etc.
- AI is worth \$120 billion as a market, it is growing by more than 20% each year, and is expected to reach a total of \$1.5 trillion by 2030.

Generative AI

- **Generative AI** is becoming increasingly popular in the business world, due to three primary factors: improvements in models, better and more data, and greater computing capacity. Recent years have seen an increase in sophistication in machine learning models.
- The **generative AI technologies** currently in focus, such as **ChatGPT, DALL-E, and LaMDA**, are distinguished by three main characteristics: 1) their generalised rather than specialised use cases, 2) their ability to generate novel, human-like output rather than merely describe or interpret existing information,

and 3) their approachable interfaces that both understand and respond with natural language, images, audio, and video.





Ethics & Threats of AI

- Poorly constructed AI projects built on biased or inaccurate data can have harmful consequences on minority groups and individuals. The threats of AI also include job displacement, privacy concerns, and the potential for AI systems to be used for malicious purposes.
- There are also concerns about the potential for AI systems to be biased or discriminatory. Search-engine technology is not neutral as it processes big data and prioritises results with the most clicks relying both on user preferences and location.

Impacts of AI

- Upskilling and Reskilling Opportunities across various sectors
- Emerging AI-related Job Roles
- Automation and Job Disruption
- Emerging AI-related Job Roles

Sectoral Impact of AI In India Across core sectors, AI affords an increasing list of use-cases across industries; while investment themes converge with the global, transformative impact on businesses and society varies

	Investment Themes	Top Use-cases	Impact Potential for India
Healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable and wider healthcare coverage • Improved patient engagement and clinical quality • Better medical outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictive diagnosis • Electronic Health Records • Telemedicine (Remote) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~\$372bn Healthcare market by 2022 • \$25-30bn* in economic value add by FY 2026 • Remedy the low doctor-patient ratio (1:1446) • Improve Healthcare Access & Quality Index (HAQ)
Manufacturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pivoting to Industry 4.0 • Quality control • Productivity and efficiency gains • Reduction in error rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anomaly detection • Predictive Maintenance • Supply chain forecasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakthrough technology to achieve 25% sectoral contribution to Indian economy, pegged at \$1tn • Potential to increase AI spend from 5% (percentage of digital tech spend) to at least 10% • 78% of manufacturers in India have defined AI strategies
Retail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyper-personalization • Integrated customer journey • Supply Chain Management • Inventory management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-Time Pricing Optimization • Personalised recommendations • Demand prediction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India is world's one of the Top 5 retail markets, to grow to \$1.4 tn by 2024 • 3X growth is expected to bring mass-scale data and AI-led disruption • CX, operational efficiency and revenue growth top priority areas
Banking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large potential costs savings transforming customer experience • Personalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service • Anti-money laundering • Portfolio Management • InfoSec 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 40%* of the payments will be optimized using AI-derived routing models by 2025 • Explosion of digital-only bank accounts in India, currently stands at 205mn • Indian banks are expected to spend \$1bn* on public cloud

Source: [PIB](#)

Government mulls Partnerships to make Semiconductor Chips

**Syllabus :GS2/Governance/GS 3/Economy
In News**

- Six working groups, which had been formed to mull the Indian government's **artificial intelligence (AI) roadmap**, have submitted the first edition of their report.

Major Points

- The report's recommendations included public-private partnerships to make **semiconductors for AI applications**.
- In addition to this, the PPP model would be leveraged to build so-called "**GPU clusters**", masses of resource-intensive graphics processors that are used by AI applications.
- These clusters would be made available to Indian start-ups and researchers use cases for AI that the India AI initiative would look at spanned "agriculture, healthcare, education, fintech, security, and governance".

About Semiconductors

- They are the thumbnail-sized building blocks of almost every modern electronic device from smartphones to connected devices in the Internet of Things (IoT).
 - They help give computational power to devices.
- The basic component of a semiconductor chip is a sliver of **silicon**, which is etched with billions of microscopic transistors and projected to specific minerals and gases, forming patterns to control the flow of current while following different computational instructions.
- The chip-making industry is a highly-concentrated one, with the big players being Taiwan, South Korea and the U.S. among others.

Steps

- In December 2021, India announced its roughly \$10 billion dollar **production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme** to encourage semiconductor and display manufacturing in the country.
- It also announced fiscal support for a **design-linked initiative (DLI) scheme** to drive global and domestic investment related to design software, IP rights etc

Challenges

- Chip production is a resource-intensive and expensive process.
- Chip-making also requires gallons of ultrapure water in a single day, which experts say could be a task for the government to provide to factories, compounded also by the drought conditions which often prevail in large parts of the country.
- Besides, an uninterrupted supply of power is central to the process, with just seconds of fluctuations or spikes causing millions in losses
- India focuses on "**lagging-edge**" **technology nodes** in the start to supply to the automotive and appliance sector, creating global demand may be difficult as giants like Taiwan offer viable cutting-edge chip-tech worldwide.
- The pandemic has brought to the fore the fragility of the global supply chain of semiconductor manufacturing.

Way Forward

- The **semiconductor industry is changing fast** as new-age technologies require innovation at the design, material, and process levels.
 - There is a need to encourage them to set up their design start-ups with handsome government grants and tax incentives.
- Premier research institutions such as the Indian Institute of Science should also be asked to work aggressively on R&D in chip designing and manufacturing.

- The government must focus on emerging technologies like LiDAR and Phased Array in which incumbents do not have a disproportionate advantage and the entry barrier is low.
- By working aggressively in new cutting-edge technologies, India can ensure that it becomes atma nirbhar.

Source: [TH](#)

Cancer Treatment Breakthrough CAR-T Therapy

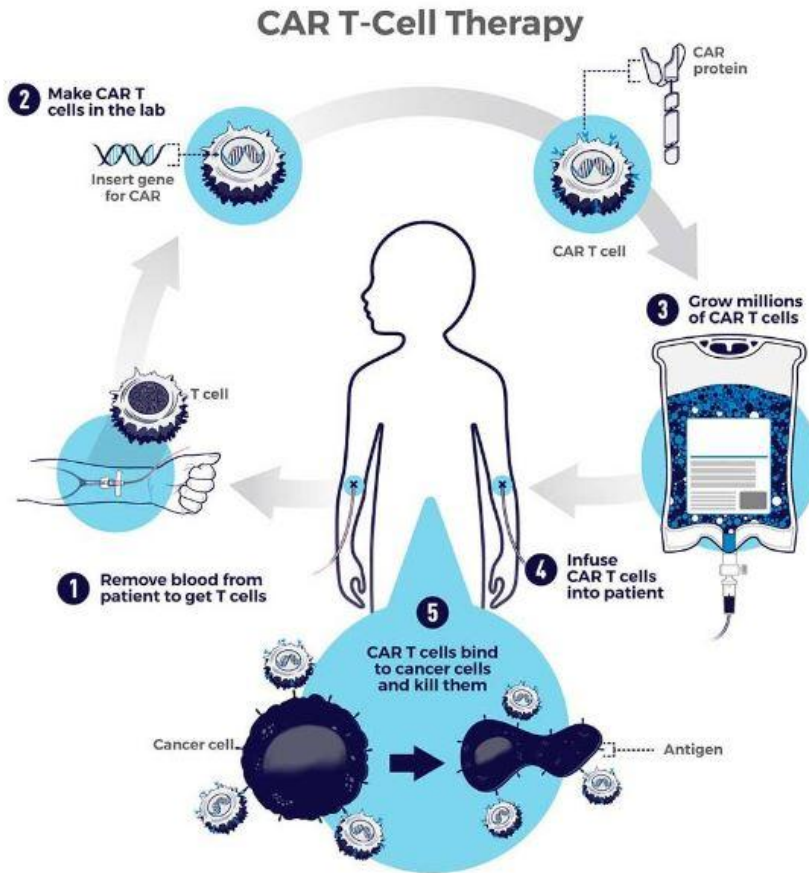
Syllabus: GS2/Health

In News

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) has issued market authorisation to **CAR-T (Chimeric Antigen Receptor-T) cell therapy**.

NexCAR19

- Called **NexCAR19**, it is an indigenously developed CD19-targeted CAR-T cell therapy.
 - ImmunoACT – an IIT Bombay incubated company – developed the treatment.
 - CD-19 is a **biomarker for B lymphocytes** and can be utilized as a target for leukemia immunotherapies.
- **What is CAR- T cell therapy?** For [CAR-T-cell therapy](#), blood is first drawn from the patient. Then, immune cells called **T-cells are genetically modified in a laboratory** and are injected back into the patient to **enable the cells to locate and destroy cancer cells more effectively**.



Significance

- Now patients in India and countries with limited resources will have access to this life-saving drug at an affordable cost.
 - Abroad, the CAR-T cell therapy costs around ₹3-4 crore per patient. The NexCAR19 will be ₹30-40 lakh per patient, which is 1/10th of the cost abroad.
- In terms of technical achievement, it puts India on the elite list of select countries that have access to CAR-T therapy.

Source: [DTE](#)

Asteroid Bennu Samples

Syllabus: GS3/Science and Technology

In News

- According to NASA, initial studies on the samples collected in space and recently brought back on earth have shown **evidence of high-carbon content and water-bearing clay minerals.**

OSIRIS-REx Mission

- The Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, and Security-Regolith Explorer, better known as OSIRIS-REx, is the **first United States mission to collect a sample from an asteroid.**
- The spacecraft was **launched in 2016** and the sample was collected three years ago.

- OSIRIS-REx returned to Earth on September 24, 2023 to drop off material from asteroid Bennu. After dropping off the sample, it continued **on to a new mission to explore the asteroid Apophis.**
- The goal of the OSIRIS-REx sample collection was to collect **60 grams of asteroid material.**
- The OSIRIS-REx sample is the **biggest carbon-rich asteroid sample ever delivered to Earth** and will help scientists **investigate the origins of life** on Earth for generations to come.
- NASA missions like OSIRIS-REx will improve **understanding of asteroids** that could threaten Earth.

Bennu Asteroid

- Bennu is a **small near-Earth asteroid** that passes close to Earth **every six years.**
- A 4.5 billion-year-old relic of the solar system's early days, asteroid Bennu has seen it all.
- Bennu's current composition, according to scientists, was established within 10 million years of the formation of solar system.

Asteroids

- Asteroids, sometimes called **minor planets**, are **rocky remnants left over** from the early formation of the solar system about 4.6 billion years ago.
- The three broad composition classes of asteroids are **C-, S-, and M-types.**
 - **The C-type (chondrite)** asteroids are most common. They probably consist of clay and silicate rocks, and are dark in appearance. They are among the most ancient objects in the solar system.
 - **The S-types ("stony")** are made up of silicate materials and nickel-iron.
 - **The M-types are metallic (nickel-iron).**
 - The asteroids' compositional differences are related to **how far from the Sun they formed.**

Source: [DTE](#)

Green Credit Program (GCP) & Ecomark scheme **under LiFE Initiative**

Syllabus: GS3/ Conservation

In News

- Recently, the **Green Credit Program (GCP) and the Ecomark Scheme** was initiated to take ahead the 'LiFE' - 'Lifestyle for Environment' movement.

Green Credit Program (GCP): Incentivizing Environmental Actions

- **About:** Green Credit Program (GCP) is an **innovative market-based mechanism** designed to **incentivize voluntary environmental actions** across diverse sectors, by various stakeholders like **individuals, communities, private sector industries, and companies.**
- **Program Governance:** The GCP's governance framework is supported by an **inter-ministerial Steering Committee**

- **The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)** serves as the GCP Administrator, responsible for program implementation, management, monitoring, and operation.
- In its initial phase, the GCP focuses on **two key activities**:
 - Water conservation and
 - Afforestation.
- **Green Credit Registry & digital platform**: A user-friendly **digital platform** will streamline the processes for registration of projects, its verification, and issuance of Green Credits.
 - The **Green Credit Registry and trading platform**, being developed by ICFRE along with experts, would facilitate the registration and thereafter, the buying and selling of Green Credits.

Ecomark Scheme: Promoting Eco-Friendly Products

- **About**: The Ecomark Scheme provides **accreditation and labelling** for **household and consumer products** that meet specific **environmental criteria** while maintaining quality standards as per Indian norms.
 - The scheme seeks to ensure **accurate labelling** and **prevent misleading information** about products.
- **Relevance**: Products accredited under the Ecomark Scheme will ensure minimal environmental impact.
 - It will build consumer awareness of environmental issues and encourage eco-conscious choices.
 - It will also motivate manufacturers to shift towards environmentally friendly production.
- **Role of BIS**: The Central Pollution Control Board administers the Ecomark Scheme in partnership with Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), which is the national body for standards and certification.

Significance

- Both initiatives mark significant steps in promoting sustainable living, environmental conservation, and, through individual and collective choice, embody eco-friendly practices in India. T
- They align with global sustainability goals and reflect the government's commitment to conservation and protection of the environment.

About LiFE Movement

- **Initiative of LiFE**:
 - The idea of LiFE was introduced by the Prime Minister during the **26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)** in Glasgow in 2021.
- **Significance**:
 - The idea promotes an environmentally conscious lifestyle that focuses on **'mindful and deliberate utilisation'** instead of **'mindless and wasteful consumption'**.
- **Promoting circular economy**:
 - The Mission envisions replacing the prevalent **'use-and-dispose'** economy—governed by mindless and destructive

consumption—with a **circular economy**, which would be defined by mindful and deliberate utilization.

- **Aim:**
 - The LiFE Movement aims to utilise the **power of collective action** and nudge individuals across the world to undertake simple climate-friendly actions in their daily lives.
 - It also seeks to leverage the strength of social networks to influence social norms surrounding climate.

Source: TH

Facts In News

RITES Ltd and IRCON granted Navratna status

Syllabus: GS-3/Economy

Context

- Ircan International Limited (IRCON) and Rail India Technical and Economic Service Limited (RITES Ltd) have been announced as **15th and 16th Navratna** respectively among Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).
 - The **Ministry of Finance** conferred the status on **RITES and IRCON**.

About Navratna status

The Indian Government classifies Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) into three categories i.e. **Maharatna, Navratna, and Miniratna**. In order to attain Navratna status, a PSU must meet specific criteria.

- **The benefit of Navratna Status:**
 - The companies are typically selected based on their **financial performance, operational efficiency, and strategic importance** to the Indian economy.
 - These companies are given more freedom in making decisions related to **investments, joint ventures, mergers, and acquisitions**.
 - It empowers it to invest up to **Rs 1,000 crore or 15% of its net worth** on a single project without seeking government approval.
 - They will also have the freedom to enter joint ventures, form alliances, and float subsidiaries abroad.
- **Eligibility Criteria for Navratna Status**
 - The CPSEs which are Miniratna I, Schedule 'A' and have obtained 'excellent' or 'very good' MOU ratings in three of the last five years and have composite scores of 60 or above in the following six selected performance indicators:
 - Net Profit to Net Worth
 - Manpower Cost to Total Cost of Production or Cost of Services
 - Profit before depreciation, interest, and taxes (PBDIT) to Capital employed
 - Profit before interest and taxes (PBIT) to Turnover
 - Earnings Per Share
 - Inter-Sectoral Performance
- **Other Companies that hold Navratna Status:**

- Bharat Electronics, Shipping Corporation of India, Hindustan Aeronautics, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam, Engineers India, NMDC, National Buildings Construction Corporation, ONGC Videsh, NLC India, Oil India, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam, National Aluminium Company, Rural Electrification Corporation, and Container Corporation of India.

About RITES:

- RITES Ltd. provides services in the diverse sectors of transportation, railways, export of rolling stock, highways, airports, metros, urban engineering & sustainability, ports & waterways, and energy management.
- The award of Navratna status will enable RITES to further nurture its brand, compete more effectively in the global market, and pursue new frontiers more aggressively for growth.

About IRCON:

- The IRCON has operated in the areas of Railway construction including ballastless track, electrification, tunneling, signal & telecommunication as well as leasing of locos, construction of roads, highways, commercial, industrial & residential buildings and complexes, airport runway,s and hangars, metro and mass rapid transit system, etc.

Source: [PIB](#)

PM inaugurates 9th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20)

Syllabus: GS-2/International Groupings

Context

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the **9th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20)** at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.
 - The summit is being hosted by the Parliament under the broader framework of **India's G20 Presidency**.

What is the P 20 Summit?

- Each year, the G20 collaborates with different groups that provide suggestions to governments on policy matters.
- They have the opportunity to contribute significantly to G20 discussions, working alongside civil society, the private sector, and other key groups.
- It was set up during the G-20 Presidency of Canada in 2010.
- The first P-20 summit was held in **Buenos Aires, Argentina** in 2018.

About the 9th P 20 Summit

- It is considered as the '**Mahakumbh**' of the Parliamentary practices of the World.
- The **theme of the 9th P 20 Summit**: "Parliaments for One Earth, One Family, One Future"
- There will be **four high-level sessions** organized during the Summit:
 - Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Showcasing Achievements, Accelerating Progress,
 - Sustainable Energy Transition — Gateway to Green Future,
 - Mainstreaming Gender Equality, From Women's Development to Women-led Development
 - Transformation in people's lives through Public Digital Platforms.

- These sessions will bring together G20 members and guest countries for wide-ranging discussions on **"how Parliaments can effectively advance the objectives of the P20"**.
- The summit will emphasize the **"Mission LiFE"** initiative to deliberate upon initiatives towards a **greener and sustainable future** in harmony with nature.

Source: [PIB](#)

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)

Syllabus: GS3/Economy

In News

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), will set up an **e-commerce portal** that will exclusively feature **electric appliances with the highest efficiency ratings**.

About

- The objective of this exercise would be to **"create demand"** and encourage consumers to opt for electric cookers, fans, refrigerators and other devices that were rated **"five star and above"**.
- The portal **would initially be for businesses** to trade among themselves and later be expanded to wider.
- Improving energy efficiency is a key plank of India's energy-security strategy. India has committed to **double its energy efficiency by 2030 from 2.2% to 4%**.

About Star Ratings of EESL

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a **joint venture of PSUs under the Ministry of Power**, which was set up by the government to **facilitate energy efficiency projects and to work as an Energy Service Company**.
- The **EESL is affiliated to the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** that has for years run a **'star-rating' system** for electric appliances with the highest-rated appliances having '5 stars'.
- The BEE has made this rating **mandatory for 15 appliances and voluntary for 20 appliances for 2023**.
 - The BEE claims that its rating system, over the years, has prevented 300 million tonnes of CO₂.
- However, the agency includes or excludes appliances from the list as it deems necessary from time to time.
- Appliances with more stars are usually more expensive than those with fewer stars.

Source: [TH](#)