

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

News

- Recently, the Indian National Congress party pitched for its **NYAY scheme**, if voted to power in the upcoming 2024 general elections.

About

- NYAY is an acronym for **Nyuntam Aay Yojana (or Minimum Income Scheme)**, and includes a **guaranteed payment of Rs 72,000 to each eligible family annually**.
- In 2018, the incumbent government had rolled out a similar scheme called **PM-KISAN**, billed as the world's largest direct benefit transfer scheme for farmers and involved **“an income support of 6,000/- per year**.

Nyay/PM-Kisan vs UBI

- While these schemes resemble UBI, they are **not exactly the roll out of Universal Basic Income (UBI)**.
 - ♦ Under a UBI, the **government gives a “basic” income to every citizen** in the country, **universally and unconditionally**, from the richest person to the poorest one, regardless of whether they work or not.
 - ♦ But, the government **also rolls back all types of subsidies in UBI** — from food to fertiliser to medical bills.
- Nyay and PM-KISAN are different from UBI in three aspects.
 - ♦ First, **they are not accompanied by removal of all the existing subsidies**.
 - ♦ Secondly, **the amount is much smaller than what anyone can consider to be the minimum or basic income** that everyone needs to have to live a decent life.
 - ♦ Lastly, **the scope of the schemes is limited to a section of Indians**; these are **targeted schemes, not universal ones**.

Problems with UBI

While Universal Basic Income (UBI) holds promise as a revolutionary social policy, it faces several potential challenges and criticisms.

Cost and sustainability:

- **Affordability:** In **rich countries** such as Switzerland (refused to adopt UBI), the **UBI amount is quite** a lot even though the population may be small.

- ♦ In **relatively poorer countries, the population is too large** even if the UBI amount may be smaller. Either way, affordability is a massive stumbling block.
- **Economic impact:** The other problem is the **reduction of existing subsidies**, and **raising of taxes** to fund the UBI.

Practical challenges:

- **Administrative complexity:** Implementing a UBI scheme requires effective infrastructure and bureaucracy to handle registration, verification, and distribution of payments.
- **Political feasibility:** Announcing the removal of existing subsidies is almost certain to create a political backlash.

Uncertainties and unintended consequences:

- **Behavioral changes:** The impact of UBI on work ethic, entrepreneurship, and social behavior is unclear and could have unforeseen consequences.
- **Dependence and disincentive to work:** Concerns exist about potential dependency on UBI and reduced motivation to work, especially for low-skilled workers.

Way Ahead:

- The feasibility and effectiveness of UBI depend on **careful design, implementation, and ongoing evaluation**.
- **Addressing the potential challenges and maximizing the benefits** requires thorough research, public debate, and pilot programs to gather evidence before widespread implementation.

Source: *IE*

INDIA'S PALM OIL IMPORTS

Context

- India's palm oil imports rose in December to their highest in four months.

Palm Oil

- It's an **edible vegetable oil** that comes from the fruit of oil palm trees, having the scientific name **Elaeis guineensis**.

- The oil palm tree is **native to West and Central Africa**. It also grows extensively in **Malaysia and Indonesia**.
- **Palm oil**, obtained from the fruits, is used in making soaps, cosmetics, candles, biofuels, and lubricating greases and in processing tinsplate and coating iron plates.
- **Palm kernel oil**, from the seeds, is used in manufacturing such edible products as margarine, ice cream, chocolate confections, cookies, and bread, as well as many pharmaceuticals.

Indian import of palm oil

- **India is the largest importer** of palm oil in Asia, accounting for 15% of global imports, followed by China (9%), Pakistan (4%) and Bangladesh (2%).
- India buys palm oil mainly from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with a special focus on the North east region and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Funding:** A financial outlay of **Rs.11,040 crore** has been made for the scheme, out of which **Rs.8,844 crore** is the Government of India share and **Rs.2,196 crore** is State share.
- Under this scheme, it is proposed to cover an additional area of **6.5 lakh hectares** for oil palm till the year **2025-26** and thereby reaching the target of 10 lakh hectares ultimately.
- **Objective:** To augment the availability of edible oil in the country by harnessing area expansion and increasing crude palm oil production to reduce the import burden.
- **The salient features** of NMEO-Oil palm are:
 - ♦ Assistance for planting material,
 - ♦ Inputs for intercropping up to gestation period of 4 years and for maintenance,
 - ♦ Establishment of seed gardens, micro irrigation, vermicompost units, solar pumps, harvesting tools, custom hiring center cum harvester Groups,
 - ♦ Farmers and officers training, and for replanting of old oil palm gardens etc.

Source: **TH**

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE, ITS THREAT

Context

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as one of the top threats to public health.

What is Antimicrobial Resistance?

- Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.
- Nearly **700,000 people** die of AMR every year. The toll can rise to as many as 10 million by 2050 and eat up **3.8 per cent** of annual global gross domestic product (GDP).

Causes for Antimicrobial Resistance

- **Overuse and Misuse of Antibiotics:** The excessive and inappropriate use of antibiotics in humans and animals is a major driver of antimicrobial resistance. This includes using antibiotics without a prescription, not completing the full course of prescribed antibiotics, and using antibiotics for non-bacterial infections.
- **Inadequate Dosage and Duration:** When antibiotics are not taken in the correct dosage and for the recommended duration, it can lead to incomplete eradication of the targeted microorganisms, allowing the surviving bacteria to develop resistance.
- **Self-Medication:** Self-prescription without proper medical guidance contributes to the misuse of antibiotics.
- **Antibiotics Consumption in Food-Animals:** Use of antibiotics as growth promoters in food animals and poultry is a common practice and later it evolves in the food chain.
- **Poor Sanitation:** The large proportion of sewage is disposed of untreated into receiving water bodies, leading to gross contamination of rivers with antibiotic residues, antibiotic-resistant organisms.

Challenges Posed by AMR

- Antibiotic resistance is emerging as the threat to successful treatment of infectious diseases, organ transplantation, cancer chemotherapy and major surgeries.

- The issue of AMR causes out of pocket expenditure on health care, especially on medicines. The use of high order drugs or second-line expensive antibiotics pushing treatment costs high.

Global Efforts against Antimicrobial Resistance

- **Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (GAP):** Globally, countries committed to the framework set out in the Global Action Plan (GAP) 2015 on AMR during the 2015 World Health Assembly and committed to the development and implementation of multisectoral national action plans.
- **World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW):** It is a global campaign that aims to raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance worldwide.
- **Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS):** WHO launched it in 2015 to continue filling knowledge gaps and to inform strategies at all levels.
 - ♦ GLASS has been conceived to progressively incorporate data from surveillance of AMR in humans, surveillance of the use of antimicrobial medicines, AMR in the food chain and the environment.
- **Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP):** A joint initiative of WHO and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDi), GARDP encourages research and development through public-private partnerships.
 - ♦ By 2025, the partnership aims to develop and deliver five new treatments that target drug-resistant bacteria identified by WHO as posing the greatest threat.
- **Country wise initiatives:** A multi-sectoral \$1 billion **AMR Action Fund** was launched in 2020 to support the development of **new antibiotics**, and the U.K. is trialing a subscription-based model for paying for **new antimicrobials** towards ensuring their commercial viability.
 - ♦ **Peru's efforts** on patient education to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions.
 - ♦ **Australian regulatory** reforms to influence prescriber behaviour, and initiatives to increase the use of point-of-care diagnostics, such as the **EU-supported VALUE-Dx programme**.
 - ♦ **Denmark's reforms** to prevent the use of antibiotics in livestock have not only led to a significant reduction in the prevalence of resistant microbes in animals, but also improved the efficiency of farming.

Measures Taken against Antimicrobial Resistance in India

- **National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR):** It has a focus on the One Health approach & was launched with the aim of involving various stakeholders ministries/ departments.
- **AMR Surveillance Network:** Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) established the AMR surveillance and research network (AMRSN) to generate evidence and capture trends and patterns of drug resistant infections in the country.
- **India's Red Line campaign:** Which demands that prescription-only antibiotics be marked with a red line, to discourage the over-the-counter sale of antibiotics– is a step forward.
- **FSSAI has set certain guidelines** limiting the antibiotics in food products such as fish and honey.
- **National Health Policy, 2017:** It terms antimicrobial resistance as one of the key healthcare issues and prioritizes the development of guidelines regarding antibiotic use and check on restricting the growth of antibiotics.
- **National Antibiotic Consumption Network (NAC-NET):** The network sites compile data on antibiotic consumption in their respective health facilities and send it to National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

Way ahead

- Addressing the challenges posed by AMR requires a coordinated global effort involving healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and the public.
- Further initiatives to promote responsible antimicrobial use, surveillance of resistance patterns, development of new drugs, and international collaboration are crucial to mitigating the impact of AMR on public health.

Source: *TH*

ONE YEAR OF INDIA-AUSTRALIA ECTA

News

- The **India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement**, recently completed one year.

About

- Negotiations are also underway for concluding the **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement** between the two countries but there is no defined deadline at the moment.

India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement:

- The ECTA is a **bilateral free trade agreement** signed **between India and Australia** on December 2, 2022. It came into effect on December 29, 2022.
- **Objectives:**
 - ♦ **Boost bilateral trade and investment:** Removing tariffs and trade barriers aims to increase trade volume and create opportunities for businesses in both countries.
 - ♦ **Enhance market access:** The agreement provides preferential access for Indian and Australian goods and services in each other's markets.
 - ♦ India has agreed to **Negative listing** after 5 years of coming into force of the Agreement.

Do you know?

- Under the **negative listing approach**, a country treats imported and locally produced goods / services equally in all areas, but **areas where this is not done are listed in the negative list as exceptions**.
- So, in Australia's case, India would provide this treatment to services exports from Australia, **after a period of 5 years**.

- ♦ **Streamline customs procedures:** Simplifying customs processes aims to save time and costs for businesses involved in cross-border trade.
- ♦ **Promote regulatory cooperation:** ECTA encourages harmonization of technical standards and regulations between the two countries.

Expected benefits for India

- **Duty-free access for 96.4% of India's exports to Australia:** This includes key sectors like textiles, agriculture, and leather products.
- **Exports:** Exports are expected to increase by 10 billion by 2026-27 and the total bilateral trade is expected to cross US \$ 45-50 billion by 2035.
- **Increased job creation:** Increased trade is expected to generate approximately 10 lakh new jobs in various sectors in India.
- **Greater foreign investment:** Improved market access and a more predictable regulatory environment could attract more foreign investment into India.

- **Closer economic ties with Australia:** ECTA strengthens the economic partnership between India and Australia, opening up new avenues for collaboration.

Achievements so far

- According to official data, **India's exports to Australia grew 14%** year on year in value terms to \$5.87 billion between April and November 2023 while **imports contracted 19%** year on year to \$11.46 billion in the period.
- **The trade deficit between the two countries was \$5.2 billion** between April and November 2023 **as against \$8.6 billion in the corresponding period a year ago**.
- **Exports to Australia on preferential lines grew by 17.8%** in the same period and grew by 15.14% on non-preferential lines.
- Meanwhile, **agricultural exports to India from Australia are 50% higher** since the trade agreement came into force.

Way Ahead

- While ECTA presents promising opportunities, some challenges remain, such as **differences in regulatory standards and potential implementation issues**.
- **Continued dialogue and collaboration** between both countries are crucial to maximize the benefits of the agreement.
- Its successful implementation could pave the way for further cooperation and **contribute to regional economic growth and development**.

Source: **BT**

CYBER CRIMES IN INDIA

In Context

- Around **50% of cyber-crime complaints** received on the **national cyber crime helpline** every day have their **origin in China and pockets of Cambodia and Myanmar**.

What is Cybercrime?

- Cybercrime refers to criminal activities that involve the **use of computers, networks, and digital technologies**.
- It encompasses a **wide range of illicit activities** conducted in the virtual space, often with the intent to compromise, damage, or gain unauthorized access to computer systems, networks, and data.

- Cybercriminals employ **various techniques and tools** to exploit vulnerabilities in networks, and they may target individuals, organizations, or even governments.

Common types of cybercrime include:

- **Hacking:** Unauthorized access to computer systems or networks to steal, alter, or destroy data.
- **Phishing:** Deceptive attempts to acquire sensitive information, such as usernames, passwords, and financial details, by posing as a trustworthy entity.
- **Malware:** Malicious software designed to disrupt, damage, or gain unauthorized access to computer systems. This includes viruses, worms, trojans, ransomware, and spyware.
- **Identity Theft:** Stealing and using someone's personal information, such as social security numbers or credit card details, for fraudulent purposes.
- **Cyber Espionage:** Covert activities aimed at gaining unauthorized access to sensitive information for political, economic, or military purposes.
- **Cyberbullying:** Using digital platforms to harass, threaten, or intimidate individuals.
- **Online Fraud:** Engaging in fraudulent activities, such as online scams and financial fraud, to deceive and exploit victims for monetary gain.

Cybercrime in India

- Chief executive officer of Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), mentioned that on average **5,000 cyber complaints** are registered in the country every day and around **40-50% originate outside the country**.
- There were five major cybercrime trends noticed last year:
 - ◆ complaints were received against **Investment Apps/Websites** which offered part time jobs or lured people into Ponzi schemes;
 - ◆ complaints pertaining to **Illegal loan Apps**;
 - ◆ complaints on Customer Care Number and **One Time Password (OTP) frauds**;
 - ◆ complaints of Impersonation or **takeover of social media accounts** and
 - ◆ complaints of **Sextortion**.
- Most cyber crimes were reported from **Haryana, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Goa**. Among Union Territories, most complaints came from **Delhi**, followed by Chandigarh and Puducherry.

Impact of Cyber Crimes

- **National Security Threats:** Cyber crimes pose a threat to national security when state-sponsored actors or criminal organizations target critical infrastructure, government institutions, or military systems.
- **Financial Loss:** This includes theft of personal information, online banking fraud, credit card fraud, and ransomware attacks.
- **Data Breaches:** Data breaches can lead to the exposure of personal information, trade secrets, intellectual property, and other confidential data, causing severe damage to the affected entities.
- **Disruption of Services:** Cyber attacks can disrupt essential services such as power grids, communication networks, and transportation systems.
- **Reputational Damage:** Organizations that fall victim to cyber attacks often suffer reputational damage.
- Customer trust can be eroded, and it may take a significant amount of time and resources to rebuild a positive image.
- **Increased Costs for Cybersecurity Measures:** This includes implementing robust security protocols, training employees, and deploying advanced technologies, which can result in increased operational costs.

Initiatives by Government of India to Prevent Cybercrimes

- **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In):** CERT-In is the **national nodal agency** for responding to cybersecurity incidents.
 - ◆ It provides proactive and reactive cybersecurity support and plays a crucial role in ensuring the security and resilience of the country's cyber infrastructure.
- **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC):** NCIIPC is responsible for protecting critical information infrastructure from cyber threats.
 - ◆ It identifies and designates critical sectors and advises organizations in these sectors on enhancing their cybersecurity measures.
- **Cyber Crime Prevention against Women & Children (CCPWC) scheme:** The Ministry of Home Affairs has provided financial assistance to all the States & UTs under the scheme to support

their efforts for setting up of cyber forensic-cum-training laboratories, training, and hiring of junior cyber consultants.

- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** The Government has established I4C to provide a framework and ecosystem for Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to deal with cyber crimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
 - ♦ 'Joint Cyber Coordination Teams' have been constituted for seven regions at Mewat, Jamtara, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Vishakhapatnam and Guwahati under the I4C.
- **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal:** The Government has launched the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to enable the public to report incidents pertaining to all types of cyber crimes.
 - ♦ **A toll-free number 1930** has been operationalized to get assistance in lodging online cyber complaints.
 - ♦ The **Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System** module has also been launched for immediate reporting of financial frauds and to stop siphoning off funds by the fraudsters.
- **Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre):** This initiative is aimed at creating awareness about **botnet and malware infections** and providing **tools for detection and cleaning**.

International Conventions on Cyber Crimes

- **Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime):** Also known as the **Budapest Convention**, it is the **first** international treaty specifically addressing crimes committed via the internet and other computer networks.
 - ♦ It includes provisions on offenses such as illegal access, data interference, system interference, and content-related crimes.
- **Internet Governance Forum:** The United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) serves to bring people together from various stakeholder groups, as equals, in discussions on digital public policy.
- **African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention):** This convention focuses on cybersecurity and personal data protection on the African continent.

- ♦ It outlines principles for preventing cyber threats, protecting critical information infrastructure, and facilitating international cooperation.
- **Organization of American States (OAS) Cybercrime Convention:** This convention, also known as the "OAS Model Law on Cybercrime," provides a model legal framework for member states to address cybercrime.
 - ♦ It covers various offenses related to computer systems, content, and electronic evidence.

Source: TH

LIVELIHOOD IN RURAL INDIA

In Context

- At a group discussion held by Life Skills Collaborative, most of the **rural youth** when questioned about their **aspirations** for the future they **preferred staying in their village**.

About

- With the prevalent trend of urbanisation — the UN projects that almost **50%** of the Indian population will be living in **urban areas by 2047**— it is crucial not to overlook those who choose to stay behind in villages.

Rural Livelihood

- **Main source of income:** Farming is the main source of rural livelihoods, with children from many rural families supplementing their family's income by working on family-owned farms.
- **Changing Trends:** The rural economy is experiencing a major occupational shift, the National Sample Survey Office data recorded 34 million farmers leaving their farms and transitioning to other sectors such as construction during 2004-05 and 2011-12.
 - ♦ This highlights the need for not only making agriculture an aspiring vocation among rural youth, but also **creating alternative employment opportunities**.
- **Current vocational education:** In rural India the current vocation education is intermixed with Industrial Training Institutes to upskill rural populations, but with little to no placement opportunities.

- ◆ Presently, rural education scarcely focuses on skill development, if learning is infused with rural life skills in schools, rural education will have the potential to nurture a generation capable of thriving.

Initiatives by Government of India to Upskill Youth in Rural India

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** Launched in 2015, PMKVY is a flagship skill development scheme that aims to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training to help them secure a better livelihood.
 - ◆ The scheme provides short-term training programs in various sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, construction, and more.
- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY):** DDU-GKY is a part of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and focuses on the rural poor youth.
 - ◆ It aims to transform rural poor youth into economically independent and globally relevant workforce through market-driven training programs.
- **National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM):** NRLM, launched in 2011, aims to reduce poverty by promoting diversified and gainful self-employment and wage employment opportunities in rural areas.
 - ◆ It includes skill development as a key component to enhance the livelihood options for rural youth.
- **Skill Development Initiatives under MGNREGA:** Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) includes provisions for skill development and wage employment in rural areas.
 - ◆ States may allocate a portion of their MGNREGA funds for skill development programs.
- **Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs):** RSETIs are institutions established to provide training and skill development to rural youth, especially those from economically weaker sections.
 - ◆ These institutes aim to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas.

- **Skill Development in Agriculture:** Various initiatives focus specifically on skill development in the agricultural sector, including training programs on modern farming techniques, use of technology in agriculture, and agribusiness skills.
- **Digital India:** The Digital India initiative aims to bridge the digital divide in rural areas by providing digital literacy and skills training.

Way Ahead

- To control migration of these youth to urban areas in search of meaningful employment, it becomes imperative to **provide vocational training** to students to imbibe relevant rural skills.
- **Effective rural education** should be tailored such that technical as well as life skills, needed to empower youth in these areas, become accessible to them through formal education.
- Educational evidence from other developing economies suggests — such as **Mexico's tele-schools and Bhutan's well-being-infused curriculum**.
 - ◆ The tele-schools provide lessons on subject matters as well as values, thereby providing a much higher level of access to value-based secondary education for remote areas where secondary schools are scarce.
 - ◆ This has shown to have trickling benefits in the local economy with improved attitudes and increased aspirations among children and parents.
- By offering rural populations skills in fields like **agricultural mechanisation, pollution monitoring, nursing and digital technologies** via e-learning, rural India can boost employability in both traditional and non-traditional trades, leading to a vibrant economy.

Source: *TH*

NEWS IN SHORT

SMART 2.0

Context

- Recently SMART 2.0' (Scope for Mainstreaming Ayurveda Research among Teaching Professionals) program has been launched.

About

- **The program** was launched by the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) along with the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM).

- The **objective** of 'SMART 2.0' is to generate tangible evidence to demonstrate efficacy and safety of Ayurveda interventions using interdisciplinary research methods and translating it into public health care.

Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)

- It is an apex organization for the formulation, co-ordination, development and promotion of research on scientific lines in Ayurveda.
- CCRAS is functioning under the **Ministry of Ayush**.

Source: *PIB*

VVPATS

Context

- Opposition wants a meeting with the Election Commission (EC) to discuss and provide suggestions on the use of VVPATs.

About Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPATs)

- VVPATs or **Verified Paper Record (VPR)** is an **independent system** attached with the **Electronic Voting Machines** that **allows the voters to verify that their votes** are cast as intended.

Background:

- The **idea of the VVPAT machine** first emerged in **2010**, when the EC held a meeting with political parties to discuss the EVM and ways to make the polling process more transparent.
- The idea of an **additional layer of transparency** for the satisfaction of voters in the form of a **'voter verifiable paper trail'** was suggested by the political parties in a meeting taken by the ECI in 2010.
- In 2013, the **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**, were amended to use VVPATs along with EVMs.

- ♦ When a voter presses a button in the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), a **paper slip** is printed through the VVPAT **containing the poll symbol and name of the candidate**.

Significance of VVPATs

- It is intended as an **independent verification system** for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to

detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide **a means to audit the stored electronic results**.

- After being visible to the voter from a glass case in the VVPAT for seven seconds, the ballot slip will be cut and dropped into the drop box in the VVPAT machine and a beep will be heard.
 - ♦ It allows the voter to verify his/her choice.
- VVPATs are **a second line of verification** and are particularly useful in the time when allegations around tampering of EVM.

Source: *IE*

CYBER KIDNAPPING

In Context

- A Chinese student who was a victim of **'cyber kidnapping'** has been found in rural Utah, unharmed.

What is Cyber Kidnapping?

- Cyber kidnapping refers to a crime where the 'kidnappers' **convince their victim to hide**, and then contact their loved ones for ransom.
- Criminals may threaten the victim or their family with violence, or they may create **fake evidence** of a kidnapping, such as photos or videos.
 - ♦ The goal is to convince the victim to **cooperate with the criminals** and do what they say, such as isolating themselves, providing personal information, or transferring money.
- The 'kidnappers', though not physically present, **monitor the victim online through video-call platforms**.
- Unlike traditional abductions, virtual kidnappers have not actually kidnapped anyone.
 - ♦ Instead, through deceptions and threats, they coerce victims to pay a quick ransom before the scheme falls apart.

Measures to Prevent Cyber Kidnapping

- **Secure Your Devices:** Keep your devices secure with strong passwords, two-factor authentication, and updated security software to prevent unauthorized access.
- **Be Skeptical of Unsolicited Messages:** Exercise caution when receiving unexpected or unsolicited messages, especially those demanding actions or threatening consequences.

- ◆ Don't click suspicious links or attachments.
- **Secure internet connection:** Avoid public Wi-Fi networks for sensitive activities.
 - ◆ Use a VPN when on such networks to encrypt your traffic.
- **Social media privacy:** Limit the information you share publicly on social media, especially details like home addresses, travel plans, or family names.
- **Create Awareness:** Discuss cyber kidnapping threats and educate family and friends about the importance of online safety.
- **Report suspicious activity:** If you suspect you're being targeted, immediately report it to the relevant authorities and security platforms you use.

Source: *IE*

BUXA NATIONAL PARK

In News

- Recently, forest officials acknowledged the presence of big cats in the **Buxa National Park**.

About the Buxa Tiger Reserve

- Buxa Tiger Reserve is situated in **North Bengal's** Alipurduar district and stretches over a length of 50 km from West to East and 35 km from North to South.
- Its **Northern boundary runs along the border with Bhutan**.
 - ◆ According to the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Reserve has corridor connectivity across the border with the **forests of Bhutan in the North**; linkages with the **Kochugaon forests and Manas Tiger Reserve in the East**; and with the **Jaldapara National Park on the West**.
- Historically, tigers were distributed throughout the reserve but the **reserve has a low tiger density at present**.

Source: *IE*

EUROPEAN BISON

In News

- Ongoing conflict in Ukraine poses a serious threat to the survival of the European bison.

About European bison(*Bison bonasus*)

- It is also known as the wisent



- It belongs to the same family (Bovidae) as the American bison .
- It is the largest mammal in Europe, and is called the "Forest Emperor".
- **Habitat :** It is commonly found in broad-leaved or mixed forests in a mosaic-type landscape.
 - ◆ Deciduous forest types tend to be the most favorable.
- **Distribution :** It roamed across Europe in large herds at the end of the last ice age.
 - ◆ The largest subpopulations are now found in **Poland, Belarus and Russia**.
- **Importance :** it serves an important role as an ecosystem engineer, restoring grassland habitat
- IUCN Red List status : **Near Threatened**

Source: *TH*

PENINSULAR HILL TROUT

In News

- Scientists have decoded for the first time the mitochondrial genome of Peninsular Hill Trout.

About Peninsular Hill Trout(*Lepidopygopsis typus*)

- It is known locally as 'Brahmanakenda'.



- It is a unique freshwater fish species of the **Western Ghats**

- It is known to occur only inside Kerala's Periyar Tiger Reserve.
- **Threats** : Exotic species, pollution and presence of a dam are the major threats
- **Importance** : It is an example of an **EDGE species** — a species that is evolutionarily distinct and globally endangered.
- It is an example of a monotypic species (a genus having only a single species), signifying its evolutionary importance.
- **Protection status** :It has been listed as 'endangered' on the **IUCN Red List** .

Source: *DTE*

