

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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SUPREME COURT FORMS TASK FORCE TO PROTECT DOCTORS

Context

- The Supreme Court constituted a **National Task Force (NTF)** of senior medical professionals to formulate comprehensive safety protocols for healthcare workers across India.

About National Task Force (NTF)

- The NTF has been tasked with the critical responsibility of **devising an action plan to ensure the safety and well-being of medical professionals**, with a particular focus on preventing gender-based violence and creating dignified working conditions for interns, resident doctors, and non-resident doctors.
- The action plan will address several key areas, including:
 - Enhancing **security in emergency rooms** and other critical areas;
 - Providing **restrooms and gender-neutral spaces** for medical staff;
 - Introducing **biometric and facial recognition** systems, Improving **lighting and installing CCTV** in all hospital areas.
 - Performing quarterly **audits of institutional safety measures**;
 - Applying the **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH)** Act to medical establishments, ensuring the constitution of an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC).

Challenges faced by the healthcare workers

- Workload and Burnout:** High patient-to-staff ratios result in overwhelming workloads. Healthcare workers experience burnout due to long hours, high stress, and insufficient time to rest.
- Violence and Abuse:** Instances of violence against healthcare workers, including verbal abuse and physical attacks, have been reported in several instances.
- Inadequate Compensation:** Salaries for healthcare workers, particularly those in the public sector or rural areas, are relatively low compared to the cost of living and the demands of the job.
- Infrastructure Issues:** Poor infrastructure in healthcare facilities such as lack of proper sanitation, unreliable electricity, and inadequate medical waste management compromise patient care and worker safety.
- Health and Safety Risks:** Healthcare workers face health and safety risks, including exposure to infectious diseases, particularly in under-

resourced settings where personal protective equipment (PPE) and infection control measures are inadequate.

Present Scenario of Legal Protection to Healthcare Professionals

- Currently **no central law exists** to safeguard healthcare workers nationwide.
- As of **2020, 19 States** had implemented their statutes, each with varying provisions. Other States and Union Territories had no laws at all.
 - This lack of uniformity meant protection is inconsistent.
- Among States, **Kerala and Karnataka** provide their healthcare workers with the most robust legal protections in India.

Challenges in enacting a Central law

- A central law has not been enacted because public **health is a State subject**, and VAHCW is primarily a public health-related issue.
- While the **concurrent list** allows for a central law, the central government has not prioritized this issue, leaving it to the States to manage.

Way Ahead

- Incident Reporting:** Develop a robust mechanism for reporting incidents of violence that ensures confidentiality and protection for those who report.
- Workplace Safety Policies:** Develop and enforce comprehensive workplace safety policies and procedures to prevent and respond to violence against healthcare workers.

Source: TH

INDIA AND MALAYSIA COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Context

- India and Malaysia decided to upgrade ties to a **'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'** during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

About

- Both leaders announced the **decision to upgrade the 2010 Strategic Partnership**, which had been made an 'Enhanced Strategic Partnership' in 2015, along with a number of agreements and MoUs signed in their presence.
 - These include MoUs on workers' mobility, digital technology, culture, tourism, sports, and education.

- The two Prime Ministers also discussed geopolitical challenges, including the current conflicts and tensions in the Indo-Pacific region.

Overview of India and Malaysia Relations

- **Diplomatic Relations:** India and Malaysia established diplomatic relations shortly after Malaysia gained independence from British rule in **1957**.
 - ♦ Both countries are members of various international organizations, such as the United Nations, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), and the Non-Aligned Movement.
- **Trade and Economic Relations:** Malaysia is the 13th largest trading partner for India while India stands amongst the 10 largest trading partners globally.
 - ♦ Furthermore, Malaysia has emerged as the third largest trading partner for India from the ASEAN region and India is the largest trading partner for Malaysia among the countries of the Southeast Asian region.
 - ♦ Malaysia stands as an important trade partner, as both countries have engaged in various economic agreements such as the **India-Malaysia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)**.
 - ♦ Both countries have agreed to conduct **trade settlements in Indian rupees**, reflecting an intention to bolster trade relations.
- **Defense and Security:** The defense ties have steadily expanded, marked by the signing of a **defense cooperation memorandum in 1993**, regular defense cooperation meetings, joint military exercises, and Malaysia's interest in acquiring 18 new Indian light fighter jets, indicating potential growth in arms trade between the two nations.
- **Strategic Partnership:** India and Malaysia have aimed to strengthen their strategic partnership through various initiatives, including high-level visits, joint commissions, and dialogues.
 - ♦ Both countries have expressed interests in enhancing cooperation in areas such as defense, counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cultural exchanges.
- **ASEAN Centrality:** Malaysia holds a crucial position in **expanding India's trade with ASEAN**, aligning with **India's Act East Policy**, **advancing maritime connectivity** in the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea, and supporting ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Perspective (AOIP) and the Indo-Pacific Initiative (IPOI).
- **Tourism and diaspora:** Over the last two decades, tourism has been a cornerstone in

fostering relations between India and Malaysia.

- ♦ Various agreements, including the India-Malaysia visa waiver for diplomatic and official passport holders, a tourism-focused memorandum of understanding in 2010, a bilateral agreement on employment and workers' welfare in 2009, and a revised air services agreement in 2017, have significantly contributed to the growth of tourism between the nations.
- **Cultural Ties:** Indian influence in Malaysia can be seen in various aspects of Malaysian culture, including language, religion (Hinduism and Buddhism), architecture, cuisine, and festivals.

Challenges

- **Trade Disputes and Imbalances:** Issues related to tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and trade restrictions have occasionally strained economic ties between the two countries.
- **Domestic Politics:** Internal political developments in either country often strain relations. For example, changes in government or political leadership lead to shifts in foreign policy priorities.
- **Geopolitical Considerations:** Both countries have diverse foreign policy priorities and engagements with other nations, which lead to differences in strategic perspectives.
- **South China Sea:** While not directly involved, Malaysia's stance on South China Sea disputes impact its broader regional strategies.
 - ♦ India's interest in regional stability and maritime security sometimes align or conflict with Malaysia's positions.

Conclusion

- India and Malaysia completed 65 years of modern diplomatic relations in 2022.
- The relations between India and Malaysia have grown from a Strategic Partnership to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership and to a comprehensive partnership now, with new cooperation in cultural diplomacy, digital economy, and agricultural commodities forthcoming.

Source: TH

'2+2' DIALOGUE BY INDIA AND JAPAN FOCUSING ON INDO-PACIFIC

Context

- In a significant diplomatic engagement, **India and Japan** recently conducted their third "2+2" dialogue, bringing together their foreign and defence ministers.

About the India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue (2024)

- It refers to a high-level meeting between the **foreign affairs and defence ministers** (or secretaries) of **two countries**.
- It's a format that allows for comprehensive discussions on a wide range of issues, including defence cooperation, regional security, and strategic alignment.
- It emphasised defence cooperation and the significance of a **free and open Indo-Pacific**. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based order in the region, especially in light of **China's assertiveness**.
 - ♦ The strategic partnership between India and Japan is closely tied to the Indo-Pacific. For India, this aligns **naturally with its Act East policy**.
 - ♦ Both countries recognize the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, where maritime security, trade, and connectivity play crucial roles.

Strategic Context

- The dialogue took place against the backdrop of a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Both nations recognise the importance of this region, especially given China's assertive military actions in the area.
- India and Japan share a **"Special Strategic and Global Partnership."** This relationship is built on common values such as democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. Defence cooperation has emerged as a crucial pillar within this partnership.

Mutual Cooperation

- The India-Japan relationship has transformed into a special strategic and global partnership over the last decade. This evolution stems from expanding interests and collaborative efforts.

Recent Instances of the "2+2" Dialogue

- **India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue (2023):** It was aimed to expand the global strategic partnership between India and the US, focusing on defence industrial ties, Indo-Pacific engagement, and cooperation in critical areas like high-technology and minerals.
- **India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue (2023):** Discussions centred on enhancing defence cooperation and deepening the strategic relationship, particularly in critical sectors such as trade, investment, and access to critical minerals.

Significance of "2+2" Dialogue

- **Comprehensive Engagement:** The "2+2" format allows for a holistic discussion that combines

diplomatic and defence perspectives. It ensures that both ministries align their strategies and policies.

- **Strategic Alignment:** In an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape, countries seek reliable partners who share common interests. The dialogue helps strengthen strategic alignment and mutual understanding.
- **Indo-Pacific Focus:** Many of these dialogues emphasise the Indo-Pacific region—a critical area for global security and economic stability. Participants discuss maritime security, freedom of navigation, and regional stability.

Economic and Technological Cooperation

- **Infrastructure Development:** Japan has been a significant partner in India's infrastructure projects, including the **Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)** and the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (Bullet Train) project**.
- **Trade and Investment:** Both nations actively promote trade and investment. Japan is a major investor in India, particularly in sectors like automobiles, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.
- **Technological Collaboration:** India and Japan collaborate in areas such as robotics, artificial intelligence, and clean energy. Initiatives like the India-Japan Digital Partnership aim to enhance digital connectivity and innovation.

Cultural and People-to-People Ties

- **Cultural Exchanges:** India and Japan celebrate their rich cultural heritage through various exchanges, including art exhibitions, film festivals, and academic programs.
- **Tourism:** Japan is an increasingly popular destination for Indian tourists, and vice versa. The exchange of ideas and experiences contributes to mutual understanding.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- India stressed that the "2+2" dialogue should focus on the road ahead. Since their last meeting in Tokyo two years ago, global developments and changes in capabilities necessitate recalibrating their relationship.
- It echoed the sentiment, emphasising that the India-Japan partnership rests on democratic values and adherence to the rule of law.
- India and Japan continue to strengthen their bilateral ties, particularly in the context of regional security challenges. The Indo-Pacific remains

a critical theatre for cooperation, and both nations are committed to maintaining a stable and open environment in the face of geopolitical complexities

Source: ET

FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNITION OF SELF-REGULATORY ORGANISATIONS IN FINANCIAL MARKETS

In News

- The Reserve Bank of India issued a framework for recognition of self-regulatory organisations in the financial markets space to help strengthen compliance culture and provide a consultative platform for policy making.

Key regulations mentioned in the RBI's framework:

The RBI framework provides guidelines for recognizing SROs to oversee financial market segments like fintech firms and non-banking financial corporations (NBFCs).

- **Application Process:** Applications can be submitted via email or to the RBI's Financial Markets Regulation Department in Mumbai
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Not-for-Profit: Must be a not-for-profit entity registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013, with a minimum net worth of 10 crore and adequate infrastructure.
- **Voluntary Membership:** Membership should be voluntary.
- **Representation:** Must represent a diverse mix of sector entities. If current representation is insufficient, a two-year roadmap must be provided to achieve adequate representation.
- **Directors:** Must have competent, fair, and reputable directors without past convictions for offences, including economic crimes.
- The RBI may impose additional conditions to ensure the SRO's functioning is in the public interest.

About Self-Regulatory Organisations

- Self-Regulatory Organisations are entities that are created by industries themselves to regulate and oversee the conduct of their members. Unlike government regulatory bodies, which are established by legislative or executive actions,
- SROs are formed by industry stakeholders and often operate under a framework of rules and guidelines developed by the industry.

Primary objectives:

- SROs **develop and enforce standards** and practices that members must adhere to, ensuring consistency and quality within the industry.
- They help in **setting ethical guidelines** and codes of conduct to prevent malpractices and unethical behavior among members.
- SROs often provide **mechanisms for resolving disputes** between members or between members and their clients, thus promoting fairness and transparency.
- They offer **training and resources** to help members stay informed about industry developments, regulatory changes, and best practices.

Challenges

- While SROs contribute significantly to industry self-regulation, they face several challenges:
 - ♦ Maintaining consistent compliance among members can be challenging, especially in rapidly evolving industries.
 - ♦ SROs must balance the interests of different stakeholders, including large corporations and small businesses, which can sometimes lead to conflicts.
 - ♦ The effectiveness of SROs can be impacted by the extent of regulatory oversight they are subject to. Striking the right balance between self-regulation and external regulation is crucial.

Conclusion and way forward

- SROs in India are likely to focus on enhancing their regulatory frameworks, adopting new technologies for better compliance, and improving transparency and accountability. By addressing these challenges, SROs can continue to play a vital role in fostering ethical practices and maintaining high standards across various industries.
- As industries evolve, SROs will need to adapt and innovate to effectively manage the challenges of modern self-regulation.

Source : TH

NEWS IN SHORT

WATERSPOUT

Context

- Recently, a luxury yacht that sank was hit by a violent storm off the coast of Sicily, Italy, the **storm could have been a waterspout.**

About

- A waterspout is a **large column of air and mist rotating over a water body**.
- It is a weaker cousin of tornadoes and typically **lasts for around five minutes** — occasionally it can last up to 10 minutes.
- The average waterspout can be around **165 feet in diameter**, with wind speeds of **100 kilometres per hour**.
- Although waterspouts are **more common in tropical waters**, they can appear anywhere.
- They occur when there are **high levels of humidity** and relatively **warm water temperatures** compared to the overlying air.
- **There are two types of waterspouts:** tornadic waterspouts and fair-weather waterspouts.
 - ♦ Tornadic waterspouts are actual tornadoes that form over water or move from land to water.
 - ♦ Fair-weather waterspouts, which are much more common, form over only water. As their name suggests, they are formed during fair weather.
 - ♦ They are less dangerous and usually small.
- Experts believe that **as ocean temperatures are soaring, the frequency of waterspouts is increasing**.

Source: IE

DHANGARS OF MAHARASHTRA

Context

- Recently, a large group of **Dhangars** demanded a '**grazing corridor**' for their sheep and goats in Maharashtra's Buldhana district.

About the Dhangars

- The Dhangars are a community of shepherds with a rich cultural heritage.
- They reside not only in **Maharashtra** but also in other states like **Gujarat, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh**.
- **Grazing Corridors and Their Struggle:** Historically, Dhangars have followed specific routes for grazing their animals. These routes are deeply ingrained in their way of life, and they've herded their flocks along them since time immemorial.
 - ♦ These paths are not just about sustenance; they're part of their cultural identity.

- **Quest for Scheduled Tribe (ST) Status:** The Dhangars are currently listed under **Maharashtra's Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VJNT) category**.

- ♦ However, they've been persistently seeking Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for decades.
- ♦ Interestingly, in other parts of the country, they are recognized as "Dhangad" and enjoy reservation benefits as an ST community.

Source: IE

JAN POSHAN KENDRAS

Context

- The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution launched a pilot project to transform 60 ration shops in 4 States as "Jan Poshan Kendras"
- ♦ On the occasion, he also launched **FPS Sahay application**, and **Mera Ration app 2.0**.

About

- **Jan Poshan Kendra** provides solutions to the demand of **Fair Price Shop (FPS)** dealers across India to raise their income level.
- The Kendras will **offer a diverse range of nutrition-rich food items** to consumers as well as provide an additional source of income to the FPS dealers.
- The Jan Poshan Kendra will have provision for storing **50% products under the category of nutrition** while the rest for keeping other household items.

FPS-Sahay and Mera Ration app 2.0

- **FPS-Sahay**, is an on-demand Invoice Based Financing (IBF) application designed to offer completely paperless, presence-less, collateral-free, cash flow-based financing to FPS dealers.
- **Mera Ration App 2.0** mobile app is launched with more value added features for the beneficiaries across the nation.

Source: TH

BPALM REGIMEN FOR DRUG-RESISTANT TUBERCULOSIS

Context

- India is set to roll out training of healthcare professionals in administering the **BPalm regimen**.

What is the BPaLM regimen?

- It is composed of **bedaquiline, pretomanid, linezolid and moxifloxacin (BPaLM)** for treating multidrug-resistant or rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis (MDR/RR-TB).
- Recommended by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** in 2022, currently, TB patients in nearly 40 countries have access to this new regimen.

Significance

- The **BPaLM protocol** is more effective, has a shorter duration of treatment (six months versus the prevailing 18-24 months), fewer side effects and, most importantly, prevents transmission, making it a pivotal tool in containing and managing TB.
- India, which accounts for around **27 per cent** of global TB cases, stands to benefit significantly. For example, this move is expected to boost the country's **National TB Elimination Programme**, which aims to eliminate the disease by **2025**.

Source: IE

MEASURES FOR PROMOTING HANDLOOM SECTOR

Context

- **The Union Textile Ministry** recently stated that it has undertaken **various measures for promoting the handloom sector**.
 - ♦ Handloom refers to the process of weaving cloth using a manually operated loom.

Schemes to Promote Handloom Sector

- **National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP):** NHDP has been formulated for its implementation during the financial year 2021-22 to 2025-26.
 - ♦ The scheme follows a need-based approach for integrated and holistic development of handlooms and welfare of handloom weavers.
- **The Yarn Supply Scheme (YSS):** The Yarn Supply Scheme (YSS) with partial modification and renamed as Raw Material Supply Scheme (RMSS) has been approved for implementation during the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
 - ♦ To make available quality yarn & their blends to the eligible Handloom weavers at subsidized rates.
- **Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme:** It is providing Life, accidental and

disability insurance coverage to handloom weavers/workers under the components Pradhan Mantri Jivan Jyoti Bima Yojana(PMJJB), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana(PMSBY) and Converged Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana(MGBBY).

- **Weaver MUDRA Scheme:** Under the Scheme, credit at concessional interest rate of 6% is provided to the handloom weavers.
- **Urban Haat:** These are set up in the big towns/ metropolitan cities to provide adequate direct marketing facilities to the craft persons/weavers and eliminate middle agencies.
- **Design & Technology upgradation (DTU):** The Scheme aims to upgrade artisan's skills through development of innovative designs and prototyping products for overseas markets, revival of endangered crafts and preservation of heritage etc.

Source: TH

INFLATION TARGETING

In News

- The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) inflation targeting regime has worked well and need not be abandoned in favour of a more discretionary regime that could be risky and counterproductive.

About Inflation targeting

- It involves a central bank committing to meet a publicly announced numerical inflation target within a specific timeframe.
- Types of Targets: Point Targets: A specific numerical target.
 - ♦ Band Targets: Inflation is targeted within a range.
- **Purpose:** Provides a clear medium-term inflation outlook.
 - ♦ Reduces inflationary shocks and their costs.
 - ♦ Leads to more stable and lower long-term interest rates.
- **Important Considerations:** Focus on numerical targets may reduce policy flexibility.
 - ♦ Monetary policy actions affect inflation with a lag; reliance on forecasts can be problematic.
 - ♦ Targets should allow for flexibility and adjustments for volatile components.
 - ♦ Excessive flexibility can undermine central bank credibility.

- **Scope in Developing Countries:** Higher inflation rates and uncertain future inflation predictions make meeting targets challenging.
 - ♦ Central bank autonomy may be limited by fiscal needs.
 - ♦ Central banks might be reluctant to raise interest rates due to fiscal concerns
- **Unlike active euthanasia** (*where a specific action is taken to end a patient's life*), **passive euthanasia** involves refraining from interventions that would prolong life artificially.
- **Common scenarios** include discontinuing mechanical ventilation, stopping artificial nutrition and hydration, or withholding aggressive medical treatments.

Source: TH

LIQUID WATER ON MARS

Context

- Scientists have discovered a reservoir of liquid water on Mars - deep in the rocky outer crust of the planet.

What are the findings?

- The findings come from a new analysis of data from **Nasa's Mars Insight Lander**, which touched down on the planet back in 2018.
- That layer is located at depths of about **10 to 20 km** in the Martian crust.
- The study suggests that the water could have seeped from the surface billions of years ago when Mars harbored rivers, lakes, and possibly oceans.

Planet Mars

- It is the **fourth planet** from the Sun and is a **cold desert** world. It is half the size of Earth.
- It is sometimes called the **Red Planet**. It's red because of rusty iron in the ground.
- It is also a dynamic planet with **seasons, polar ice caps, canyons, extinct volcanoes**, and evidence that it was even more active in the past.
- It has a very thin atmosphere made of **carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and argon**.

Source: IE

PASSIVE EUTHANASIA

Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court refused to grant an aged couple's plea to allow "**passive euthanasia**" for their 30-year-old son.

About the Passive Euthanasia

- It refers to the intentional act of allowing a patient to die by withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment.

Legal Developments in India

- The **Supreme Court of India (in 2018)** recognised passive euthanasia and upheld the right of individuals, including the terminally ill, to create advance directives (*commonly known as "living wills"*).
- Advance directives allow individuals to express their wishes regarding medical treatment in case they become incapacitated and unable to communicate.
 - ♦ These directives can include instructions to withhold life support under specific conditions.
- The court emphasised stringent safeguards to prevent misuse and ensure that decisions align with the patient's genuine intent.

Source: TH

PURANDAR FIGS

Context

- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has facilitated the export of India's first ready-to-drink **fig juice**, made from **GI-tagged Purandar Figs**, to Poland.

Purandar Figs

- It is grown in the Purandar taluka of **Maharashtra's Pune district** and is known to be one of **India's finest figs**.
- It has high pulp content and a rich source of vitamins & minerals. Also, it has an excellent sweet taste and an attractive **violet colour**.
- These specialties are attributed to the climatic factors, red-black soil & salt-free well irrigation technique followed in the Region.
- In **2016**, it was given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- It was set up in **1986 through an Act of Parliament** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- APEDA is mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development of the products like Fruits, Vegetables, Meat, Poultry and their Products, etc.

Source: PIB

NATIONAL GEOSCIENCE AWARDS

In News

- The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, conferred the prestigious National Geoscience Awards (NGA) for the year 2023.

About the National Geoscience Award (NGA)

- It is one of the oldest and most prestigious national awards in the field of geosciences, instituted by the Ministry of Mines, Govt. of India in the year 1966.

- Before the year 2009, these awards were called National Mineral Awards.
- The objective of these Awards is to honour individuals and teams for extraordinary achievements and outstanding contributions in various fields of geosciences i.e. mineral discovery & exploration, Mining Technology & Mineral Beneficiation, fundamental/ applied geosciences.
- Any citizen of India with significant contribution in any field of geosciences is eligible for the award.
- The Ministry of Mines confers National Geoscience Awards every year in three categories:
 - ◆ National Geoscience Award for Lifetime Achievement
 - ◆ National Geoscience Award
 - ◆ National Young Geoscientist Award

Source :PIB

