

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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APPOINTMENT OF 18TH LOK SABHA SPEAKER

Context

- The ruling BJP-led NDA nominee, **Om Birla**, was elected as the Speaker of the **18th Lok Sabha** for a second consecutive term.

Speaker of Lok Sabha

- The presiding officer of **India's Lower House of Parliament**, the Lok Sabha Speaker, is the constitutional and ceremonial head of the House.
- In the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker discharges his/her functions.
- Article 93** of the Indian Constitution provides for the election of both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker.
- Generally, a member belonging to the **ruling party** is elected as Speaker.

Appointment of the Lok Sabha Speaker

- There are two methods for the appointment of a Lok Sabha speaker.
 - The ruling party nominates** a candidate using the first and most practiced method. After a formal consultation with the opposition party, the candidate is named the Speaker of Lok Sabha for the respective assembly.
 - However, in the less practiced method, the **ruling and opposition party nominates one candidate** from each side for the position. The Speaker is elected based on votes cast by the present MPs of the Lok Sabha on the day of the election.
 - In the **72 years** of the Lok Sabha Assembly, the election for the Speaker post has taken place thrice, i.e., **in 1952, 1976 and 2024**.

Salary and Allowances

- The Speaker of Lok Sabha is entitled to a **regular salary and allowance** fixed by the Parliament.
- The salary and allowances of the Speaker of Lok Sabha are **charged on the Consolidated Fund of India** and hence are not subject to the annual vote of Parliament.

Responsibilities and Powers

- Interpreter of constitutional provisions:** The Lok Sabha Speaker is the final authority on the **interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution** of India, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Lok Sabha, and

the parliamentary proceedings within the House. Their rulings on such matters are binding on the members of the House.

- Presiding over joint sessions:** The Speaker presides over joint sittings of both houses of Parliament, to resolve deadlocks between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on a particular bill.
- Maintaining order and decorum:** The Speaker has the power to adjourn the House or suspend a meeting in the absence of one-tenth of the total strength of the House, known as the quorum.
- Casting vote:** In the event of a tie, the Speaker is entitled to cast a deciding vote, known as the 'casting vote'
- Deciding on money bills:** The Speaker has the exclusive authority to decide whether a bill is a "money bill" or not, and this decision is final and cannot be challenged.
- Disqualifying members:** It is the Speaker who decides the questions of disqualification of a member of the Lok Sabha arising on the ground of defection under the provisions of the **Tenth Schedule**. The **52nd Amendment** to the Indian Constitution vests this power in the Speaker.
 - As per the Supreme Court's ruling in the **Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu Case of 1992**, the decision of the Speaker in this regard is subject to judicial review.
- Chairing committees and groups:** The Speaker acts as the ex-officio chairman of the **Indian Parliamentary Group (IPG)**, which serves as a link between the Parliament of India and the various parliaments of the world. The Speaker also chairs the conference of presiding officers of legislative bodies in the country.
- Protecting the House's privileges:** The Speaker is the guardian of the rights and privileges of the House, its committees, and its members. It depends solely on the Speaker to refer any question of privilege to the Committee of Privileges for examination, investigation, and report.

Source: **IE**

PANCHSHEEL: 'FIVE PRINCIPLES' OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Context

- Recently, it is observed that China is celebrating the 70th anniversary of the **'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence'**, which **India called it as Panchsheel**.

About India-China Relations

- India and China share a complex history of diplomatic relations, marked by territorial disputes, border tensions, and occasional military clashes.
- Both countries **established diplomatic relations in 1950**, making **India the first non-socialist bloc country** to do so with the People's Republic of China.

Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (aka Panchsheel)

- These were first formally enunciated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the **Tibet region of China and India signed in 1954**.
- India welcomed Panchsheel, recognizing its alignment with its foreign policy since independence.

Ancient Roots

- It traces its **origin to the Buddhist concept of Pañcaśīla**, which describes the **five moral vows of Buddhism**: abstinence from murder, theft, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants.
- **Confucius, the Chinese philosopher**, spoke of harmony amid differences, laying the groundwork for these principles.
- Panchsheel's modern form emerged in China, bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary international relations.

Key Features

- **Mutual Respect for Territorial Integrity and Sovereignty**: Both nations committed to respecting each other's territorial boundaries and sovereignty. It emphasised the importance of recognizing each other's rights and boundaries.
- **Mutual Non-Aggression**: India and China pledged not to engage in aggressive actions against each other. It aimed to prevent armed conflicts and maintain peace.
- **Mutual Non-Interference**: The two countries agreed not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. It emphasised respect for national autonomy and sovereignty.
- **Equality and Mutual Benefit**: India and China sought equal treatment and mutual benefits in their interactions. It emphasises fairness and cooperation.

- **Peaceful Co-existence**: The ultimate goal was peaceful coexistence, fostering an environment where both nations could thrive without conflict.

Relevance

- **Post-Chinese Revolution**, the Common Programme adopted most core Panchsheel principles.
- Panchsheel guided India-China relations and resonated in the **North-South dialogue** and other global groupings.
 - ♦ Its relevance persists in our ever-changing world.
- **Collective Security in Asia**: India and China came to the conclusion that it was not through military pacts and alliances but through the **Five Principles (Panchsheel)** that a system of **collective security or collective peace** could be established in Asia. They visualised Panchsheel agreements of this type between **China and Burma, Burma and India, China and Indonesia, then Indonesia and India** etc.

Global Acceptance

- The Five Principles came to be accepted almost universally by countries and **finally by the United Nations Organisation**.
- The **United Nations (UN)** accepted the Five Principles as a code of conduct in international relations. Later, Yugoslavia, Sweden and India, moved a resolution in the UN containing the Five Principles; it was adopted unanimously.
- In a series of active and independent international moves, heads of both countries visited countries in **Asia, Africa and Europe** and signed with most of them agreements **embodying the Five Principles**.
- The Asian-African conference held in Bandung accepted the Five Principles, expatiating them into the **Ten Principles of Bandung**.
- Panchsheel became the presiding principle of the **Asian-African movement** for **equality and freedom** against the prevailing colonial and imperialist domination of the world.
- The **Conference of Non-aligned nations in Belgrade** accepted them as the core principles behind the **Non Aligned Movement (NAM)**.

Concerns Related to India and China Relations

- **Boundary Questions**: Since the 1980s, India and China have sought peaceful resolution of their boundary dispute. **Informal summits** between leaders, like those in **Wuhan (2018) and Chennai (2019)**, emphasised **strategic communication and cooperation**.

- ♦ The unresolved boundary issue remains a point of contention, leading to occasional tensions.
- **Economic Ties:** Bilateral trade has grown significantly, with China becoming India's largest trading partner in goods. However, economic competition and geopolitical tensions persist.
 - ♦ Both countries vie for influence in South Asia, often **competing for regional projects and markets**.
- **Strategic Geopolitics:** South Asia lies at the crossroads of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The region's proximity to the Indian Ocean and shipping routes is critical for China's oil imports and trade.
 - ♦ South Asia, where land and maritime Silk Roads intersect, plays a crucial role in this initiative.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** China invests heavily in port development, enhancing connectivity and securing its maritime trade routes.
- **Military Dimension:** China's military ties with South Asian nations have grown, impacting regional dynamics. Its influence extends through diplomacy, culture, and economic initiatives.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- India-China relations stand at a critical juncture. Both countries need to focus on **Dialogue and Diplomacy, and Conflict Avoidance. Balancing competition and cooperation** is essential for regional stability and prosperity, as highlighted at the Wuhan summit.
- As both nations celebrate 70 years of diplomatic ties, revisiting the spirit of good neighbourliness and friendship remains crucial.
- Today, the Panchsheel Principles continue to resonate globally. They guide interstate relations, remain relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, and foster peace, sovereignty, and mutual growth.

Source: IE

ONE HEALTH INITIATIVE

Context

- India is ahead of several countries in drafting a **legal framework** to support the **implementation of the 'One Health' initiative**.

What is One Health?

- It is an **integrated, unifying approach** that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems.
- It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent.

Need of One Health in India

- **Zoonotic Diseases:** India faces significant challenges from zoonotic diseases such as rabies, leptospirosis, and avian influenza.
 - ♦ These diseases can spread between animals and humans, highlighting the need for integrated surveillance and control measures involving both human and animal health sectors.
- **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR):** India has high rates of antimicrobial resistance due to the widespread use of antibiotics in human healthcare, veterinary medicine, and agriculture.
 - ♦ One Health approaches are crucial to mitigate AMR by promoting responsible antibiotic use across all sectors.
- **Livestock and Agriculture:** Agriculture and livestock farming are major economic sectors in India.
 - ♦ One Health strategies can ensure sustainable agricultural practices that promote animal welfare, reduce disease transmission, and enhance food security.
- **Emerging Infectious Diseases:** India, like many countries, faces threats from emerging infectious diseases such as COVID-19.
 - ♦ These diseases often originate at the human-animal-environment interface, underscoring the importance of early detection, rapid response, and collaborative efforts between health sectors.

India's Steps

- **The Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC)** in its 21st meeting, approved to set up a **National One Health Mission** with a cross-ministerial effort which will serve to coordinate, support, and integrate all the existing One Health activities in the country and fill gaps where it is appropriate.

- **Mandate of the Centre for One Health (CoH):** CoH is working in coordination with all stakeholders to promote health and quality of life by undertaking activities necessary for prevention and control of Zoonotic Diseases with “One Health” approach.
- **G-20:** During India’s presidency of the G-20, “One Health” was widely endorsed by all the members to work together in specific areas such as building better surveillance capacity etc.
- **National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR):** India launched the NAP-AMR in 2017 to address antimicrobial resistance across human health, animal health, and environmental sectors.
- **National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC):** The NCDC plays a key role in disease surveillance and response in India, including zoonotic diseases.
 - ♦ It collaborates with animal health agencies such as the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying, and Fisheries (DAHDF).
- **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP):** IDSP monitors disease outbreaks across India and includes zoonotic diseases in its surveillance efforts, thereby promoting a One Health approach in disease monitoring.

Way Ahead

- To reap all the advantages of a One Health approach, India should move beyond short-term collaborations and create an **integrated, science-based environment**.
- India has combatted several zoonotic diseases and has a robust institutional network for biomedical research, which can lead and operationalize the One Health approach.
- For One Health Science, it is important to **develop databases and models** with a consolidated approach of ecologists, field biologists, epidemiologists, and other scientists.
- Therefore, a **nexus of science, social science, indigenous knowledge**, and policy at national, state, and local levels can put forward strategies and institutions for the implementation of One Health.

Source: BS

THE WORLD DRUG REPORT 2024

Context

- Recently, **the World Drug Report 2024** was released by the **UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**.

About the Report

- The World Drug Report is published **annually** by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- The first report was published in **1997**, the same year the agency was established.
- The World Drug Report provides an **annual overview** of the major developments in drug markets for the various drug categories, ranging from production to trafficking, including development of new routes and modalities, as well as consumption.

UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

- It is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime, in addition to being responsible for implementing the United Nations lead programme on terrorism.
- Established in **1997** and **headquartered in Vienna**.
- UNODC relies on **voluntary contributions**, mainly from governments, to carry out the majority of our work.
- The UNODC Strategy 2021-2025 is committed to promoting human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion, as well as protecting children and harnessing the transformative power of youth.

Major Findings

- **Increase in Use of Drug:** There has been a concerning rise in global drug use, the drug users worldwide are numbering 292 million in 2022 which is a 20 percent increase over the past decade.
- **Most used Drug:** Cannabis remains the most widely used drug globally.
 - ♦ It is followed by opioids, amphetamines, cocaine, and ecstasy.
- **Treatment:** Only one in 11 people suffering from drug use disorders receives treatment.
 - ♦ This is despite the fact that an estimated 64 million people worldwide suffer from such disorders.

- **Women**, in particular, face significant barriers, with only one in 18 women with drug use disorders receiving treatment compared to one in seven men.
- **Drug trafficking** empowers organised crime groups, which are diversifying into other illegal economies, such as wildlife trafficking, financial fraud, and illegal resource extraction.
- **Global opium production fell by 74 percent in 2023**, following a drastic 95 percent decrease in Afghanistan's opium production in 2023 and a 36 percent increase in Myanmar.
 - ♦ Both countries are major centres of the global trade in narcotics.
- **Measures to be Taken:** Evidence-based prevention programmes give people, especially young people, the knowledge and skills they need to avoid drug use.
 - ♦ A comprehensive strategy is needed to address drug use and its consequences.
 - ♦ This requires prevention, treatment, and the strengthening of law enforcement to disrupt the criminal networks profiting from these illicit activities.

Golden Triangle

- It includes the regions of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.
- It is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region and one of the oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.

Golden Crescent

- It includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.
- It is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.



Initiatives Taken against Illegal Drug Abuse

Global Initiatives:

- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):** The UNODC is at the forefront of the

global fight against illicit drugs. The UNODC-led campaign aims to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse.

- **International Narcotics Control Board (INCB):** The INCB monitors the global drug situation and assesses countries' compliance with international drug control treaties.
- **Paris Pact Initiative:** This initiative focuses on combating the trafficking of Afghan opiates, which are a major source of illicit drugs globally.

Indian Initiatives:

- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act):** Comprehensive legislation provides the legal framework for drug control in India. It prohibits the production, possession, sale, and consumption of illicit drugs and prescribes penalties for violations.
- **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB):** The NCB is the nodal agency responsible for drug law enforcement in India. It coordinates with various state and central agencies to combat drug trafficking and abuse.
- **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan:** Launched in 2020, this campaign aims to create awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and promote a drug-free India. It focuses on community outreach, education, and rehabilitation programs.
- **Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF):** Many states have established ANTFs to strengthen drug law enforcement at the state level.

Source: DTE

NEED FOR AMENDING THE MSME DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2006

Context

- The Union Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) is amending the MSME Development Act, 2006 to improve mechanisms for managing disputes related to delayed payments and to better address the evolving needs of the MSME sector.

About

- The MSME ministry is in the process of transforming the **Samadhaan portal**, which currently only tracks disputes arising from delayed payments to micro and small enterprises (MSEs), into a comprehensive online resolution platform.

- The ministry also announced the **Trade Enablement & Marketing (TEAM) initiative**, which aims to onboard 5 lakh MSEs onto the **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**.
- The ministry also announced the **Yashasvini campaign** to spread awareness for formalizing women-owned, informal micro enterprises, with a focus on tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

What are MSMEs?

- MSMEs or Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises are businesses that are defined by their **investment and turnover levels**.
- They are considered an important sector of the economy as they create jobs, generate income, and promote entrepreneurship.

Existing MSME Classification			
Criteria : Investment in Plant & Machinery or Equipment			
Classification	Micro	Small	Medium
Mfg. Enterprises	Investment < Rs. 25 lac	Investment < Rs. 5 cr.	Investment < Rs. 10 cr.
Services Enterprise	Investment < Rs. 10 lac	Investment < Rs. 2 cr.	Investment < Rs. 5 cr.

Revised MSME Classification			
Composite Criteria : Investment And Annual Turnover			
Classification	Micro	Small	Medium
Manufacturing & Services	Investment < Rs. 1 cr. and Turnover < Rs.5 cr.	Investment < Rs. 10 cr. and Turnover < Rs.50 cr.	Investment < Rs. 20 cr. and Turnover < Rs.100 cr.

Contribution of MSMEs

- Contribution in Economy:** MSMEs are often called the powerhouse of the Indian economy; they account for more than 11 crore jobs and contribute around **27% of India's GDP**.
- Employment Generation:** The sector consists of around 6.4 crore MSMEs, with 1.5 crore of them registered on the Udyam portal and employs around **23% of the Indian labor force**, making it the **second-largest employer in India after agriculture**.
- Output and Exports:** They account for **38.4% of the total manufacturing output** and contribute **45.03% of the country's total exports**.

Challenges faced by MSMEs in India

- Access to Finance:** MSMEs struggle to secure capital due to a lack of collateral, limited credit history, or inadequate access to formal financial institutions.
- Bureaucratic Red Tape:** Navigating complex regulations and bureaucratic procedures can

be time-consuming and costly for MSMEs, often diverting resources away from core business activities.

- Increased Competition:** MSMEs face stiff competition from larger, more established companies that have greater resources and market influence.
- Lack of Technological knowledge:** Many MSMEs lack the technical expertise needed to modernize their operations, adopt new technologies, and stay competitive in the market.
- Marketing and Networking Opportunities:** Limited resources and networks prevent MSMEs from effectively marketing their products and services, making it difficult to reach new customers and grow their businesses.
- Lack of Formalization:** Many MSMEs operate informally or are unregistered, which limit their access to government support, financial services, and other benefits that are available to formally registered businesses.

Government initiatives to promote the MSME sector

- **MSME Champions scheme:** The objective of the scheme is to modernize MSMEs' manufacturing processes, reduce wastages, encourage innovativeness, sharpen business competitiveness and facilitate their National and Global reach and excellence.
- **Udyam Registration:** It is an online registration process to simplify the registration of MSMEs. The primary objective is to provide MSMEs with a streamlined process to avail themselves of various benefits and incentives offered by the government.
- **Section 15 of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006,** and newly enacted **Section 43B(h) of the Income-tax Act** says that businesses must pay these MSME Registered Enterprises within 15 days, or up to 45 days if they have an agreement.
- **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE):** This scheme provides collateral-free credit to micro and small enterprises through a credit guarantee mechanism.

Way Ahead

- The government should focus on six pillars such as, formalization and access to credit, increased access to market and e-commerce adoption, increased productivity through modern technology etc.
- Also there is a need for enhancing skill levels and digitalisation in the service sector, support to khadi, rural, and coir industries, and empowerment of women and artisans through enterprise creation.

Source: IE

DARKNET OR DARK WEB

Context

- Recently, the National Testing Agency (NTA) faced a new threat from the 'darknet', causing staff to doubt exam security.

About

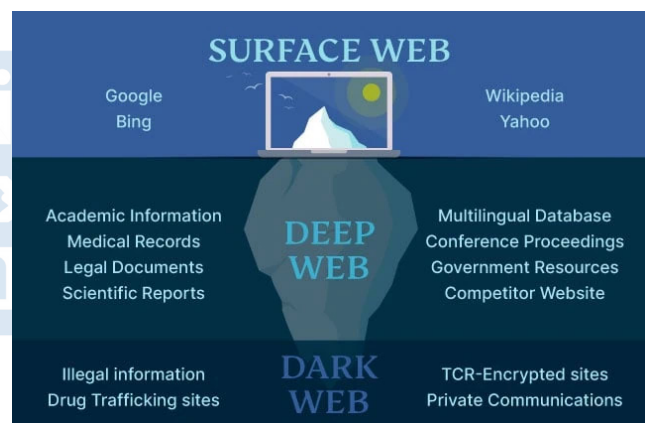
- Think of the internet as an ocean, that categorised further into the **surface, darknet or dark web, and deep web.**

Surface Web (aka Visible Web)

- These are websites that search engines can **easily index and access**, and are open to the public and include everything from news articles to online shopping platforms.
- For instance, when you search on Google, you're exploring the Surface Web. Surprisingly, this represents **only about 10%** of the entire web.
- Examples of the Surface Web include news websites, blogs, e-commerce platforms, and educational resources.

Darknet or Dark Web

- It is a layer of the internet **accessible only through specialised software and overlay networks**. It hosts content that is intentionally hidden, encrypted, and often anonymous.
- Users access it using tools like the **Tor (The Onion Router) browser**, which routes internet traffic through a network of relays.



- Most Dark Web pages are hosted **anonymously and encrypted**.
- Initially designed **to ensure secure and anonymous exchanges**, particularly for governmental and military purposes, the darknet has **regrettably become synonymous with criminal enterprises**.
 - ♦ Illegal transactions, including the sale of weapons and narcotics, thrive within its shadowy confines.

Deep Web

- It encompasses content that search engines cannot index. While it's not hidden, it remains inaccessible to traditional search engines.
- Examples of Deep Web content include:
- **Password-protected Sites:** Websites that require a username and password for access (e.g., email accounts, online banking).

- ◆ **Private Databases:** Information stored in databases that isn't publicly accessible.
- ◆ **Internal Networks:** Company intranets, academic databases, and government-related pages.
- ◆ **Dynamic Content:** Pages generated based on user queries (search boxes or forms) from databases.
- Although search engines don't index the Deep Web, some data may **leak through data breaches or targeted attacks**.

Source: ET

NEWS IN SHORT

SENGOL

Context

- Opposition has demanded that **Sengol** be removed from Parliament.

About

- The Prime Minister ceremonially installed the Sengol near the Speaker's chair in India's new Parliament building last May.
- A sengol — or chenkol — is a **royal sceptre**, signifying **kingship, righteousness, justice, and authority**.
- Its origins lie in **Tamil Nadu**, and it served as a **kingly emblem**.
- Among the **Madurai Nayakas**, for example, the sengol was placed before the goddess Meenakshi in the great temple on important occasions, and then transferred to the throne room, representing the **king's role as a divine agent**.
- As such, the sengol may be described, in its historical context, **as a symbol of dharmic kingship**.

Source: IE

REVISED CURRENCY SWAP ARRANGEMENT FOR SAARC COUNTRIES

Context

- The Reserve Bank of India, has decided to put in place a revised framework on **currency swap arrangement** for SAARC (South Asian

Association for Regional Cooperation) countries for the period **2024 to 2027**.

About

- The SAARC Currency Swap Facility came into operation in **2012** with an objective to **provide a backstop line of funding for short term foreign exchange liquidity requirements** or balance of payment crises of the SAARC countries.
- Under the Framework for **2024-27**, a separate INR Swap Window has been introduced for swap support in Indian Rupee.
 - ◆ The total corpus of the Rupee support is **₹250 billion**.
- The RBI will continue to offer swap arrangements in US\$ and Euro under a separate US Dollar/ Euro Swap Window with an overall corpus of **US\$ 2 billion**.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- **SAARC was established** in 1985.
- **Secretariat:** It was set up in **Kathmandu, Nepal**, in 1987.
- **It aims** to accelerate the process of economic and social development in its member states through increased intra-regional cooperation.
- **SAARC has eight member countries:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka.

Source: TH

AMENDMENT TO THE PROHIBITION OF INSIDER TRADING (PIT) REGULATIONS

Context

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended **Prohibition of Insider Trading (PIT) regulations** to provide flexibility in the "Trading Plan" that allows insiders to deal in their shares.

Background

- According to regulations, they have a narrow window to carry out trades to avoid insider trading.
- These insiders have to give a 'trading plan' specifying the share price, amount, and transaction date in advance.

What Is Insider Trading?

- 'Insider trading' in financial markets refers to trading in securities by company insiders who have access to exclusive information about the issuer of a particular security before such information is released to the general public.
- The officials who usually have access to unpublished price-sensitive information (UPSI) are considered to be insiders.

What are the amendments?

- Sebi has reduced the minimum cool-off period between disclosure and implementation of the trading plan from **six months to four months**.
- It has also introduced a **20 per cent price range** for buying or selling shares in the trading plan.
- There is flexibility to insiders to not execute the trades if the execution price is outside the limit set by them in the trading plan.

Source: BS

SPACE MAITRI MISSION

Context

- The **New Space India Ltd (NSIL)** is set to launch the **Optimus spacecraft** of Australia under the **Space MAITRI Mission**.

About Space MAITRI Mission

- The mission, named **Space MAITRI (Mission for Australia-India's Technology, Research, and Innovation)**, underscores Space Machines Company's dedication to fostering sustainable space operations.
- **Partnership:** Space Machines Company, an Australian-Indian in-space servicing firm, has signed a crucial Launch Service Agreement with NSIL, a commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- **Optimus Spacecraft:** It is the **largest Australian-designed** and built spacecraft to date and the second **spacecraft of Space Machines Company** that NSIL is set to launch by its **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) in 2026**.

Objectives

- It aims to address critical challenges such as **debris management**, technological innovation, and sustainability in space operations while strengthening bilateral ties among **commercial,**

institutional, and governmental space organisations between **Australia and India**.

Source: FE

JUSTICE REDDY COMMISSION

Context

- Former Telangana CM, has sought a stay on all **further proceedings of the Justice Reddy Commission**.

About

- It was constituted by the Congress government to inquire into **Power Purchase Agreements made by the previous BRS government and construction of thermal power plants at Manuguru and Damaracherla**.
- After the creation of the **separate state of Telangana in 2014**, to ease the shortage of power, the **TRS government of KCR** had made several agreements with **Chhattisgarh to purchase power**.
 - ♦ There were allegations that the Telangana government had purchased the power at high prices.

Source: TH

LAKE NATRON

In News

- Millions of flamingos at Lake Natron in Tanzania face threats from climate change and human activities, which disrupt their habitat and food sources.

About Lake Natron

- Lake Natron, a salt or alkaline lake located in northern Tanzania. It is situated in the East African Rift Valley.
- It is a crucial breeding ground for lesser flamingos. It is a Ramsar Site of international significance.

Source: DTE

MAINLAND SEROW

In News

- A significant discovery has been made in **Assam's Raimona National Park**, where a mainland serow, an antelope-like mammal listed as vulnerable, was recorded at the lowest elevation ever documented for the species.

About

- The mainland serow is native to the Himalayas, Southeast Asia, and China.
- It is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and is included in Appendix I of CITES, highlighting

the need for conservation efforts to protect this species.

- This discovery raises interesting questions about the serow's adaptability and potential range expansion.

Source: IE

