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Time: 45 Min

Date: 28-08-2024

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CENTERS PROMOTING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES DEMANDING AUTONOMY

Context

- Special centers established to promote Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia, following their designation as **classical languages**, are seeking **autonomy to enhance their effectiveness**.
 - ♦ The **four of the centres for classical languages** function under the aegis of the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysuru, the **centre for Tamil is autonomous**.

Need for Autonomous Special Centers

- **Financial Independence:** These centers currently function under the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysuru, which controls their financial operations. By becoming autonomous, these centers would have direct control over their finances, allowing them to plan and implement activities without delays.
- **Operational Flexibility:** Due to the lack of autonomy, these centers face challenges in managing day-to-day operations. Many approved posts for research scholars and administrative staff remain unfilled because of funding delays or restrictions.
- **Improved Governance and Accountability:** Autonomy would streamline decision-making processes, reducing the layers of bureaucracy that currently slow down operations.
- **Comparison with Tamil Language Center:** The Tamil language center, which already enjoys autonomy, serves as a successful model. Its ability to operate independently has allowed it to better fulfill its mandate.

Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL)

- It is a subordinate office of the **Ministry of Education**, was set up in **1969** at Mysore.
- The Institute promotes Indian languages through **several comprehensive schemes**.

Classical Languages in India

- **India has six classical languages** — Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia.
 - ♦ Tamil was declared a classical language in 2004, Sanskrit in 2005, Kannada in 2008, Telugu in 2008, Malayalam in 2013, and Odia in 2014.

- ♦ All the Classical Languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
- **Criteria:** It should have high antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1,500-2,000 years,
 - ♦ a body of ancient literature or texts that is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers,
 - ♦ the literary tradition should be original and not borrowed from another speech community,
 - ♦ the said language and literature should be distinct from its modern format.
- **Benefits:** Once a language is notified as a classical language, the Education Ministry provides certain benefits to promote it such as:
 - ♦ two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in the said languages,
 - ♦ a Centre of Excellence for Studies in the classical language is set up,
 - ♦ and the University Grants Commission is requested to start with a certain number of Chairs for the classical language at least in the Central Universities.
- **For the promotion of Sanskrit**, dedicated universities also receive funds directly from the Union Education Ministry.

Eighth Schedule

- The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists the **official languages of the Republic of India**.
- **Part XVII** of the Indian Constitution deals with the official languages in **Articles 343 to 351**.
- The Eighth Schedule includes the recognition of the following **22 languages**:
 - ♦ Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri are the 22 languages presently in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.
 - ♦ Of these languages, 14 were initially included in the Constitution. Subsequently, Sindhi was added in 1967; Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were added in 1992; and Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santali were added by the 92nd Amendment Act of 2003.

Source: TH

10 YEARS OF PRADHAN MANTRI JAN DHAN YOJANA (PMJDY)

Context

- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched in **2014 under the Ministry of Finance** has completed a **decade of successful implementation**.

About

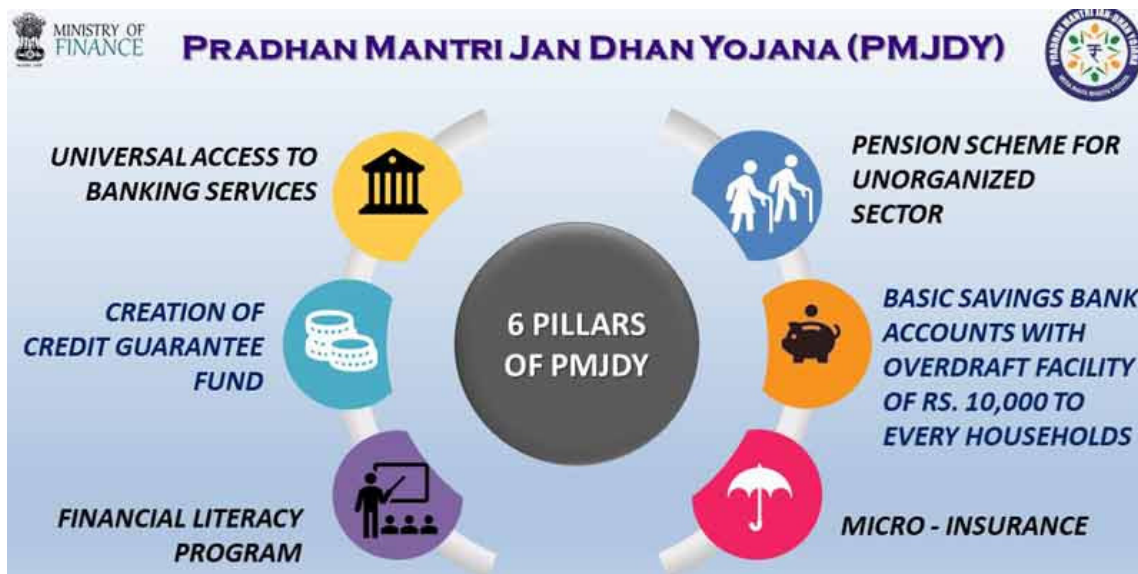
- PMJDY being the **largest financial inclusion initiative** to provide support to the marginalised and economically backward sections through its financial inclusion interventions.
- PMJDY provides one basic bank account for every unbanked adult.

Key Features of the Jan Dhan Yojana

- Under the PMJDY, individuals can open a basic savings bank deposit (BSBD) account at any bank branch or through a Business Correspondent ('Bank Mitra').

Key benefits of the scheme include:

- No requirement to maintain a minimum balance in PMJDY accounts;
- Interest earned on deposits in PMJDY accounts;
- Provision of a RuPay Debit card to account holders;
- Accident insurance cover of Rs 100,000 (increased to Rs 200,000 for new accounts opened after August 28, 2018) with the RuPay card;
- Overdraft facility of up to Rs 10,000 for eligible account holders;
- Eligibility for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), and Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Bank (MUDRA) scheme.



Significance

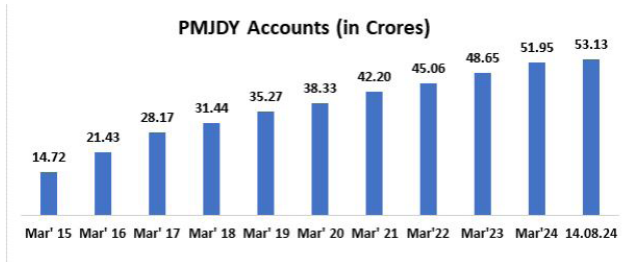
- The PMJDY serves as a platform for hassle-free subsidies/payments made by the government to the intended beneficiary without any middlemen, seamless transactions, and savings accumulation.
- They have been crucial in providing life and accident insurance to millions of unorganized sector workers through Jan Suraksha schemes (micro insurance schemes).

Successful Implementation of the Scheme

- The success of the initiative is reflected in **53**

crore people having been brought into the formal banking system through the opening of Jan Dhan Accounts.

- These bank accounts have garnered a deposit balance of **Rs. 2.3 lakh crore**, and resulted in the issuance of **over 36 crore free-of-cost RuPay cards**, which also provide for a 2 lakh accident insurance cover.
- 67%** of the accounts have been opened in **rural or semi-urban areas**, and **55%** of accounts have been opened by women.



Conclusion

- PMJDY's success highlights its mission-mode approach, regulatory support, public-private partnerships, and the importance of digital public infrastructure like Aadhaar for biometric identification.
- Account holders can now show saving patterns, which makes them eligible for loans from banks and financial institutions.
- PMJDY being the world's largest financial inclusion scheme, with its transformative power and its digital innovations have revolutionised financial inclusion in India.

Source: PIB

EDUCATION MINISTRY DEFINES LITERACY AND FULL LITERACY

Context

- In a letter to all States, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has defined '**literacy**,' and what it means to achieve '**full literacy**,' in the light of the renewed push for adult literacy under the **New India Literacy Programme (NILP)**.

What is literacy and full literacy?

- **The Ministry of Education (MoE), has stated that literacy** may be understood as the ability to read, write, and compute with comprehension, i.e. to identify, understand, interpret and create along with critical life skills such as digital literacy, financial literacy etc.
- **The full literacy**, to be considered equivalent to 100% literacy, will be achieving 95% literacy in a State/UT that may be considered as equivalent to fully literate.

New India Literacy Programme (NILP)

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to be implemented during **five years** from the **FYs 2022-23 to 2026-27** with financial outlay of Rs.1037.90 crore.
 - ♦ The central share is Rs.700.00 crore and the State share is Rs.337.90 crore.

- The scheme aims to cover a target of **5.00 crore non-literates** in the age group of **15 years** and above.
- **The Scheme has five components**; such as Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills, Vocational Skills Development, Basic Education and Continuing Education.

Beneficiaries under the scheme

- The beneficiaries are identified through **door to door surveys on Mobile App** by the surveyors in the States/UTs.
 - ♦ The non-literate can also avail the benefit of the scheme through **direct registration from any place** through mobile app.
- The teaching learning material and resources have been made available on the **DIKSHA platform** of NCERT and can be accessed through the mobile-apps.
 - ♦ Further, other modes like **TV, Radio, Samajik Chetna Kendra** etc. are also to be used for dissemination of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

Literacy Challenges in India

- As per Census 2011, the literacy rate in the country was **74% in 2011** as compared to 64.8% in 2001.
 - ♦ There are **25.76 crore non-literate** individuals in the 15 years and above age group, comprising **9.08 crore males** and **16.68 crore females**.
- Despite the progress made under the **Saakshar Bharat programme**, which certified 7.64 crore individuals as literate between 2009-10 and 2017-18, an estimated **18.12 crore adults in India remain non-literate**.

Reasons of low literacy in India

- **Educational Utility:** In rural areas, education may not be perceived as valuable due to limited economic opportunities, leading to lower enrollment rates.
 - ♦ Additionally, the availability of schools nearby is often limited, further restricting access to education.
- **Caste disparities:** Discrimination against lower castes has resulted in high dropout rates and low enrollment rates.
- **Female Literacy:** A significant proportion of illiterate individuals in India are women, contributing to the overall low literacy rate.

- **Lack of Basic Facilities:** The absence of essential facilities like drinking water, toilets, and electricity in schools deter attendance, particularly for girls.

Challenges faced by non-literate individuals

- Non-literate individuals often face social stigma, which can lead to **low self-esteem and marginalization** within their communities.
- The increasing **reliance on digital technology** for communication, education, and services exclude non-literate individuals.
- Non-literate individuals are excluded from higher productivity sectors that require technical skills or formal education, **limiting their economic mobility** and keeping them in cycles of poverty.
- The cycle of illiteracy can **continue across generations**, as children of non-literate parents may be at a higher risk of dropping out of school or not receiving the educational support they need.

Government Initiatives

- **Nipun Bharat:** it was launched with a vision to ensure universal literacy and numeracy for **Class 3 children by 2026-27**.
 - ♦ It envisaged a five-tier implementation mechanism, set up at the National- State- District- Block- School level in all States and UTs, under the aegis of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Samagra Shiksha.
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan:** An integrated scheme for school education, covering Pre-school to Class XII. It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education.
- **The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020:** It has provisions for the National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools.
 - ♦ It also aims to identify state-wise targets and goals to be achieved by **2025**.
- **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS):** Provides vocational training and skill development to non-literate and neo-literate individuals, with a focus on rural areas.

Concluding remarks

- The initiatives reflect the government's commitment to improving literacy and educational outcomes across India, with a focus on inclusivity and equity.
- The potential of technology should be harnessed in improving literacy rates in India by making

education more accessible, interactive, and tailored to the needs of diverse learners.

Source:TH

UNREST IN THE BALOCHISTAN REGION

In News

- Recent large-scale protests in Balochistan underscore the issues of governance and deep-seated ethnic tensions in Pakistan.

About

- Balochistan is a region with a distinct cultural and historical identity that is now divided between three countries mainly Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.
- Recent large-scale protests in Balochistan were organized by the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) to address human rights violations, resource exploitation, and inadequate basic amenities.
- **Women's Participation:** Women, including Mahrang Baloch, have played a significant role in the protests, highlighting their deep discontent with government actions.

Reasons for Turmoil

- **Balochistan's political** history includes a failed bid for independence in 1947, coercive incorporation into Pakistan in 1948, and significant regional discontent due to the centralization of power.
- **Economic Disparities:** Despite being resource-rich, Balochistan remains economically underdeveloped.
 - ♦ The exploitation of resources has not benefited the local population, contributing to regional grievances.
- **Human Rights Issues:** The region faces enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, deepening discontent and fueling further unrest.
- **China's role**
 - ♦ China has emerged as a major player in Balochistan and has invested in mining, energy, airports and expressway projects as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC begins in Kashgar, China, traverses through the length of Pakistan and ends in Gwadar
 - ♦ China's investment in Balochistan through CPEC projects has led to concerns about militarization, displacement of local

communities, and lack of tangible benefits for the Baloch people.

- **Insurgency and Security Response:** An armed insurgency against security forces and CPEC projects has intensified, leading to a harsher security response from the Pakistani government

Impact

- The protests led to clashes with security forces, resulting in fatalities, detentions, and increased prices of necessities due to blockades in major towns.
- The security forces' crackdown and blockade of major thoroughfares in many towns and cities, such as Gwadar, Hub, Mastung and Quetta, resulted in a sharp increase in the prices of necessities such as food, medicine, and petrol

Suggestions and Way Forward

- The situation in Balochistan reflects broader challenges in Pakistan's nation-building efforts, particularly in balancing ethnic and religious identities and providing provincial autonomy.
- There are calls for a more compassionate approach to address Balochistan's issues, emphasizing the need for local stakeholder involvement and addressing socio-economic disparities.

Source: TH

INDIA-BRAZIL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Context

- India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar co-chaired the **9th India-Brazil Joint Commission** with his Brazilian counterpart Mauro Vieira in New Delhi.

About

- India's External Affairs Minister said that The India-Brazil strategic partnership has "**deepened and diversified**" over the years. It **spans defense, space, security, technology, and people-to-people relations**, strengthening ties across various domains.
- India reiterated its **full support to the Brazilian G20 presidency** as it is currently the chair of the bloc.
 - ♦ The G20 presidency was relayed to Brazil by India last year.

Major Highlights of India and Brazil Relations

- **Strategic Partnership:** Relations were established in 1948, and the two countries have been Strategic Partners since 2006.
 - ♦ Both sides also have several Joint Working Groups to take forward sectoral cooperation.
- **Trade Relations:** In 2022, the **bilateral trade expanded by 32%** to US\$15.2 billion (India's exports US\$8.8 billion & Imports – US\$6.4 billion).
 - ♦ India and Brazil have established **Trade Monitoring Mechanism** as an institutional mechanism to monitor and identify bottlenecks in bilateral trade and take appropriate measures to address them.
- **Defence & Security Cooperation:** India and Brazil signed an agreement in **2003** for cooperation in defense. Meetings of the **Joint Defence Committee (JDC)** are held as an institutionalized mechanism for defense cooperation.
- **Security Cooperation:** India and Brazil established a **Strategic Dialogue mechanism in 2006** to cover regional and global issues of mutual concern.
 - ♦ The two countries have an Extradition Treaty, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters and an Agreement of Transfer of Sentenced Persons in place.
- **Space Cooperation:** India and Brazil signed a framework agreement for **peaceful use of outer space** in **2004** as well an Agreement for inter-institutional cooperation between the space agencies.
 - ♦ Both countries have been collaborating in Data sharing and satellite tracking of Indian satellites.
- **Multifora Relations:** India and Brazil share a very close and multifaceted relationship both at bilateral level as well as in plurilateral fora such as BRICS, BASIC (a bloc consisting of Brazil, South Africa, India and China), G-20, G-4, IBSA, International Solar Alliance, as well as in the larger multilateral bodies such as the UN, WTO, UNESCO, and WIPO.

Challenges in the Relations

- **Geopolitical Competition:** Both India and Brazil are emerging powers with aspirations for greater global influence. This leads to competition, particularly in international forums like the United Nations, where both countries seek greater representation and influence.

- **Trade Barriers:** Trade between India and Brazil has not reached its full potential, partly due to various trade barriers and protectionist measures in both countries. These barriers hinder the growth of bilateral trade and investment.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Improving infrastructure and connectivity between the two countries remains a challenge.

Way Ahead

- Overcoming the challenges requires sustained diplomatic efforts, enhanced economic cooperation, and a commitment to finding common ground on global issues.
- Despite the obstacles, the potential benefits of a stronger India-Brazil partnership make overcoming these challenges a worthwhile endeavor.

Source: TH

RIGHT TO DISCONNECT IN AUSTRALIA: BALANCING WORK AND LIFE

Context

- Recently, **Australia** has implemented a regulation known as the “**right to disconnect**,” which permits employees to disregard communications from their employers after hours.

About the Right to Disconnect of Australia

- It allows employees to ignore communications from their employers after regular working hours.
- The primary goal of this policy is to alleviate the stress associated with being constantly available and responsive outside of work hours.
- It recognises that employees need dedicated downtime to recharge and maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- The Australian government joins more than 20 other countries in adopting similar rules, mostly in Europe and Latin America.

How does it work?

- Employees now have the **option to decline calls or texts** from their employers **after work hours** without fearing negative consequences.
- Employers are not forbidden from reaching out to employees outside regular business hours, but the new law empowers workers to decide when it's reasonable to engage.

- Disagreements regarding communication after hours should be resolved directly between the employer and the employee.
 - ♦ If needed, the **Fair Work Commission (FWC)** can mediate disputes.
 - ♦ The FWC has the authority to order employers to stop contacting workers after hours or, conversely, require a worker to respond if their refusal is deemed unreasonable.
- **Noncompliance with the FWC's instructions** can result in significant fines: up to **A\$19,000 for individuals** and up to **A\$94,000 for enterprises**.

Implications and Perspectives

- **Work-Life Balance:** Right to disconnect enhances work-life balance. It acknowledges that employees should have dedicated time away from work-related communication.
 - ♦ Some worry that rigid boundaries might hinder flexibility. For instance, certain roles (e.g., emergency services) require constant availability.
- **Employer Obligations:** Some emphasise that employers have a duty to protect employees' well-being. Constant digital connectivity can lead to burnout and stress.
 - ♦ However some argue that strict regulations could hinder business productivity, especially in a globalised, interconnected economy.
- **Technology and Culture:** The right to disconnect reflects evolving norms around technology use. It acknowledges that being “always on” isn't sustainable.
 - ♦ However, some argue that tech companies should design tools that encourage healthy boundaries rather than perpetuating constant connectivity.

Global Precedents

- **France:** Pioneered the ‘right to disconnect’ in 2017, allowing employees to ignore work-related emails outside working hours.
- **Portugal, Belgium, and Ireland:** Followed suit, emphasising the need for balance.

Conclusion

- Australia's “right to disconnect” law acknowledges the importance of personal time and mental well-being.
- It's a positive shift that recognises that work should not encroach upon every aspect of our lives.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

BAN OF FIXED-DOSE COMBINATION (FDC) DRUGS

In News

- The government has banned 156 fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs, including popular medicines such as Cheston Cold and Foracet, used for cold and fever and pain respectively.

About

- A total of 499 FDCs have been banned since 2014. The problem of irrational FDCs was first highlighted in 2012.
- A committee set up in 2014 found 963 such drugs to be irrational and suggested their ban. The government's recent action is part of an ongoing effort to eliminate these from the market
- The 2019 rules require FDCs to be treated as new drugs, needing central approval, which has reduced the number of irrational combinations in the market.
 - ♦ The **Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA)** supports the ban, citing previous committee reviews and emphasizing patient safety

What are Fixed-dose Combination (FDC) Drugs?

- They are medications containing more than one active ingredient in a single dosage form, often used to treat conditions requiring multiple drugs, such as tuberculosis and diabetes, to improve adherence to treatment.
 - ♦ The ban includes combinations for gastrointestinal issues, anti-allergic medications, skin treatments, migraine and nausea, menstrual cramps, and erectile dysfunction.

Reason for the Ban

- **No Therapeutic Benefits:** These FDCs were termed "irrational" by the government, meaning **they offer no therapeutic benefit** or contain ingredients that don't work well together or aren't necessary for patients to take together.
 - ♦ Patients might end up consuming unnecessary drugs. For example, Cheston Cold combines paracetamol, cetirizine, and phenylephrine, which may not all be needed for every patient.
- **Impact on the Market:** Manufacturers have been ordered to stop producing, stocking, and selling these drugs immediately, though they may still

be available for some time due to potential legal challenges

- **Health Impact:** Consuming these banned FDCs now is unlikely to cause harm, but their continued use poses risks like antibiotic resistance and unnecessary medication.
 - ♦ Despite earlier bans, FDCs have increased in proportion, particularly antibiotic FDCs, with many being potentially inappropriate and not recommended by WHO.

Source : IE

IMDX MPOX DETECTION RT-PCR ASSAY

Context

- The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation** has granted approval to Siemens Healthineers for the manufacture of RT-PCR testing kits for **detection of Mpox**.

About

- The **World Health Organization** has classified the outbreak of **Mpox as a global health emergency**.
- A new strain of the disease has spread beyond the **Democratic Republic of Congo** for the first time to at least 12 other African countries.

What is Mpox?

- **Mpox, previously known as monkeypox**, is a viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus, a species of the **genus Orthopoxvirus**.
 - ♦ There are two distinct clades of the virus: **clade I** (with subclades Ia and Ib) and **clade II** (with subclades IIa and IIb).
- **Common symptoms:** Skin rash or mucosal lesions which can last 2–4 weeks accompanied by fever, headache, muscle aches, and swollen lymph nodes.
- **Transmission:** It can be transmitted through close contact with someone who has mpox, with contaminated materials, or with infected animals.
- **Treatment:** Mpox is treated with supportive care, with close attention to nutrition, hydration, skin care, prevention of secondary infections and treatment of co-infections, including HIV where present.
- **Prevention:** There are vaccines for Mpox. Vaccination should be considered along with other public health interventions.

Source: TH

HP INCREASES MINIMUM AGE OF MARRIAGE FOR WOMEN

Context

- In a significant move towards gender equality and promoting higher education, the **Himachal Pradesh** State Assembly recently passed the '**Prohibition of Child Marriage (Himachal Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2024**'.

About

- The **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** was enacted to prevent the solemnisation of child marriages and address related matters.
- The Bill proposes raising the minimum age of marriage for girls **from 18 to 21 years**.
 - It aims to provide gender equality and create opportunities for girls to pursue higher education and personal development.
- Himachal Pradesh proudly claims the title of being the **first state in India** to enact legislation increasing the marriage age of girls to 21.

Why is it significant?

- Early marriages can hinder not only a woman's career but also her physical development.
- By increasing the minimum marriage age, the state aims to empower women and ensure they have more choices and opportunities.

Source: TH

54TH FOUNDATION DAY OF BPR&D

Context

- Recently, the Union Home Minister attended the 54th Foundation Day celebration of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) in New Delhi.

Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)

- About:**
 - It was established **formally in 1970 and replaced the Police Research Advisory Council which was formed in 1966**. It operates under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
 - It envisions **transforming Indian police forces into SMART** (Strategic, Modern, Agile, Responsive, and Technologically equipped) forces capable of meeting the challenges of policing and internal security effectively.

- Mission and Vision:**

- To promote systematic and rapid research on police and prison-related issues in a dynamic and evolving society.
- To apply scientific and technological advancements to enhance policing methods and techniques across the country.

- Key Functions and Divisions:**

- Training and Modernization Division:** This division formulates quality standards for police training and focuses on capacity building.

- It ensures that law enforcement personnel receive the necessary intellectual, material, and organisational resources to excel in their roles.

- The **Gore-Committee (1971)** studied the training aspects of police and gave several recommendations.

- The Government created a **Training Division (1973)** in addition to the two divisions already existing to function under the Bureau.

- It actively engages with training initiatives, including **iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training)**, which provides online training to government employees.

- Special Project Division:** It specialises in critical areas such as internet security, human trafficking, gender issues, and problems faced by senior citizens. It also publishes valuable research in policing and administration.

- Research and Correctional Administration Division:** Responsible for conducting research in key policing areas, this division contributes to evidence-based policy formulation and correctional practices.

Source: DD News

INDIA WILL GET THE FIRST QUANTUM COMPUTER UNDER NQM

In News

- India's first quantum computer will be launched under the **National Quantum Mission**.

About

- The goal of the mission is to establish a quantum computer with a computation of **20-50 qubits** in the next three years, **50-100 qubits in the next**

five years and 50-1000 qubits in the next 10 years.

- It is essential for India to have its own homegrown quantum computer. For instance, China has the highest investment numbers by state into quantum computing surpassing even the US.
- And, India needs its **own computing capabilities** to fend off attacks on the critical digital infrastructure.
- Quantum technology will impact computing, communication, cryptography, and sensing, with applications across healthcare, finance, and defense

About National Quantum Mission

- It was approved by the Union Cabinet on 19th April 2023.
- Total cost: 6003.65 crore from 2023-24 to 2030-31.
- **Implementation Strategy:** Establish four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) in top academic and National R&D institutes focusing on:
 - ♦ Quantum Computing
 - ♦ Quantum Communication
 - ♦ Quantum Sensing & Metrology
 - ♦ Quantum Materials & Devices
 - ♦ Promote R&D through basic and applied research in mandated areas.
- **Mission Objectives:** Develop intermediate-scale quantum computers using various platforms like superconducting and photonic technology.
 - ♦ Establish satellite-based secure quantum communications between ground stations over 2000 km within India.
 - ♦ Enable long-distance secure quantum communications with other countries
 - ♦ **Quantum Computing Goals:** Short-term: Achieve 20-50 qubits in three years.
 - Medium-term: 50-100 qubits in five years.
 - Long-term: 50-1000 qubits in ten years.
- **Impact:** Elevate India's Technology Development ecosystem to global competitiveness.
 - ♦ Benefit various sectors including communication, health, financial, and energy.
 - ♦ Applications in areas such as drug design, space, banking, and security.
 - ♦ Support national initiatives like Digital India, Make in India, Skill India, Stand-up India, Start-up India, Self-reliant India, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Source : TH

SATISH KUMAR: NEW CHAIRMAN OF RAILWAY BOARD

Context

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved the appointment of Satish Kumar as the Chairman and CEO of Railway Board.
 - ♦ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) is a high-level committee headed by the PM responsible for appointing senior officials to key positions in the central government and public sector undertakings.

About Railway Board

- The Railway Board was established in 1905 as a part of the British Indian government's efforts to better manage the expanding railway network.
- It serves as the apex body responsible for the administration, operation, and policy formulation of Indian Railways.
- The Railway Board is headed by the Chairman and CEO, who is the administrative and operational head of Indian Railways.

Source: TH

HOOLOCK GIBBONS

Context

- Assam wildlife department has recommended to the Centre that forest clearance be granted for oil and gas exploration in the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of the **Hollongapar Gibbon wildlife sanctuary**.

Hollongapar Gibbon wildlife sanctuary

- It is an isolated protected area of evergreen forest located in **Jorhat district of Assam**. The sanctuary was officially established and renamed in **1997**.
- It contains **India's only gibbons** – the hoolock gibbons, and Northeastern India's only nocturnal primate – the Bengal slow loris.

Hoolock Gibbons

- Gibbons are the smallest and fastest of all apes. **The hoolock gibbon**, unique to India's northeast, is one of 20 species of gibbons.
- **Distribution:** It is found in forested areas from eastern India and Bangladesh to Myanmar and southern China.

- **Habitat:** This species is found in thick evergreen, mixed evergreen, and scrub forest throughout its natural range.
- **Appearance:** Hoolock gibbons are characterized by longer hair, curved white brow streaks, and faintly triangular-shaped head.



- **Diet:** These animals are generally frugivorous, but fruits may be mixed with insects, leaves, and other vegetable matter.
- **Threats:** Habitat loss and hunting for food.
- **Conservation Status:** Endangered in the IUCN Redlist, while the eastern hoolock is listed as Vulnerable.
 - ◆ Both the species are listed on Schedule 1 of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act 1972.

Source: IE

SUDAN

Context

- The **Arbaat Dam in eastern Sudan** has collapsed following heavy rainfall, causing severe flooding.

About Sudan

- Located in the north eastern part of Africa, it is Africa's **3rd largest** country by area. Before the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan was the largest country in Africa.
- It is **bordered** with the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, Egypt to the north, Eritrea to the east, Ethiopia to the southeast, Libya to the northwest, South Sudan to the south and the Red Sea.
- It is also home to the **longest river** in the world, the River Nile.
 - ◆ The White and Blue Niles meet in **Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan**, and merge to become the Nile River that flows all the way to the Mediterranean Sea via Egypt.



Source: TH

