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LOKPAL FORMS INQUIRY WING TO PROBE GRAFT CASES AGAINST PUBLIC SERVANTS

Context

- Anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal has constituted an inquiry wing for conducting preliminary probe into graft-related offenses committed by public servants.

Inquiry Wing of Lokpal

- To discharge its statutory functions, **Section 11 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013**, obligates the Lokpal to constitute an inquiry wing.
 - ♦ The purpose of the wing is conducting preliminary inquiry into any offense punishable under the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988**, alleged to have been committed by the specified public servants and functionaries.
- **The Lokpal chairperson** has been **authorized to commence the selection process** for appointment of a specified number of suitable persons as officers and staff required to provide logistical assistance in the inquiry wing.

Structure of the Inquiry Wing

- The bench of the **Lokpal had approved organogram providing for the staffing pattern** and specified number of suitable officers and staff for the inquiry wing.
- According to the organogram, there will be a **Director of Inquiry** under the Lokpal chairperson.
 - ♦ The director will be assisted by **three Superintendents of Police (SPs)** — SP (general), SP (economic and banking) and SP (cyber).
 - ♦ Each SP will be further assisted by inquiry officers and other staff.

Lokpal in India

- In India, the **ombudsman is known as Lokpal (“protector of people”)** or Lokayukta (People’s appointee).
- The Lokpal, established as an independent anti-corruption ombudsman at the central level to investigate allegations of corruption against public officials, including PM, derives authority from the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**.
 - ♦ **Social activist Anna Hazare’s movement** against corruption in 2011 fueled public demand, leading to the eventual passage of the Lokpal Act.

Structure of Lokpal

- The institution of Lokpal is a **statutory body** established by the **Lokpal Act 2013**.
- **Members:** Lokpal is a multi member body, made up of **one chairperson and maximum of 8 members**.
 - ♦ **Half members will be judicial members** and should be either a former Judge of the Supreme Court or a former Chief Justice of a High Court.
 - ♦ The non-judicial member should be an eminent person with impeccable integrity and outstanding ability.
 - ♦ Minimum fifty per cent of the Members will be from SC / ST / OBC / Minorities and women.
- **Selection committee:** The members are appointed by the president on the recommendation of a selection committee, composed of:
 - ♦ The Prime Minister who is the Chairperson;
 - ♦ Speaker of Lok Sabha ,
 - ♦ Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha ,
 - ♦ Chief Justice of India or a Judge nominated by him / her, and One eminent jurist.

Jurisdiction of Lokpal

- The jurisdiction of the Lokpal will include the Prime Minister except on: Allegations of corruption relating to international relations, security, the public order, atomic energy and space.
- **Ministers and MPs:** The Lokpal will also have jurisdiction over Ministers and MPs except not in the matter of anything said in Parliament or a vote given there.
- **Public Servants:** Lokpal’s jurisdiction will cover all categories of public servants within and outside India.
- **Related to CBI:** It has the powers to superintendence over, and to give direction to CBI.
 - ♦ If Lokpal has referred a case to CBI, the investigating officer in such case cannot be transferred without the approval of Lokpal.

Issue with Lokpal

- **Operational Delays:** Operational efficiency is hampered by delays in appointments. For instance, there was a 21-month delay in appointing a new Lokpal after the post fell vacant in May 2022.

- ♦ Although the Lokpal Act was enacted in 2014, the institution only became functional in 2019, which reflects significant delays in its operationalization.
- **Pending Complaints:** According to recent data, the Lokpal has a backlog of pending complaints. As of July 2024, **52 graft-related complaints** were still awaiting action, indicating that the institution struggles to manage its caseload effectively.
- **Jurisdictional Conflicts:** Overlapping jurisdictions with other vigilance agencies cause conflicts, creating confusion over authority and responsibility in investigations, which delays action against corrupt officials.
- **Prosecution Wing Not Constituted:** Despite the provision in the Lokpal Act for setting up a prosecution wing headed by a Director of Prosecution, this has yet to be constituted.
- **Political Influence and Interference:** The Lokpal's appointment committee includes members from political parties, which raises concerns about political interference.
- **Ambiguity in Selection of Eminent Jurists:** The vague criteria for appointing "eminent jurists" and "persons of integrity" can be manipulated to favor political choices.
- **No Constitutional Backing:** The Lokpal lacks constitutional status, which weakens its institutional authority and durability.

Way Forward

- The Lokpal remains a significant institution in India's fight against corruption. A powerful and independent Lokpal can play a pivotal role in **fostering a culture of transparency and accountability** within the Indian government.
- By addressing the challenges and implementing necessary reforms, India can maximize the effectiveness of this crucial anti-corruption institution.
- There is a need to **grant greater powers to the Lokpal** to independently initiate investigations, enforce prosecutions, and implement punishments to enhance its effectiveness.

Source: BS

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Context

- The Union government under PM Modi will implement the 'One Nation One Election' in its current tenure.

Background

- **Simultaneous Elections (One Nation One Election)** refer to the idea of holding Lok Sabha and State legislative assembly elections together, with the aim of reducing the frequency of elections and their associated costs.
- Simultaneous elections in India to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies were held in the years **1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967**.
- Thereafter, the schedule could not be maintained and the elections to the Lok Sabha and the State legislative assembly have still not been realigned.
- The issue of simultaneous elections was highlighted by Prime Minister Modi in **2014**, and a **committee headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind** also looked into the issue.

Suggestions of the Ram Nath Kovind Panel

- **Opting Step wise Process:** According to the panel, simultaneous polls to Lok Sabha and state assembly elections can be held in the 1st step, followed by local body (municipal and panchayat) polls within **100 days** in the second step.
- **In case of hung House,** No-confidence motion, fresh elections could be held only for the remaining term of the immediately preceding full term of the House.
- **Constitution Amendments Needed:** The panel has recommended amendments to **Article 83** (duration of Houses of Parliament) and **Article 172** (duration of State legislatures) of the Constitution.
 - ♦ This constitutional amendment will not need ratification by the States.
- **Ratification of states:** The panel also recommended amendments to Constitution which requires ratification by the States;
 - ♦ **Article 324A** of the Constitution to allow simultaneous elections in panchayats and municipalities; and
 - ♦ **Article 325** to allow the Election Commission of India (ECI), in consultation with State election authorities, to prepare a common electoral roll and voter ID cards.

Arguments In Favour of One Nation One Election

- It will **reduce the huge expenditure** incurred for conducting separate elections every year.

- The problem of frequent elections leads to imposition of the Moral Code of Conduct over prolonged periods of time which affects the normal governance. Simultaneous elections can overcome such issues.
- Simultaneous elections will **free the crucial manpower** which is often deployed for prolonged periods on election duties.
- The **focus on governance will increase**, instead of being constantly in election mode.

Arguments Against One Nation One Election

- All states and the central government face **massive logistical challenges** including coordinating the schedules, resources etc.
- It may **help the dominant national party** or the incumbent at the Centre at the cost of regional parties and regions issues can be overshadowed by the national issues.

Way Ahead

- Synchronized polls for all 3 tiers of government will improve governance architecture. It will enhance “transparency, inclusivity, ease and confidence of voters.
- The **22nd Law Commission**, examining the simultaneous polls issue, is expected to recommend simultaneous polls from the **2029** general election cycle.

Source: TH

DPIIT TO LAUNCH BHASKAR INITIATIVE

In News

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is set to launch the **Bharat Startup Knowledge Access Registry (BHASKAR)**.

About

- This digital platform is a part of the Startup India program and aims to strengthen India’s startup ecosystem by centralizing resources and enhancing collaboration among startups, investors, mentors, service providers, and government bodies.
- To be recognized as a startup under the Startup India initiative, the entity must be a private limited company, LLP, or partnership firm that is less than 10 years old, with an annual turnover not exceeding ₹100 crore.

Key highlights of BHASKAR

- **Centralized platform:** A one-stop hub for stakeholders to access resources, tools, and knowledge, helping entrepreneurs from ideation to execution.
- **Networking and collaboration:** The platform will facilitate seamless interaction and partnerships within the ecosystem.
- **Personalized IDs:** Each stakeholder will receive a unique BHASKAR ID, enhancing discoverability and tailored experiences.
- **Global recognition:** The initiative will boost India’s reputation as a hub for innovation and encourage cross-border collaborations.

Significance

- BHASKAR will help unlock the potential of India’s startup ecosystem, fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation. This initiative aligns with the government’s vision of making India a global leader in innovation and economic growth.

India’ Startup Ecosystem

- India is the third-largest startup hub globally after the U.S. and China and it has over 1,46,000 recognized startups.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) recognizes a business as a startup.
- The adoption of cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and data analytics is helping drive this innovation.

Government Initiatives for Boosting Startups

- The Startup India initiative, launched in 2016, plays a crucial role in promoting startups by providing benefits like tax exemptions, simplified regulations, and access to funding through Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS).
- Other initiatives like Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) by NITI Aayog and Make in India Initiative.

Source: PIB

ROAD CONNECTIVITY PROJECT FOR LWE AFFECTED AREAS (RCPLWE)

In News

The Centre has doubled the allocation of funds under the **Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas (RCPLWEA)** for financial year 2024-25,

- Earlier, the Union Home Minister announced that Left Wing Extremism will be “completely eradicated” in the country before March 2026.

About RCPLWEA

- It is a separate vertical under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).
- It is aimed at providing all-weather road connectivity with culverts and cross-drainage structures in 44 worst-affected Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) districts and adjoining districts in nine states, which are “critical from security and communication point of view”.
- **Covered states** :Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh
- **Major allocations include:**
 - ♦ Chhattisgarh: Rs 200 crore
 - ♦ Jharkhand: Rs 200 crore
 - ♦ Andhra Pradesh: Rs 150 crore
 - ♦ Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh: Rs 140 crore each.
- **Objectives** : The project aims to drive socio-economic development, strengthen rural livelihoods, and address strategic security needs in LWE-affected areas, which have historically lacked infrastructure.

Other related Efforts

- **Constitutional Framework** : Police and Public Order are state subjects, but the Indian Government supplements state efforts against Left Wing Extremism (LWE).
- **National Policy**: Approved in 2015, it includes security measures, development interventions, and ensuring local rights.
 - ♦ Measures include providing Central Armed Police Forces, training, modernizing state police, and infrastructure support.
- **Other initiatives** include instilling confidence in development and calling on LWE-affiliated youth to abandon violence and join national development efforts.
- **Development Initiatives**: Road Network: 14,395 km roads built, with 11,474 km in the last 10 years.
 - ♦ Telecom Connectivity: 5,139 towers installed.
 - ♦ Financial Inclusion: 1,007 bank branches, 937 ATMs, and 5,731 post offices opened.
 - ♦ Skill Development: 46 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 49 Skill Development Centres (SDCs) established.

- ♦ Education: 130 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in tribal areas.
- **Progress** : Violence Reduction: LWE incidents down 73% from 2010 levels; deaths reduced by 86%.
 - ♦ LWE-affected districts reduced from 126 in 2013 to 38 in 2024.
 - ♦ Reporting LWE violence decreased from 465 in 2010 to 89 in mid-2024.
 - ♦ The security forces have significantly impacted LWE's financing and operational capacities.
 - ♦ Significant reductions in violence and spread of LWE, with continued progress in infrastructure and development.

Source: IE

BRAIN-INSPIRED ANALOG COMPUTING PLATFORM

Context

- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have developed a brain-inspired analog computing platform capable of storing and processing data in an astonishing **16,500 conductance states** within a molecular film.

About

- This new technology represents a significant advancement from traditional binary computing systems, venturing into the domain of **neuromorphic or brain-inspired analog computing**.
- Unlike conventional computers, which follow predefined programming, neuromorphic systems have the **capability to learn from their environment**, potentially elevating artificial intelligence to new levels.

Revolutionizing AI hardware

- This neuromorphic platform could potentially bring complex AI tasks, such as **training Large Language Models (LLMs)** — like ChatGPT — to personal devices like laptops and smartphones.
- The technology addresses two major hurdles in AI development: **lack of optimal hardware and energy inefficiency**.
- The molecular system at the heart of this innovation utilizes the natural movement of ions to process and store data in a manner similar to the human brain, creating a **“molecular diary”** that functions like a computer but with far greater energy efficiency and space-saving capabilities.

Precision and efficiency

- The innovation overcomes significant challenges to achieve the precision needed to measure the molecular states.
- A custom circuit board has been designed capable of **measuring voltages as tiny as a millionth of a volt** at very fast sampling rates, setting a new benchmark for electronic accuracy.

Future Prospects

- Researchers feel that the breakthrough could **position India as a leader in global technology innovation**, particularly in AI hardware development.
- In the context of the **India Semiconductor Mission**, this development could be a game-changer, revolutionizing industrial, consumer and strategic applications.

Large Language Models (LLMs)

- A large language model (LLM) is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm that uses **deep learning techniques** and massively large data sets to understand, summarize, generate and predict new content.
- Deep learning involves the probabilistic analysis of unstructured data, which eventually enables the deep learning model to recognize distinctions between pieces of content without human intervention.
- It helps to understand how characters, words, and sentences function together.

Source: TH

CHINA'S CARBON MARKET

Context

- China is seeking public feedback on a **plan to include cement, steel, and aluminium production** in its **carbon emissions trading scheme (ETS)**.

China's Carbon Market

- China's carbon market consists of a **mandatory emission trading system (ETS)** and a voluntary greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction trading market, also known as the **China Certified Emission Reduction (CCER) scheme**.
- The ETS will eventually include **eight major emitting sectors** including power generation, steel, building materials, non-ferrous metals,

petrochemicals, chemicals, paper and civil aviation, which together account for **75% of China's total emissions**.

- The two schemes operate independently but are interconnected via a mechanism that allows firms to **buy CCERs on the voluntary market to meet their compliance targets under the ETS**.

What is the Emission Trading System?

- ETS started trading in **2021** on the **Shanghai Environment and Energy Exchange**.
- Under the scheme, firms are granted a **quota of free certified emission allowances (CEAs)**.
 - ♦ If actual emissions exceed a company's quota during a given compliance period, it must **buy more allowances** from the market to cover the gap. If its emissions are lower, it **can sell its surplus CEAs**.
- Allocations are decided not by absolute emission levels, but by **industry carbon intensity benchmarks set by the government**, which are reduced over time.
 - ♦ Emitters are obliged to submit key parameters on a monthly basis and report emission data every year.
- Since its inception, it has become the **world's largest emissions trading platform**, covering about 5.1 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, around **40% of China's total**.

Carbon Markets

- Carbon markets are **trading systems** in which **carbon credits are sold and bought**.
- Companies or individuals can use carbon markets to **compensate for their greenhouse gas emissions** by purchasing carbon credits from entities that remove or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **One tradable carbon credit equals one tonne of carbon dioxide** or the equivalent amount of a different greenhouse gas reduced, sequestered or avoided.
- When a credit is used to reduce, sequester, or avoid emissions, **it becomes an offset and is no longer tradable**.
- There are broadly **two types of carbon markets: compliance and voluntary**.
 - ♦ **Compliance markets** are created as a result of any national, regional and/or international policy or regulatory requirement.
 - ♦ **Voluntary carbon markets** – national and international – refer to the issuance, buying and selling of carbon credits, on a voluntary basis.

Significance

- By putting a price on carbon, it encourages companies **to find cost-effective ways to reduce emissions.**
- Companies can choose how and where they reduce emissions, potentially leading to more **innovative solutions.**
- Offsetting mechanisms can fund projects that contribute to **environmental sustainability.**
- Carbon finance will be key for the implementation of the **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, and the **Paris Agreement.**

Source: IE

GOVERNANCE OF COMMONS

Context

- Delhi hosted a first-of-its-kind **dialogue on the conservation, restoration and governance of common resources** usually referred to just as **Commons.**

What are Commons?

- Commons is a term used to refer to resources that are **not owned by any individual or group or the government**, but belong to, and are shared by, the **community as a whole.**
 - ♦ Forests, local ponds, grazing lands, rivers, and sacred sites are all Commons. In the urban setting, parks and lakes are Commons.
 - ♦ They provide a variety of **ecological and other services** that are beneficial for the entire community.
- **Intangible Commons:** Language, folk art or dance, local customs, and traditional knowledge are all shared resources, and thus are Commons.
- **At the international level,** the polar regions, the Arctic and Antarctica, are considered global Commons.
- Outer space, the Moon, and other planetary bodies are also **global Commons.**
- **In the digital age,** most Internet and open-source software are Commons.
 - ♦ Digital resources with creative commons licences are meant to be used freely by everyone.
- **No country is allowed to take ownership** of these areas, even though everyone can use them for certain kinds of activities.

Need to Govern Commons

- They need to be maintained, preserved, and used sustainably.

- As these resources are accessible to all, they face a greater threat of over-exploitation and damage.
- Since no one owns Commons, the responsibility of maintenance and upkeep often becomes a problem.
- Commons have also come under increased stress due to climate change.

Governance of Commons

- There are **international agreements**, for the use and management of **polar regions, outer space, and high seas.**
 - ♦ **The Paris Agreement on climate change**, which seeks to maintain a liveable planet for everyone, is an example.
- **In urban areas**, municipalities or other structures of local governance take care of the Commons.
- **At rural levels**, the governance of Commons is often not very well-defined or is non-existent.
 - ♦ Local communities do get involved but in most cases, lack the resources or the legal sanction to manage these common spaces.

Do you know?

- **Elinor Ostrom** studied with several local communities across the globe and provided plenty of evidence to show that **community-led governance structures** resulted in more sustainable management of common spaces.
- It fetched her a **Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009**, the **first for a woman**, culminating in a book titled *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action.*
- Ostrom's ideas now form the **backbone of the governance structures of Commons in many parts of the world.**

Forest Rights Act and its significance

- In India, the **2006 Forest Rights Act (FRA)** is considered a good template for managing common forest resources.
- The Act gives **individual and community ownership rights** to forest-dwellers to live in and carry out their livelihood in the forest areas.
- The FRA recognised the **legal rights of the forest dwellers over the land.**

Conclusion

- Nearly **one-fourth of India's landmass**, about 205 million acres, is estimated to be Commons, comprising **community forests, pastures or water bodies.**

- Almost **350 million rural people** depend on these Commons for their livelihoods.
- These Commons are estimated to **generate economic value worth about Rs 6.6 lakh crore annually**, through the provision of goods and ecological services.
- FRA is a good model for forest land but similar **frameworks need to be developed for other common resources**, particularly areas that are officially classified as wasteland.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

INTEGRATED OCEAN ENERGY ATLAS

In News

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has developed an 'Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas' for India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

About

- The atlas highlights the potential of ocean energy resources like solar, wind, waves, tides, and ocean currents.
- It aims to guide policymakers, industries, and researchers in tapping into these resources for energy generation.

Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)

- It is an autonomous body established in 1999 under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- It plays a crucial role in providing ocean data, information, and advisory services to various sectors, including society, industry, government, and the scientific community.

Source: PIB

TURKEY'S BID TO JOIN BRICS

In News

- Turkey has formally applied to join BRICS.

About

- **BRICS:** The BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) leaders first met in St. Petersburg, Russia, in July 2006 during the G8 Outreach Summit.
 - ♦ The group was formalized as BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in

September 2006, held alongside the UN General Assembly in New York City.

- ♦ The inaugural BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, on June 16, 2009.
- **Reason for Turkey's Joining:** Frustrated by its stalled European Union (EU) accession process, Turkey sees BRICS as an opportunity to form stronger ties with emerging global powers like Russia, China, and India. This could help Turkey reduce its dependency on Western alliances and diversify its international partnerships.
 - ♦ By joining the group, Turkey hopes to access new markets, boost trade relations, and attract investments from BRICS members, which could help strengthen its economy.
- **Expansion to BRICS:** The group was renamed BRICS after South Africa joined as a full member in September 2010.
 - ♦ South Africa attended the 3rd BRICS Summit in Sanya, China, on April 14, 2011.
 - ♦ In January 2024, five new countries—**Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, and Ethiopia—were added to the bloc.**
- **India's Strategic Goals:** India aims to use BRICS to enhance its global standing and promote a multipolar world order.
 - ♦ The expansion aligns with India's foreign policy objectives and its efforts to reform global governance.

Source: IE

OPERATION SADBHAV

Context

- **India** has launched Operation Sadbhav to provide **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) to Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.**

About

- **Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam** have been hit by **severe flooding caused by Typhoon Yagi.**
- Operation Sadbhav is part of India's broader effort to contribute to HADR within the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region, in line with its longstanding '**Act East Policy**'.
- **Typhoon Yagi** has been termed the **strongest tropical cyclone** that has hit Asia in 2024.
 - ♦ It started as a tropical storm in the western Philippine Sea and turned into a **Category 5 typhoon** and made landfall in **China's Hainan province** with winds of 223 kmph.
 - ♦ It has displaced millions across South East Asia and caused widespread devastation.

Source: TH

CREATE SETUP

In News

- The Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises has inaugurated the Centre for Rural Enterprise Acceleration through Technology (CREATE) setup at Leh.

About

- CREATE will provide a Pashmina Wool Roving Facility, Training for development of production facility for Essential Oil Extraction from Roses and Other Flowers and Training for development of production facility for Bio-processing of available fruits and other raw materials.
- It will enhance local productivity, product quality, economic potential and improve livelihoods for the local communities.

Source: PIB

20TH MARITIME STATE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Context

- The 20th Maritime State Development Council (MSDC), was concluded in Goa recently.

About

- It saw the resolution of over **80 critical issues between the Central Government, States, and Union Territories**, focused on port infrastructure modernization, connectivity, statutory compliances, maritime tourism, navigation projects, sustainability, and port security.
- The MSDC has been instrumental in **aligning policies and initiatives like the Indian Ports Bill and the Sagarmala program**.

Maritime State Development Council

- MSDC is an **apex advisory body** for the **development of the Maritime sector** and aims to ensure **integrated development of Major and non-Major Ports**.
- It was constituted in **1997** to assess in consultation with State Governments, the future development of existing and new Minor Ports by the respective Maritime States either directly or through captive users and private participation.
- MSDC also monitors the **development of minor ports, captive ports and private ports in the Maritime States**.

- It also ensures their integrated development with Major Ports and to assess the requirements of other infrastructure requirements like roads/rail/IWT.

Source: PIB

SATELLITE CHAMRAN-1

In News

- Iran successfully launched its Chamran-1 research satellite into orbit
 - In January, Iran launched the **Sorayya satellite into a 750 km orbit**, its highest to date.

About

- The Chamran-1 satellite, weighing 60 kg, was placed into a 550-kilometer orbit to test orbital maneuver technology.
- It used the **Qaem-100 rocket** which is a solid-fuel carrier designed and built by the Aerospace Force of the Revolutionary Guards.
- Western nations, especially the United States, express concern that Iran's space program could be used to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Do you know ?

- Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) are missiles with a range over 5,500 kilometers, designed to deliver nuclear warheads.
- They are possessed by several countries, including the US, Russia, China, and others.

Source: IE

SAARTHI APP

Context

- The **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** launched Saarthi, a new reference application aimed at helping businesses create customized multilingual buyer apps.

About

- It is developed in collaboration with **Bhashini** which is an AI-powered language translation tool.
- The app initially supports **Hindi, English, Marathi, Bangla and Tamil**, with plans to scale up to all **22 languages** provided by Bhashini.
- The **multilingual features of Saarthi**, including real-time translation, transliteration, and voice

recognition allow businesses to expand market reach, enabling companies to tap into new regions and increase customer acquisition.

Source: TH

MOKSHAGUNDAM VISVESVARAYA

In News

- Engineers' Day is observed on September 15 each year to celebrate the birth anniversary of **Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya**.

About Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya (1861–1962)

- He was a renowned Indian engineer, statesman, and scholar. He played a pivotal role in

modernizing India's infrastructure and is considered one of the nation's foremost engineers.

- He developed a flood protection system for Hyderabad and designed automatic water floodgates at the Khadakwasla reservoir near Pune.
- Established Bangalore Agricultural University, University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering, etc.
- He served as the **Diwan (Prime Minister) of the princely state of Mysore** from 1912 to 1918
- He was conferred '**Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire**' by the British in 1915 and conferred the **Bharat Ratna**, India's highest civilian award, in 1955.

Source: IE

