

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## MINERALS SECURITY FINANCE NETWORK (MSFN)

### Context

- **India has joined** the US-led Minerals Security Finance Network, an initiative aimed at strengthening global cooperation in securing critical mineral supply chains.

### Minerals Security Finance Network (MSFN)

- It is a new initiative **emerging from the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)**, a framework established by the US in 2022.
- **The network aims** to bring together institutions from the Indo-Pacific region and Europe, promoting cooperation, information exchange, and co-financing.

#### Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)

- **It is a US-led collaboration that** would focus on the supply chains of minerals such as Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium, and also the 17 'rare earth' minerals.
- **Members:** Australia, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Norway, Sweden, the UK, U.S., and the EU.
  - ♦ **India** was inducted to the MSP in **2023**.
- **Mandate:** To catalyze public and private investment in critical mineral supply chains globally. It directly addresses four major critical minerals challenges:
  - ♦ Diversifying and stabilizing global supply chains;
  - ♦ Investment in those supply chains;
  - ♦ Promoting high environmental, social, and governance standards in the mining, processing, and recycling sectors; and
  - ♦ Increasing recycling of critical minerals.

### What are Critical Minerals?

- These are minerals that are **essential for economic development and national security**.
- The lack of availability of these minerals or the concentration of extraction or processing in a few geographical locations could potentially lead to **"supply chain vulnerabilities and even disruption of supplies"**.

### Applications of Critical Minerals

- **Clean technologies initiatives** such as zero-emission vehicles, wind turbines, solar panels etc.

- ♦ Critical minerals such as Cadmium, Cobalt, Gallium, Indium, Selenium and Vanadium and have uses in **batteries, semiconductors, solar panels**, etc.
- **Advanced manufacturing inputs and materials** such as defense applications, permanent magnets, ceramics.
  - ♦ Minerals like Beryllium, Titanium, Tungsten, Tantalum, etc. have usage in new technologies, electronics and defense equipment.
- **Platinum Group Metals (PGMs)** are used in medical devices, cancer treatment drugs, and dental materials.

### Way Ahead

- India's participation in the network will help in **diversifying and securing its supply of critical minerals** from nations like Argentina, Chile, Australia, and select African countries.
- The partnership marks a critical step forward for India in its quest to **reduce reliance on China** for these minerals and build a robust, self-sustaining supply chain for its green energy initiatives.

Source: BS

## INDIA, AUSTRALIA PUSH FORWARD ON CECA TALKS

### Context

- India and Australia are in talks for a **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)**, after already having signed the **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) in 2022**.

### About

- The talks focused on **strengthening trade ties** to achieve the countries' shared goal of **\$100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030**.
- The ECTA, which came into effect in 2022, has led to about **\$30 billion worth** of Australian exports entering India tariff-free, with Australians saving around \$225 million on goods from India.
- India is one of Australia's largest trading partners, with two-way trade in goods valued at over **\$6.7 billion in 2023-24**.
  - ♦ Bilateral trade between both sides, including goods and services, stood **close to \$50 billion** at the end of calendar year 2023.

### About CECA

- It is a **free-trade agreement** between two countries that strengthens their bilateral trade.

- Australia and India first embarked on negotiations for a CECA in **2011**.
- Talks were suspended in 2016. In 2021, the two countries formally revived the CECA talks.
- Both countries are looking to expand their trade ties under CECA, to cover **sectors** like goods, services, rules of origin, government procurement, digital trade, and agri-technology.
  - ♦ It also aims to unlock the potential of sectors such as clean energy, agribusiness, education, skills development, and tourism.

#### Key Objectives:

- **Trade Liberalization:** Reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers to promote bilateral trade.
- **Investment Facilitation:** Encourage mutual investments and provide a framework for better investment protection.
- **Service Sector Expansion:** Enhance cooperation in services, including education, healthcare, and professional services.
- **Technological Collaboration:** Foster innovation and technology exchange, especially in sectors like renewable energy and digital economy.

#### Significance:

- **Economic Growth:** Boost in GDP growth for both nations through increased trade volumes.
- **Job Creation:** Expansion of employment opportunities in various sectors.
- **Market Access:** Providing Australian businesses better access to the Indian market and vice versa.

#### Way Ahead

- The relationship between Australia and India has **developed rapidly in recent years**, particularly under the impetus of India's far-reaching process of economic reform and the resulting **rapid globalization of the Indian economy**.
- Both countries have grown in strength and importance and made rapid strides in all areas - **trade, energy and mining, science & technology, information technology, education, and defence**.
- The year 2022-23 saw **increasing depth and breadth of engagements** including establishing new mechanisms for cooperation.
- In the coming years, the overall relationship between India and Australia will **continue to grow and has the potential to assume greater prominence**.

Source: TH

## GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH

#### Context

- As per the World Health Organization (WHO) and ITU (International Telecommunication Union), an investment of an additional **US\$0.24 per**

**patient per year** in digital health interventions, can help save more than 2 million lives from noncommunicable diseases over the next decade.

#### Major Findings

- These investments could also **prevent approximately 7 million hospitalisations** over the next 10 years.
  - ♦ This will significantly reduce the strain on healthcare systems and lead to a total **economic gain of \$199.2 billion globally**.
- The economic benefits of digital health investment were found to be particularly compelling for **low- and middle-income countries**, where the average required spending was only \$0.10 per person per year.
  - ♦ The cost for upper middle-income countries is estimated to be \$0.16 and for high-income countries at \$0.67.
  - ♦ Cumulatively, the global spending required for these interventions would total **\$9.8 billion over the 10-year period**.
- The report mentions India's use of digital technologies to address healthcare disparities, particularly in **rural areas where more than 65% of the population lives**.
- The report called on governments and stakeholders to take decisive action, ensuring that digital health tools are integrated effectively into healthcare systems to combat the rising burden of NCDs globally.

#### Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

- NCDs, also known as **chronic diseases**, tend to be of **long duration** and are the result of a combination of **genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors**.
- The main types of NCD are **cardiovascular diseases** (such as heart attacks and stroke), **cancers, chronic respiratory diseases** (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and **diabetes**.
- The major NCDs share **four behavioral risk factors**- unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, and use of tobacco and alcohol. Factors contributing to the rise of NCDs also include ageing, rapid unplanned urbanization and globalization.
- NCDs including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease, are collectively responsible for **74% of all deaths worldwide**.

### Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)

- The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) in **2023**.
- The initiative have **four main components**:



- **Aim:** ALIGN efforts to support the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020–2025;
  - ♦ SUPPORT quality assured technical assistance to develop and strengthen standards-based and interoperable systems aligned to global best practices, norms and standards;
  - ♦ FACILITATE the deliberate use of quality assured digital transformation tools that enable governments to manage their digital health transformation journey.
- **Personalized Care:** Electronic health records (EHRs) and wearable devices facilitate personalized treatment plans and preventive care.
- **Empowered Patients:** Digital platforms can educate patients, enhance medication adherence, and promote self-management of chronic conditions.
- **Streamlined Healthcare Delivery:** Digitization empowers efficient data management, administrative processes, and resource optimization within healthcare systems.

### Digital Health

- Digital health refers to the **use of technology to improve health and healthcare delivery**.
- It encompasses a **broad range of tools and solutions** that integrate digital technologies with health services, aiming to enhance patient outcomes, streamline processes, and increase accessibility.
- It includes tools such as Telemedicine, Mobile Health (mHealth), Electronic Health Records (EHRs), Wearable Devices, Health Applications etc.

### Significance

- **Improved Access:** Digital tools can reach remote areas, connect patients to specialists, and enable virtual consultations, expanding healthcare access.
- **Enhanced Affordability:** Telemedicine, electronic prescribing, and data-driven resource allocation can potentially reduce healthcare costs.

### Government Initiatives

- **National Health Policy (NHP) 2017:** This policy emphasizes the use of technology in health services and promotes the integration of digital health solutions.
- **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM):** Launched in 2020, NDHM aims to create a digital health ecosystem in India.
  - ♦ It focuses on creating a Health ID for every citizen, facilitating access to health records, and ensuring the integration of healthcare services.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):** It enables the establishment of health accounts, electronic health records, and health information exchanges.
- **E Sanjeevani Telemedicine Platform:** Facilitates virtual consultations between doctors and patients across the country.

- **Health Management Information System (HMIS):** This initiative aims to improve the collection and use of health data for better planning and decision-making.
- **Digital India Initiative:** While broader in scope, this initiative supports digital health by promoting internet connectivity, digital literacy, and technology use in various sectors, including healthcare.

### Way Ahead

- Digital health is a proven accelerator to **advance health outcomes and achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** and health-related Sustainable Development Goals. Hence, it needs to be made integral to every health policy.
- By scaling up existing initiatives, collaborating across stakeholders, and fostering innovation, India can leverage digital health to achieve its goal of universal healthcare and ensure better health outcomes for all.

Source: DTE

## 10 YEARS OF MAKE IN INDIA

### Context

- **On September 25, 2014**, the “Make in India” initiative completed 10 years as a pivotal step in India’s nation-building efforts.

### Pillars of ‘Make in India’

- **New Processes:** The “Make in India” initiative identified ‘ease of doing business’ as a crucial factor for promoting entrepreneurship.
- **New Infrastructure:** The government focused on developing industrial corridors and smart cities, integrating state-of-the-art technology and high-speed communication to create world-class infrastructure.
- **New Sectors:** Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was significantly opened up in various sectors including Defence Production, Insurance, Medical Devices, Construction, and Railway infrastructure.
- **New Mindset:** The government embraced a role as a facilitator rather than a regulator, to foster a collaborative environment that supported industrial growth and innovation.



### Production linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes

- The Schemes were introduced to enhance the country’s manufacturing capabilities and boost exports with an **outlay of ₹1.97 lakh crore**.
- **It covers 14 key sectors** aimed at fostering investment in cutting-edge technology and promoting global competitiveness.

### PM GatiShakti

- Launched in 2021, PM GatiShakti is a strategic initiative aimed at achieving Aatmanirbhar Bharat and a **US \$5 trillion economy by 2025** through the creation of **multimodal and last-mile connectivity infrastructure**.
- **It is driven by 7 engines**, namely: Railways, Roads, Ports, Waterways, Airports, Mass Transport, Logistics Infrastructure.

### Semiconductor Ecosystem Development

- **The Semicon India programme** was approved in **2021**, encompasses four key schemes:
  - ◆ Modified Scheme for Setting Up Semiconductor Fabs in India
  - ◆ Modified Scheme for Setting Up Display Fabs in India
  - ◆ Modified Scheme for Setting Up Compound Semiconductors, Silicon Photonics, Sensors Fabs, and Discrete Semiconductors, along with Semiconductor Assembly, Testing, Marking, and Packaging (ATMP) / OSAT Facilities in India
  - ◆ Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme.

### National Logistics Policy (NLP)

- Launched in 2022, the Policy targets reducing logistics costs, improving India’s Logistics Performance Index ranking to among the top 25 countries by 2030, and developing a data-driven decision support system.

### Industrialization and Urbanization

- **The National Industrial Corridor Development Programme** is India’s most ambitious infrastructure initiative, aiming to create **“Smart Cities”** and advanced industrial hubs.

### Startup India

- Launched **2016**, the Initiative aimed at supporting entrepreneurs, and building a robust startup ecosystem.
- India boasts the **third-largest startup ecosystem** in the world, with 148,931 DPIIT Recognized Startups, which have created over 15.5 lakh direct jobs.

### Major Achievements under Make in India

- **FDI inflows have steadily risen**, starting from \$45.14 billion in 2014-15 to a record **\$84.83 billion in 2021-22**.
- India made remarkable progress in improving its business environment, climbing from 142nd in 2014 to **63rd in the World Bank's Doing Business Report (DBR)** published in October 2019 before its discontinuation.
- India recorded **merchandise exports worth \$437.06 billion in FY 2023-24**, reflecting the country's growing role in global trade.
- **The textile industry** has created a staggering **14.5 crore jobs** across the country, significantly contributing to India's employment landscape.
- **Vande Bharat Trains**, India's first indigenous semi-high-speed trains, are a shining example of the success of the 'Make in India' initiative.
- India became a **major exporter of life-saving vaccines** to many developing and underdeveloped countries across the world.
- **India's electronics sector** has experienced rapid growth, reaching **USD 155 billion in FY23**.

### What are the concerns?

- The share of **manufacturing in India's GDP** was **17.3 percent in 2013-14**, and it was still stagnant at **17.7 percent in 2023** far from the target of **25% by 2030**.
- The share of the **manufacturing sector in total employment** in the country has marginally declined from **11.6 percent in 2013-14** to **10.6 percent in 2022-23**.
- **India's exports as a share of GDP** has fallen from 25.2 percent in 2013-14 to **22.7 percent in 2013-24**.
  - ♦ Exports are also relatively concentrated in goods and services that tend not to be labor-intensive.

### Conclusion

- As the "Make in India" initiative celebrates its 10th anniversary, it stands as a testament to India's determination to reshape its manufacturing landscape and enhance its global standing.
- Though the efforts and achievements fall short when the fundamental indicators of the manufacturing sector show lackluster growth, With strategic reforms, investment-friendly policies, and a strong focus on infrastructure development, the initiative has significantly enhanced India's industrial capabilities.

Source: PIB

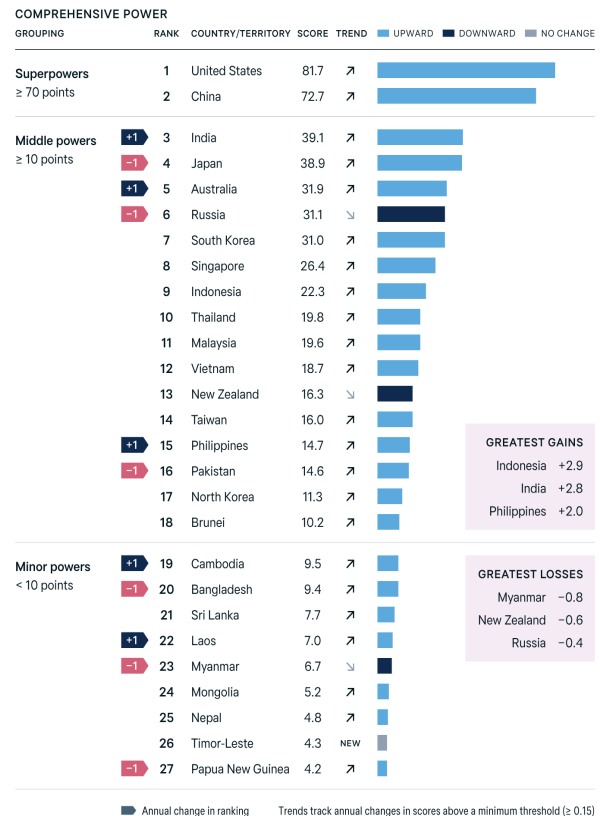
## NEWS IN SHORT

### ASIA POWER INDEX, 2024

#### In News

- India has become the third most powerful nation in Asia, surpassing Japan in the Asia Power Index.
  - ♦ USA and China have been ranked at 1st and 2nd place, respectively

#### About Asia Power Index



Source: Asia Power Index 2024

- **Launched by:** Lowy Institute in 2018.
- **Scope:** It is an annual measure that examines power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Coverage:** The Index evaluates 27 countries across the region, analyzing their ability to shape and respond to their external environment.
- **Objectives:** A country's overall power score is derived from a weighted average of 8 measures, which are divided into resource-based and influence-based determinants, encompassing 131 individual indicators.
  - ♦ The Asia Power Index provides valuable insights into the geopolitical landscape of the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the growing influence of countries like India.

Source: AIR

## CLAUSE 6 OF THE ASSAM ACCORD

### Context

- The Chief Minister of Assam mentioned the implementation of 52 recommendations of the **Justice Biplab Sarma Committee** regarding **Clause 6 of the Assam Accord**.

### About

- The Assam Accord was a **Memorandum of Settlement** between the **Union government and the leadership of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU)**, which was signed in **1985**.
- The accord ended the **six-year-long agitation in Assam** against the **entry of Bangladeshi migrants** into the state.
- Clause 6 of the accord** states that "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people."
- In 2019, the Union Home Ministry constituted a committee chaired by retired Assam High Court **Justice Biplab Kumar Sarma**, to suggest **ways to implement the clause**.
  - Among the key questions before the committee was a definition of **the Assamese people eligible for the safeguards under Clause 6**.
- Based on this, the committee made several recommendations for **reservations for Assamese people**, including in Parliament, the state Assembly, local bodies, and jobs.

Source: IE

## QUALITY CONTROL ORDER (QCO) FOR MEDICAL TEXTILES

### Context

- The Ministry of Textiles has introduced a **Quality Control Order** for Medical Textiles to enhance Public Health and Safety.

### About

- This regulation establishes **stringent quality standards** for critical medical textile products, including **sanitary napkins, baby diapers, reusable sanitary pads, and dental bibs**.
  - It is aimed at ensuring that these products **consistently meet essential quality benchmarks**.
- The notified specifications **cover critical performance criteria** such as pH levels,

hygiene testing, bacterial and fungal bioburden, biocompatibility evaluations, and biodegradability.

- There is a strong emphasis on **testing for phthalate levels** in baby diapers, as these chemicals can pose risks to both the users and the environment.
- Compliance with these standards will be **legally required**, with non-compliance potentially leading to **fines and other penalties**.
- The implementation of the QCO is part of the government's comprehensive strategy to **enhance the quality and safety of essential consumer products**.

Source: PIB

## PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING

### Context

- A study by RBI economists reveals that priority sector lending (PSL) improves banks' asset quality.

### What is Priority sector lending?

- Priority Sector Lending (PSL) is a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) initiative that **requires banks to lend a certain percentage of their funds** to sectors that may not otherwise receive enough credit.
- The goal of PSL is to **support the all-round development of the economy** by providing credit to sectors that are important for development or have difficulty getting loans
- The RBI periodically updates** the sectors that are eligible for PSL, as well as the loan limits.
  - The sectors that are eligible for PSL include:** Agriculture, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Export Credit, Education, Housing, Social Infrastructure, Renewable Energy.
- In case, banks fail to meet their PSL targets, they have to deposit the allocated amount to the **Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF)** established with NABARD and to other funds as decided by the RBI

Source: ET

## ADB RAISES INFLATION FORECAST FOR INDIA

### In News

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** forecasts that India's GDP will grow by 7.0% in FY2024 (ending March 2025) and 7.2% in FY2025.

### About the Forecast

- **Inflation Projections:** ADB raised India's retail inflation forecast for 2024-25 to 4.7%, up from 4.6%, citing elevated food prices.
  - ♦ The forecast for 2025-26 remains unchanged, expecting core inflation to rise as food inflation moderates.
- **Monetary Policy Outlook:** ADB does not expect an immediate cut in interest rates, contrary to some agencies' expectations of a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) by October.
  - ♦ Monetary policy is expected to become less restrictive, but only after food price pressures ease.
- **Impact of Elevated Food Prices:** High food prices, despite increased imports and higher output expectations, have delayed the RBI's move towards more accommodative monetary policy.
- **GDP Growth Outlook:** ADB maintains India's GDP growth projection at 7% for 2024-25 and 7.2% for 2025-26.
- **Industrial and Agricultural Outlook:** Industrial growth has slowed due to rising input costs affecting manufacturing margins, though mining and construction saw gains.
- **ADB expects La Niña** to boost India's agricultural output, particularly for rice, wheat, and sugarcane.
- **Potential Risks:** Geopolitical and weather-related shocks may affect global supply chains and agricultural output.

#### About Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- It was established in 1966 and is a regional development bank that aims to promote a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific while focusing on eradicating extreme poverty.
- ADB offers loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to its member countries to support their social and economic development.
- India is a founding member and the fourth-largest shareholder in ADB.
- ADB supports India's priorities for climate-resilient and inclusive growth, aligned with its Strategy 2030 and the country partnership strategy (2023–2027).
- **Headquarters:** Manila, Philippines

Source : TH

## WOMEN IN SPACE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

### Context

- A Women in Space Leadership Programme (WiSLP) was launched by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in collaboration with the British Council.

### About

- It was launched as part of the **UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI)**.
- **The initiative focuses** on supporting institutions in **strengthening gender-inclusive practices** to foster women's leadership in space sciences by developing a strategic leadership framework.

### Implementation of WiSLP

- The programme will **aid 250 early career researchers** to become better equipped to take up leadership roles and navigate gender biases and associated barriers.
- **The programme is underpinned by three foundational pillars:**
  - ♦ Intersectionality or understanding of different aspects of women's identities;
  - ♦ Collaborative culturally sensitive approaches that respond to opportunities and challenges in India;
  - ♦ Using leadership theory from both social science and STEM to support female scientists to become more confident about their leadership abilities.

Source: PIB

## CENTRAL SILK BOARD

### In News

- Union Minister of Textiles, Shri Giriraj Singh, unveiled a commemorative coin celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of the **Central Silk Board (CSB)** at Mysuru.

### About Central Silk Board

- The **Central Silk Board (CSB)** is a statutory body established in 1948 under an Act of Parliament.
- It operates **under the Ministry of Textiles** and plays a crucial role in the development of India's silk industry.
- The CSB advises the Government of India on all matters concerning **sericulture (silk farming) and the silk industry**.
- **Headquarters:** Bengaluru, Karnataka



**Silk Production in India**

- India is the **2nd largest producer** of Silk in the World.
- **India is the only country** in the world that produces all four major varieties of silk – **Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga**.
- South India is the leading silk producing area of the country and is also known for its famous silk weaving enclaves like **Kancheepuram, Dharmavaram, Arni**, etc.

Source: PIB

## DIFFERENTIAL ROTATION OF THE SUN

**In News**

- Astronomers mapped the variation in the Sun's chromosphere rotation speed from the equator to the poles using 100 years of data from the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory.

**Data Source and Technique:**

- Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) astronomers used solar plages and network features from daily Sun records at 393.3 nm (Calcium K spectral line).
  - ♦ These features allowed them to measure rotation speed even at the poles, unlike sunspots.
- The 100-year-long data from Kodaikanal Solar Observatory has been digitized, enabling detailed analysis of chromospheric features.

**Sun's Differential Rotation:**

- The Sun rotates at different speeds at different latitudes: the equator rotates faster (25 days) than the poles (35 days).
- This differential rotation is key to understanding the solar dynamo, the 11-year solar cycle, and solar magnetic storms.
- **Discovery:** Differential rotation was first discovered in the 19th century by Carrington, but earlier methods were limited in studying latitudes above 35 degrees.
- **Findings on Rotation Rates:** The rotation rate was faster at the equator (13.98 degrees/day) and slower towards the poles (10.5 degrees/day at 80 degrees latitude).
  - ♦ Both plages and network features showed similar rotation rates, suggesting a common origin possibly rooted deep inside the Sun.

**Plages and Networks:**

- Plages are bright regions in the chromosphere, larger than sunspots, with weaker magnetic fields.
- Network cells are slightly larger than sunspots and have weaker magnetic fields, present continuously across the Sun's surface.

**Significance of the Study:**

- This is the first time chromospheric network cells have been used to map the Sun's rotation across its entire surface.
- The findings are crucial for understanding the Sun's magnetic field and activity.

Source: PIB

