

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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SOCIALISM IN INDIA MEANS A WELFARE STATE: CJI

Context

- Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna addressed a batch of petitions challenging the inclusion of the words “**socialist, secular**” in the **Preamble of the Indian Constitution through the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976**.

Key Highlights

- The Chief Justice clarified that the idea of “socialism” in India represents a welfare state that ensures equality of opportunity for all, and does not negate private sector participation.
- He rejected the claim that the Preamble, as adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, could not be amended, stating that the Preamble is part of the Constitution and subject to changes under **Article 368**.
- He also asserted that both ‘**socialism**’ and ‘**secularism**’ are **integral to the Constitution’s Basic Structure** and cannot be altered.
 - He also dismissed the idea that these terms were undemocratic, pointing out that they were meant to foster a welfare state.

What is Socialism?

- Socialism is an **economic and political ideology** advocating **collective ownership and equitable distribution of resources** to achieve social and economic equality.
- It emphasizes **reducing disparities in wealth and opportunities** through state intervention, public ownership, and welfare policies.

Evolution of Socialism in India

- Socialism in India finds its origins in the freedom movement, where leaders like **Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose** championed a state-driven economy for equitable growth.
- The Constitution, through its Preamble, enshrined “**socialist**” ideals after the **42nd Amendment in 1976**.

Development in India

- Nehruvian Model:** Adoption of state-led industrialization and planned economic development, exemplified by the establishment of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- Land Reforms:** Redistribution of land to address feudal inequalities.
- Social Justice Movements:** Enactment of affirmative action policies like reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.

Challenges to Socialism in India

- Economic Disparities:** Wealth concentration persists despite redistributive efforts, exacerbating inequalities.
- Bureaucratic Inefficiencies:** The public sector mostly suffers from inefficiency and corruption, undermining welfare objectives.
- Policy Shifts:** The 1991 economic liberalization marked a gradual shift towards a market-oriented economy, diluting socialist ideals.
- Globalization and Privatization:** These forces have widened income inequalities and challenged the welfare orientation of the state.
- Resource Constraints:** Limited fiscal space hampers the government’s ability to deliver universal welfare programs effectively.

Contemporary Relevance of Socialism

- Social Security:** Programs like MGNREGA and PM-KISAN uphold the socialist ethos by supporting vulnerable sections.
- Healthcare and Education:** Initiatives such as **Ayushman Bharat and the National Education Policy (NEP)** aim to democratize access to essential services.
- Climate Justice:** Socialism now intersects with environmental concerns, advocating equitable access to natural resources and sustainable development.
 - Developed nations honor commitments like the **Green Climate Fund** to help developing nations tackle climate change impacts.
- Technological Equity:** The digital divide necessitates policies that promote digital literacy and access for all.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **social security nets** to protect marginalized populations.
- Improve **public sector efficiency** through transparency and accountability.
- Promote inclusive growth by balancing **market reforms** with redistributive justice.
- Embrace **participatory governance**, ensuring that citizens have a voice in policy making.

Concluding remarks

- Socialism in India reflects the collective aspiration for equality, justice, and dignity.
- While challenges persist, it continues to serve as a guiding principle for achieving a just and inclusive society.

Source: TH

INDIA-U.S. TIES HAVE STRONG FOUNDATION

Context

- The White House recently reaffirmed the strong foundation of India-U.S. bilateral relations amidst the controversy of bribery allegations against Indian businessman Gautam Adani.

Overview of India and US Bilateral Relations

- Since India's independence, ties with the United States have weathered the **Cold War era** distrust and **estrangement over India's nuclear program**.
 - ♦ Relations have **warmed in recent years** and cooperation has strengthened across a range of economic and political areas.
- **Bilateral Trade:** The bilateral trade between the two countries has risen by **72 percent** between 2017-18 and 2022-23.
 - ♦ The US accounted for **18 percent** of the gross **FDI inflows** into India during **2021-22**, ranking second behind Singapore.
 - ♦ US is the largest trading partner of India with overall bilateral trade in goods and services of \$190.1 billion for calendar year 2023
- **Defense and Security:** India and the US have signed a troika of "foundational pacts" for deep military cooperation, beginning with the **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016**, followed by the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (**COMCASA**) after the first 2+2 dialogue in 2018, and then the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) in 2020**.
 - ♦ In **2016**, the United States elevated India to a **major defense partner**.
- **Space: Artemis Accords** signed by India established a common vision for the future of space exploration for the benefit of all humankind.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** India and the United States cooperate closely in multilateral organizations and forums, including the **United Nations, G20, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization**.
 - ♦ Together with Australia and Japan, the United States and India convene as the **Quad**, a diplomatic network, to promote a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.
- **Nuclear Cooperation: Civil Nuclear Deal** was signed in **2005**, under the agreement, India agreed to separate its civil and military nuclear

facilities and place all its civil resources under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

- ♦ In exchange, the United States agrees to work toward full civil nuclear cooperation with India.
- **New initiatives:** Several new initiatives have been announced like **GE-HAL deal** to manufacture jet engines in India and the **initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)**, to bring revolution between the relations of the two nations.

Divergence in relations

- **Limited Utility:** India's utility to the US in an Indo-Pacific conflict, such as a Chinese invasion or naval blockade of Taiwan, is likely limited.
 - ♦ In the event of US military involvement in Taiwan's defense, India would likely avoid entanglement in such a US-China conflict.
- **The US seeks greater alignment from its allies against Russia:** India is viewed by the US and the West as opportunistically buying more oil from Russia amid the war.
- **Defence Relations with Russia:** The US is concerned about India's acquisition of arms like the S-400 air defense system, as it strengthens Russian power.
- **Trade Protectionism:** India's high tariffs and the U.S.'s emphasis on intellectual property rights strains the trade relations.
- **Human Rights and Democratic Norms:** The U.S. has raised concerns over India's press freedom and religious tolerance, which is viewed as interference in internal matters of India.

Concerns for India

- **Economic Stability:** Issues like the Adani controversy highlight vulnerabilities in India's corporate governance that have the possibility to deter U.S. investors.
- The **Russia-Ukraine conflict** has shifted the focus of the US away from China, and has, therefore, contributed to considerably eroding the strategic convergence between India and the US.
- Further, the **war in the Middle East** has diverted US attention away and Indo-Pacific in general and India, in particular, have suffered neglect.

Concluding remark

- India-U.S. relations are multifaceted, marked by both cooperation and divergence.
- However, the strategic convergence in addressing global challenges underscores the resilience of this partnership.

Source: TH

CHINA-INDIA STATE OF PLAY

Context

- Recent developments have highlighted the delicate balance trying to maintain in the relationship between China and India which is complex and multifaceted, marked by cooperation and conflict by both countries.

Historical Context

- The China-India relationship has been historically strained, primarily due to border disputes.
- The most notable conflict **occurred in 1962**, and tensions have periodically flared up since then, most recently with the **Galwan Valley clash in 2020**, which resulted in casualties on both sides.
- Since then, both countries have engaged in numerous rounds of diplomatic and military talks to de-escalate the situation, but with limited success.

Line of Actual Control (LAC)

- The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- India considers the LAC to be 3,488 km long, while the Chinese consider it to be only around 2,000 km.
- It is divided into **three sectors**:
 - the **eastern sector** which spans Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim;
 - the **middle sector** in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and;
 - the **western sector** in Ladakh.
- LAC in the eastern sector consisting of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim is called the **McMahon Line** which is 1,140 km long.

Major friction points along the India-China border

- Depsang Plains:** This area is located in the northernmost part of Ladakh and has seen incursions by Chinese troops in the past.
- Demchok:** This area is located in eastern Ladakh and has seen disputes over the boundary between India and China.
- Pangong Lake:** This area has been a major flashpoint between the two countries, with Chinese troops attempting to change the status quo on the LAC in the region.
- Gogra and Hot Springs:** These two areas are located in eastern Ladakh and have seen standoffs between Indian and Chinese troops in recent years.

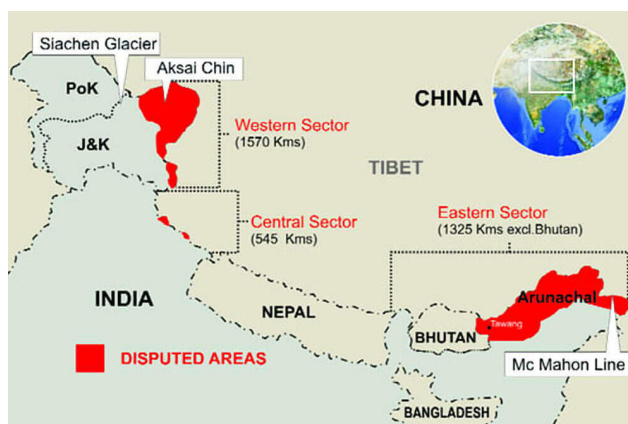
- Arunachal Pradesh:** This northeastern Indian state is claimed by China as part of its territory and has been a major point of contention between the two countries.

How is the LAC different from the Line of Control with Pakistan?

- The LoC emerged from the 1948 ceasefire line negotiated by the UN after the Kashmir War.
- It was designated as the LoC in 1972, following the Shimla Agreement between the two countries. It is delineated on a map signed by DGMOs of both armies and has the international sanctity of a legal agreement.
- The LAC, is only a concept and it is not agreed upon by the two countries, neither delineated on a map or demarcated on the ground.

Recent Diplomatic Engagements

- The recent meeting of heads of states of **India and China** on the sidelines of the **BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia**, marking their **first bilateral talks in five years**.
- Both leaders emphasised the importance of **maintaining peace along the LAC** and agreed on the need for **mutual trust, respect, and sensitivity** in their interactions.
- The recent agreement, as reported, involves the **restoration of patrolling rights** in the **Depsang Plains and Demchok in Ladakh**, areas that have been flashpoints in the ongoing conflict.
- It is seen as a **first concrete step** towards restoring the **pre-2020 status quo ante**. Additionally, agreements have been reached in other sectors along the LAC, including Arunachal Pradesh.



Significance

- Border Stability:** The situation along the India-China border remains a critical issue. Despite recent diplomatic engagements, the border situation is described as 'generally stable' but still requires careful management.

- ◆ Both countries have agreed to put the boundary issue in an 'appropriate position' and promote its transition to 'normalised management'.
- **Economic and Strategic Interests:** Beyond the border disputes, China and India have significant economic and strategic interests that necessitate cooperation.
 - ◆ Both countries are key members of the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and their cooperation is vital for regional stability and economic growth.
 - ◆ It opens up diplomatic space for India as it navigates its relationships with major global powers, including Russia and the West.
- **Political Engagement:** A potential meeting between Indian Prime Minister and Chinese President on the sidelines of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** summit could further solidify this agreement and outline future political and economic engagements.

Challenges Ahead

- **Implementation:** The disengagement process must be followed by de-escalation and de-induction, which will be a slow and complex process requiring constant vigilance.
- **Trust Deficit:** The relationship between India and China has been marred by a significant trust deficit. Building confidence and ensuring compliance with the agreement will be critical.
- **Broader Issues:** The border issue is just one aspect of the complex India-China relationship. Broader issues, including trade imbalances and geopolitical rivalries, need to be addressed to achieve lasting peace and stability.
 - ◆ Since the 1980s, India and China have sought peaceful resolution of their boundary dispute. **Informal summits** between leaders, like those in **Wuhan (2018) and Chennai (2019)**, emphasised **strategic communication and cooperation**.
 - ◆ The unresolved boundary issue remains a point of contention, leading to occasional tensions.

Conclusion and Way Ahead

- The India-China agreement to restore patrolling rights and begin the disengagement process is a welcome step towards breaking the stalemate.
- It reflects the patience and fortitude of India's diplomatic and security establishments.
- While recent diplomatic efforts have shown promise, the path to a stable and cooperative relationship will require **sustained dialogue**,

mutual respect, and a commitment to resolving longstanding issues.

Source: IE

REDUCING DEPENDENCE ON THE IMPORT OF THE COKING COAL

Context

- Niti Ayog has released the report '**Enhancing Domestic Coking Coal Availability to Reduce the import of Coking Coal**'.

Major Findings

- **Resources of Coking Coal:** As of 2023, India's proved geological resources of prime coking coal and medium coking coal are estimated to be 5.13 BT and 16.5 BT, respectively.
- **Imports:** During the last five years, coking coal imports accounted for **22 - 27%** of the total coal imported into India.
 - ◆ The total value of coking coal imports into India crossed Rs. 1 trillion for the first time in FY 2021-22.
 - ◆ Australia supplied **54% of India's coking coal imports** in FY 2022-23.
- **Volatile Prices:** The prices of coking coal are highly volatile due to the dominance of a few countries (mainly, Australia).
- **Share in Cost of Steel Production:** Coking coal accounted for approximately **42% of the cost of steel produced in India**, the Ministry of Steel is making efforts to reduce the import bill on coking coal by diversifying the import sources.
- **Critical Mineral:** NITI Aayog can convince the Government to **declare coking coal as a 'critical mineral' for India** for ramping up the production of domestic metallurgical coal to enhance the competitiveness of India's booming steel sector.

Importance of Coking Coal for India

- Coking coal, also known as **metallurgical coal or "met coal,"** is a type of coal that is used in the **steelmaking process**.
- It's **essential in the production of coke**, a key component in the steelmaking process.
- Coking coal needs to have **specific properties such as high carbon content, low sulfur and phosphorus content**, and strong coking properties to be suitable for steelmaking.

Challenges

- **Import dependency :** : India remains one of the world's largest importers of coking coal, importing from countries like Australia, the U.S., Indonesia, Mozambique, and Russia.

- **High Demand from Steel Mills:** The rise in imports is driven by strong demand from India's steel mills, which are the largest consumers of coking coal, a key raw material in steel-making.
- **Coking Coal Shortages:** Indian steel companies, which consume about 70 million metric tons of coking coal annually, are facing shortages and high prices.

Steps

- India is targeting a **20% increase in coking coal production**, aiming for 80 million tonnes (mt) in FY25, up from 66.55 mt last year, as part of efforts to reduce its coking coal import bill.
- The government has launched **'Mission Coking Coal' in August, 2021** to suggest a roadmap to augment the production and utilization of domestic coking coal in India by 2030.

Suggestions and Way Ahead

- Coking coal is vital for India's steel industry and economic growth. Addressing the challenges in domestic production and reducing import dependency through strategic policy changes and government interventions is crucial for ensuring coking coal security and supporting the country's industrial development
- The government should provide a special dispensation to enhance domestic coking coal production, ensure security of supply for India's steel sector and reduce the country's import bill.
- Considering India's commitments to Net Zero by 2070, the country's interests would be better served by fully utilising the proved reserves of medium coking coal (16.5 BT) in India for metallurgical purposes.

What are Critical Minerals?

- Critical minerals are elements that are the **building blocks of essential modern-day technologies**, and are at risk of supply chain disruptions.
- 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"**.

Source: IE

TELECOMMUNICATIONS (TELECOM CYBER SECURITY) RULES, 2024

Context

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has notified the **Telecommunications (Telecom Cyber Security) Rules, 2024**.

- This is the first set of rules to be issued under the newly issued Telecommunications Act, 2023.

Key Provisions

- **Aim:** To safeguard India's communication networks and services, through measures including specified timelines for telcos to report security incidents and make disclosures.
- **A telecommunication entity** will include any person providing telecom services, or establishing, operating, maintaining, or expanding telecom network, including an authorised entity holding an authorisation.
- **Access of Data to Union Government:** The rules also empower the central government/ its authorised agency to seek traffic data and any other data (other than the content of messages) from a telecom entity for the purpose of ensuring cyber security.
- **Reporting of the Cybersecurity Incidents:** It has mandated telecom companies to report cybersecurity incidents to the government within six hours of becoming aware and additional details within 24 hours.
- **Chief Telecommunications Security Officer:** Telecom companies have been asked to appoint a chief telecommunications security officer, who is a citizen and resident of India.
 - The officer will be responsible for coordinating with the Central government on behalf of the telecommunication entity for the implementation of the rules.
- **Cybersecurity Policy:** The telecom operators are also required to adopt a telecom cybersecurity policy, which includes security safeguards, risk management approaches, actions, training, best practices and technologies.
- **Prior Registration for International Equipment:** A manufacturer of equipment that has an International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number is required to register the number of such equipment manufactured in India with the government before the sale of first such equipment.

Telecommunication Sector in India

- India is the **world's second-largest telecommunications market** with a total telephone subscriber base of 1.20 billion.
- India ranks as the **world's second-largest market in terms of total internet users**.
- The Telecom sector is the **4th largest sector in terms of FDI inflows**, contributing **6% of total FDI inflow**.

- **Reasons for the Growth of Industry:** Key drivers pulling growth in the Indian telecom sector include demand for 5G network, government policies and new regulation besides relative affordability of services.

Challenges Faced by the Sector

- **Regulatory Framework:** Changes in regulations, spectrum pricing, licensing requirements, and government policies impact the operations and investments of telecom companies.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Despite significant progress in recent years, there are still gaps in telecommunications infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas.
 - ♦ Extending network coverage to these areas remains a challenge due to factors like difficult terrain, lack of electricity, and insufficient infrastructure.
- **Competition and Pricing:** Intense competition among telecom operators has led to price wars and margin pressures.
 - ♦ While this benefits consumers with lower tariffs, it puts strain on the financial health of telecom companies.
- **Quality of Service:** Maintaining consistent quality of service, especially in densely populated urban areas, is a challenge for telecom operators.
 - ♦ Issues such as call drops, network congestion, and slow internet speeds lead to customer dissatisfaction.
- **Cybersecurity:** With the increasing digitization of services, cybersecurity has become a critical concern for telecom companies.
 - ♦ They must protect their networks, customer data, and infrastructure from cyber threats and attacks.
- **Technological Advancements:** Keeping pace with rapid technological advancements, such as 5G deployment, requires substantial investments in infrastructure and upgrades.
 - ♦ Telecom companies need to balance these investments with revenue generation and profitability

Government of India's Initiatives to promote Telecommunication Sector:

- **Digital India Programme:** Launched in 2015, Digital India aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
 - ♦ It includes initiatives to provide broadband connectivity to all villages, promote e-governance, and improve digital literacy.

- **BharatNet:** It is the world's largest rural broadband connectivity program and plays a crucial role in bridging the digital divide between urban and rural areas.
- **Infrastructure Development:** The government is investing in the development of telecom infrastructure, including optical fiber networks, mobile towers, and rural broadband connectivity, to support the growth of the sector and improve service quality.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India) Initiative:** The government has emphasized promoting domestic manufacturing of telecom equipment and components to reduce dependence on imports and boost the growth of the domestic telecom industry.
- **Ease of Doing Business Reforms:** The government has implemented several reforms to improve the ease of doing business in India, including streamlining regulatory processes, reducing paperwork, and digitizing services, to attract investment and foster growth in the telecom sector.

Way Ahead

- Operators are expected to expand 5G coverage and invest in infrastructure, which will drive demand for new devices and services.
- Increased smartphone penetration and data consumption are boosting demand for digital platforms and services.
- The telecom sector is crucial for the digital economy, and as its services expand, cybersecurity becomes even more critical.
- Addressing evolving threats, securing new technologies, and meeting regulatory requirements are critical for the growth of the sector.

Source: TH

WORLD BANK'S "JOBS AT YOUR DOORSTEPS" STUDY

In News

The World Bank's "Jobs at Your Doorsteps" study by the Union Education Minister and Union Labour Minister.

About the Study

- It examined skill education and job opportunities in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan.
- It identified key sectors offering high-demand jobs for school-to-work pathways.

Focus Areas:

- It focused on scaling and strengthening skill education.
- It addressed which skills should be offered based on local economic needs.
- It explored ways to enhance skill education outcomes, including jobs, self-employment, and pathways to further education or skills.

Key Sector Findings:

- **Services Sector:** Major opportunities in retail, IT, banking, and other service sectors, requiring multi-skill exposure and employability skills.
- **Agriculture Sector:** Significant opportunities for school-based skilling to enhance farm productivity and income.
 - ◆ Areas like horticulture, dairy farming, livestock health, and aquaculture were identified for job generation.
- **Mining Sector:** Limited job opportunities due to hazardous work conditions and demand for unskilled labor.
- **Manufacturing Sector:** Both MSMEs and large industries offer medium-level opportunities. MSMEs seek multi-skilled workers, while larger industries prefer skilled workers with proper certifications (e.g., ITI equivalent).

Recommendations:

- **For Skill Education:** Create skill hubs and expand access to skill education.
 - ◆ Revise curricula to target broad-based trades and local economic needs.
 - ◆ Focus on employability skills (soft skills) alongside technical skills.
 - ◆ Enhance hands-on learning and experimental pedagogy.
 - ◆ Build industry partnerships for curriculum development and industry exposure.
 - ◆ Strengthen assessments to test practical, hands-on skills.
- **Sector-Specific Recommendations:**
 - ◆ **Agriculture:** Customize curricula based on local agricultural needs; focus on farm productivity and agronomy.
 - ◆ **Manufacturing:** Increase focus on the automobile sector to generate more job opportunities.
- **Government Role:** Both State and Central governments are encouraged to focus on specific areas such as horticulture, dairy farming, and aquaculture to boost job creation.

Source:TH

FACTS IN NEWS**STUDY ON OVARIAN CANCER****In News**

A new study from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) reveals that cancer cells adapt their migration patterns based on their microenvironment's physical and biochemical characteristics.

About Ovarian cancer

- It is a group of diseases that originate in the ovaries, fallopian tubes, or peritoneum.
- It is a serious disease marked by abnormal cell growth in the ovaries, often with subtle or nonspecific symptoms that make early detection challenging.
- It is one of the deadliest gynecological cancers, typically diagnosed at advanced stages, which complicates treatment and lowers survival rates.
- **Causes :** Genetic, reproductive, and hormonal factors contribute to its development, highlighting the need for effective risk assessment and screening.
- **Types of Ovarian Cancer: Epithelial Ovarian Cancer:** Accounts for over 95% of ovarian cancers.

- ◆ **Nonepithelial Ovarian Cancer:** Makes up about 5%, including germ cell, sex-cord stromal, and small cell cancers.

- ◆ **Histologic Subtypes:** Epithelial cancers are further classified into high-grade serous, low-grade serous, clear cell, endometrioid, and mucinous subtypes, each with different diagnostic, management, and patient outcome considerations.

Findings of recent study

- It was published in the Biophysical Journal and examined two types of ovarian cancer cells, **OVCAR-3 (polygonal shape) and SK-OV-3 (elongated spindle shape)**, on soft and stiff surfaces.
 - ◆ On soft surfaces, **both cell types moved slowly and randomly.**
 - ◆ On stiff surfaces, **OVCAR-3 cells were more migratory** than expected, displaying a unique "slip" movement pattern where their direction became less coordinated with their shape.
 - ◆ The study sheds light on the mechanisms driving cancer metastasis.

Source: TH

INDIA AND MALDIVES MOU ON USE OF LOCAL CURRENCIES

In News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote the use of local currencies in cross-border transactions.

About MoU

- It encourages the use of the Indian Rupee (INR) and Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR) in:
 - Current account transactions.
 - Permissible capital account transactions.
 - Other economic or financial transactions agreed upon by both countries.
- **Benefits:** Exporters and importers can invoice and settle payments in their respective domestic currencies (INR and MVR).
 - ♦ Facilitates trading of the INR-MVR pair in the foreign exchange market.
- **Expected Outcomes:** Optimized transaction costs and reduced settlement times.
 - ♦ Strengthened bilateral cooperation between the RBI and MMA.
 - ♦ Enhanced trade and financial integration, boosting economic ties between India and the Maldives.

Source: TH

BANDIPUR TIGER RESERVE

In News

The Karnataka Forest Department has imposed restrictions on the annual jathra (religious fair) of Beladakuppe Sri Mahadeshwaraswamy Temple, located in the core area of **Bandipur Tiger Reserve**.

About Bandipur Tiger Reserve

- **Location :** It is situated in Karnataka
 - ♦ It is located in one of India's most biodiverse regions, within the "5 B Western Ghats Mountains Biogeography Zone."
- **Border areas :** It is bordered by Mudumalai Tiger Reserve to the south, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary to the southwest, and the Kabini Reservoir to the northwest, which separates it from Nagarahole Tiger Reserve.
 - ♦ To the north, the reserve is surrounded by human-influenced landscapes, including villages and agricultural lands.

- **Biodiversity:** Bandipur is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (5,520 sq. km), India's first Biosphere Reserve, notified in 1986 under the Man and Biosphere Programme.
 - ♦ The Bandipur landscape is recognized as one of India's Mega Biodiversity Areas, supporting a rich diversity of flora and fauna.
 - ♦ Tigers and elephants are key species for ecosystem conservation, acting as flagship and umbrella species for the entire biota.

Source :TH

CENTRAL VALUE ADDED TAX (CENVAT)

Context

- The Supreme Court allowed telecom companies to claim Central Value Added Tax (CENVAT) credit for the installation of mobile towers and peripherals like pre-fabricated buildings (PFBs) for which they pay excise duties.

About

- The court ruled that mobile towers and pre-fabricated buildings (PFBs) or shelters fall within the definition of '**capital goods**' or '**inputs**' under the CENVAT Rules, 2004.
- **Capital goods** are tangible assets used in the production of goods or services but are not consumed in the process. They are typically used over a longer term and aid in the delivery of taxable outputs.

What is CENVAT?

- **The Central Value Added Tax**, is a mechanism under the **CENVAT Credit Rules, 2004**, which allows manufacturers and service providers to offset their excise duties or service tax liabilities with input tax credits.
- This system helps **reduce the cascading effect of taxes**, thereby promoting efficiency in the taxation process.
- **Key Features;**
 - ♦ It applies to **excisable goods and services**.
 - ♦ Tax credits can be **claimed for capital goods, inputs, and input services** used in the production of goods or provision of services.
 - ♦ It ensures that **taxes are paid only on the value addition** at each stage of production or service delivery.

Source: TH

REJANG DEWA, PART OF NGUSABA GORENG FESTIVAL.

Context

- The Rejang Dewa, a sacred Balinese dance, forms a significant part of the Ngusaba Goreng festival.

About

- **The Ngusaba Goreng festival**, a two-week thanksgiving ritual for a bountiful harvest in **Bali**.
- The word Rejang signifies **“offering”** or **“devotion,”** while **Dewa** refers to the **divine entities** worshiped in Hinduism.
- The festival primarily involves traditional dances performed by young girls and women.

Significance

- **Spiritual Connection:** The festival reinforces the Balinese Hindu belief in the interconnection between humans, nature, and the divine.
- **Social Cohesion:** As a community-centered celebration, it fosters social harmony and collective identity.

Source: TH

PROJECT VEER GATHA

Context

- More than 1.76 crore school students from all 36 States and UTs have participated enthusiastically in Project Veer Gatha 4.0.

About Project Veer Gatha

- The Government had launched Project **‘Veer Gatha’** as part of **‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’** to celebrate **75th year of Independence**.
- It was launched under the **Gallantry Awards Portal (GAP)** in 2021, aims to share the courageous acts and life stories of **Gallantry Awardees** with students to foster patriotism and civic values.
- Through this initiative, students have created projects in various formats, including **poems, essays, paintings, and videos**, to honor these gallantry award winners.
- Aligned with the **Republic Day celebrations** each year, Project Veer Gatha has seen great success with its first three editions.
- Under Project Veer Gatha 4.0, **100 winners** will be selected and their felicitation will be done **jointly** by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Defence during the upcoming Republic Day. Each winner will be awarded a cash prize of **Rs. 10,000**.

Source: PIB

ARGENTINA CONSIDERING LEAVING THE PARIS AGREEMENT

Context

- Argentina is considering withdrawing from the Paris Agreement.

About

- **Article 28 of the Paris Agreement** lays out the procedure and timeline for a country's withdrawal from the treaty.
 - ♦ Any time after three years from the date on which this Agreement has entered into force for a Party, that Party may withdraw from this Agreement by giving written notification.
 - ♦ If Argentina decides to withdraw, it would need to notify the UN and would remain in the agreement for one year.
- **Argentina** is South America's second-largest economy and the world's 24th-largest emitter of GHGs.
 - ♦ It comprises significant fossil fuel resources and exports, with the second-largest reserves of shale gas (a type of natural gas) and the fourth-largest reserves of shale oil worldwide.

Paris Agreement

- It is a **legally binding international treaty** on climate change, adopted in **2015**, at the **COP21** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- It aims to **limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius** above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- The Paris Agreement emphasizes **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** and encourages all countries to take climate action.
 - ♦ Countries must **review and update their NDCs every five years** to enhance their efforts and increase ambition over time.

Source: IE

ASHTAMUDI LAKE

Context

- A recent episode of fish kill in **Ashtamudi Lake** has once again highlighted the increasing pollution into the lake.

About

- It is located in the **Kollam district of Kerala**.
- The lake is fed by the major river, **Kallada**.
- The name **“Ashtamudi”** means **“eight coned”** in Malayalam, referring to the shape of the lake, which resembles a set of **eight small channels**.

- The lake is connected to the **Arabian Sea through the Ashtamudi Estuary.**
- It is part of the **Ashtamudi Wetland**, which is a **Ramsar Wetland site**, recognized in **2002** for its international importance.
- Ashtamudi Lake faces challenges such as **pollution, encroachment, and the impact of climate change.**
 - ♦ Efforts are being made to preserve its ecological balance through conservation initiatives.

Source: TH

