

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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UNION GOVERNMENT RELEASES ₹1.73 LAKH CRORE TO STATES FOR TAX DEVOLUTION

Context

- The Centre released tax devolution of 1.73 lakh crore to the state governments to accelerate capital expenditure and finance welfare activities.

About

- A **higher amount** is being devolved this month to enable states to accelerate **capital spending and finance** their development and welfare-related expenditures.
- **Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Bihar** have received the largest shares of funds.

What is Tax devolution?

- **Tax devolution** refers to the **distribution of tax revenues** between the **central government and the state governments**.
- **Objective:** To promote fiscal federalism, strengthen the financial autonomy of state governments, and empower them to meet the needs of their respective populations.
- **Article 280** of the Indian Constitution **mandates the creation of the Finance Commission**, which determines the formula for devolution of taxes.
 - ♦ The central government collects taxes (like income tax, GST, etc.) and a portion is shared with the states based on the **Finance Commission's recommendations**.
- **Formula Used:** States' share is **decided by a formula** meant to incentivize demographic performance and each states effort to mobilize its own tax revenue.
 - ♦ The formula also takes into account geographic area, forest cover and the state's per capita income.
- The Centre also aids States through **additional grants for certain schemes** that are jointly funded by the Centre and the States.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Centre State Financial Relations

- **Articles 202 to 206** deal with the financial administration of states, including provisions related to their budget, expenditure, borrowing, and taxation powers.
- **Articles 268 to 272** outline the distribution of revenues between the Union and the states.
- **Article 280** provides for the establishment of a Finance Commission every five years (or as specified by the President).
- **Article 282** allows the Union government to provide financial assistance to states for any public purpose.

Current Share of the States

- **Recommendations of the 14th FC:** It hiked the tax devolution to states to **42% from 32%**, and also added a new provision of **revenue deficit grants** to states facing any resource gap.
- **The 15th finance commission**, under the chairmanship of **N K Singh** has revised tax devolution and **brought it down to 41% from 42%**.
 - ♦ So the current tax devolution to states stands at **41% till 2026**.
- The **90:10 rule** is still applicable to the **northeastern and hill states**, although there is no special status category.
- All the other states receive **Central funding in a 60:40 ratio**, 60% being the Central government's contribution and 40% states.

Concerns of the States

- **Demand for more funds:** States argue they should receive more funds than recommended by the Finance Commission.
 - ♦ States argue that they have greater responsibilities, including education, healthcare, and policing services.
- **Disparities Among States:** Developed States like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu feel they receive less money from the Centre than they contribute in taxes.
 - ♦ In other words, it is argued that more developed States with better governance are being penalized by the Centre to help States with poor governance.
- **Divisible Pool Concerns:** Cesses and surcharges, which are not shared with the States, can constitute up to **28%** of the Centre's tax revenues, leading to revenue losses for States.
- **Criticism of the Finance Commission:** Critics believe the Finance Commission may not be fully independent due to the Centre's role in appointing its members, leading to potential political influence.

Way Ahead

- **GST and Cooperative Federalism:** Strengthening the Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework for smoother tax collection and distribution between the center and states, ensuring a fairer tax system for all regions.
- **Improved Tax Administration:** Modernizing state tax administration and improving compliance.
- **Fiscal Equalization:** Ensuring a balanced devolution of resources, considering the economic disparities among states, so that poorer states receive more support.

- **Capacity Building:** Strengthening the financial management and capacity of states to better utilize devolved funds for development.

Source: TH

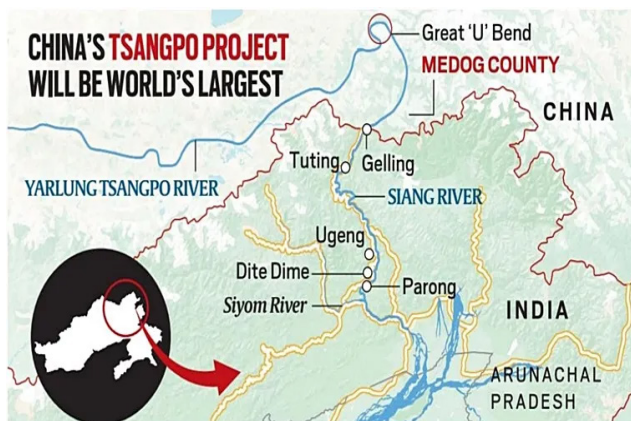
IMPLICATIONS OF CHINA'S MEGA-DAM PROJECT

Context

- China has approved the construction of the world's **largest hydropower project** on the **Yarlung Tsangpo (or Zangbo) river** in Tibet.

About

- The **60 GW capacity** project was included in **China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2020)** and **approved in 2024**. The dam will be built at the **Great Bend**, where the river takes a **U-turn**, in the Medog county of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The \$137-billion hydropower project is expected to **generate around 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually** — potentially three times more energy than the Three Gorges Dam.
 - ♦ China has previously constructed significant dams like the **Three Gorges Dam (Yangtze)** and **Zangmu Dam (Yarlung Zangbo)**.
- In the project, **India and Bhutan** are middle riparian countries, while **Bangladesh** is the lowermost riparian nation.
 - ♦ The main river does not flow through Bhutan, but **96%** of the country's area is within the basin.



Yarlung Tsangpo (Zangbo) river

- It **originates** in **Tibet**, and enters **Arunachal Pradesh**, where it is known as the **Siang**.
- In **Assam**, it is joined by tributaries such as **Dibang and Lohit**, and is called the **Brahmaputra**.
- The river then enters **Bangladesh**, and makes its way to the Bay of Bengal.

Impact of the Project

- **Hydrological Impact:** Altered water flow patterns have probability to increase **flooding during monsoons** and water **scarcity in dry seasons**, affecting downstream nations like India and Bangladesh.
- **Ecological Risks:** Threat to biodiversity and river ecosystems, including aquatic species and wetlands.
- **Seismic and Structural Risks:** The Brahmaputra basin is seismically active, as evidenced by the **1950 Assam-Tibet earthquake**.
 - ♦ A mega-dam in this zone could trigger disasters like dam collapse and floods due to structural failure.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** Control over water resources may heighten tensions between China and lower riparian countries (India, Bhutan, Bangladesh).
- **Disaster Vulnerability:** Increased risk of **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)**, as seen in the **2023 Sikkim floods**.

Coordination Mechanism for Cooperation

- There is an **umbrella Memorandum of Understanding** on cooperation on transboundary rivers, and two separate MoUs on the **Brahmaputra and Sutlej**.
 - ♦ The Brahmaputra MoU, renewable every five years, lapsed in **2023**.
 - ♦ The umbrella MoU was signed in **2013**, and has no expiry date.
- **China and India** have the **Expert Level Mechanism (ELM)** since **2006** for hydrological data sharing, but lack a comprehensive treaty.
- None of the riparian nations (China, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh) are signatories to the **UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997)**.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthen diplomatic dialogue:** Between China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh for transparent water-sharing agreements.
- **Institutional Mechanism:** Establish a permanent transboundary river management authority for data-sharing on water flow, dam operations, and disaster forecasting.
- **Disaster Preparedness:** Enhance regional cooperation for disaster management, including shared resources for relief efforts.

Source: TH

SAME SEX MARRIAGE: SC REJECTS REVIEW OF JUDGMENT

Context

- Recently, a **five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court** rejected petitions seeking a review of a judgment which refused to **legalise same-sex marriage in India**.

Background

- The Supreme Court of India, in October 2023, ruled and acknowledged the discrimination faced by same-sex couples & emphasized that such a **decision should be made by Parliament**, which is better suited to debate and legislate on this complex social issue.

Same-Sex Marriage

- It is the practice of marriage between two men or between two women. It has been regulated through law, religion, and custom in most countries of the world.
- India does not recognise** registered marriage or civil unions for same-sex couples.
 - Though, same-sex couples **can attain equal rights and benefits as a live-in couple** as per a Supreme Court of India judgement in 2022 under part of **Article 21 (the right to life)**.
- Special Marriage Act, 1954:** It provides a civil marriage for couples who cannot marry under their personal law.
 - However, the Supreme Court of India (in 2023) ruled that the Special Marriage Act (SMA) of 1954 does not apply to same-sex marriages:
 - The court unanimously agreed that **there is no fundamental right to marry**.
 - The court ruled that the Special Marriage Act, 1954 cannot be amended to include same-sex marriages.
 - The court ruled that same-sex couples cannot form civil unions or adopt.

Arguments in Favour of Same-Sex Marriage in India

- Equality and Non-Discrimination:** Advocates argue that denying same-sex couples the right to marry is a form of discrimination that violates the **principles of equality** enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
 - Legal recognition of same-sex marriage would affirm the dignity and rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Legal and Social Benefits:** Marriage provides numerous legal and social benefits, including inheritance rights, tax benefits, and social security.

- Recognizing same-sex marriages would ensure that LGBTQIA+ couples have access to these benefits, promoting their well-being and security.

- Improving Mental Health:** Legal recognition of same-sex marriages can improve the mental health of LGBTQIA+ individuals by reducing stigma and promoting social acceptance.
- International Precedents:** Many countries have legalized same-sex marriage, setting a global precedent for equality.
 - India, as a progressive democracy, could align itself with these international standards by recognizing same-sex marriages.

Global Position on Same Sex Marriages

- The **Netherlands was the first country** in 2001 to legalise same-sex marriage by amending civil marriage law.
 - According to the **Council of Foreign Relations**, same sex marriages are legal in at least 30 countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada and France.
- Many countries first recognised **same-sex civil unions** as the escalatory step to recognise homosexual marriage.
- Most countries in North and South America and Europe have legalised same sex marriage.

Arguments Against Same-Sex Marriage in India

- Cultural and Religious Beliefs:** Opponents argue that same-sex marriage is contrary to traditional Indian cultural and religious values.
 - They believe that marriage should be between a man and a woman, as per the customs and beliefs of many communities.
- Legislative Domain:** The Supreme Court of India has ruled that the legalization of same-sex marriage **falls within the legislative domain, not the judiciary**.
 - It means that any change in the law should come from Parliament, reflecting the will of the people.
- Social Readiness:** Some argue that Indian society is not yet ready to accept same-sex marriages.
 - They believe that legalizing same-sex marriage could lead to social unrest and backlash from conservative sections of society.

- **Alternative Legal Recognition:** Instead of marriage, some suggest that civil unions or domestic partnerships could provide legal recognition and rights to same-sex couples without altering the traditional definition of marriage.

Review Petition in the Supreme Court of India

- It is a **legal remedy** available to a party who seeks to challenge a judgment or order passed by the Supreme Court.
- It is filed under **Article 137 of the Constitution of India**, which grants the Supreme Court the power to review its own judgments or orders.
 - ◆ This power is however **subject to the Rules made by the Supreme Court** (under Article 145), as well as the provisions of any law enacted by Parliament.
- **Grounds for Filing:**
 - ◆ An error apparent on the face of the record;
 - ◆ Discovery of new and important information;
 - ◆ Any other sufficient reason.
- **Who can file:** Anyone aggrieved by a ruling can file a review petition, not just parties to the case.
- **Time Limit:** Must be filed within 30 days from the date of the judgment or order sought to be reviewed.
- **Procedure:** Review petitions are always heard by the same Bench that delivered the original judgment.
 - ◆ If judges on the original Bench have retired, the Chief Justice will use his/her discretion to replace them.
- **Outcome:** The Supreme Court may either accept or reject the review petition.
 - ◆ If accepted, the court may modify, reverse, or affirm its original judgment or order.

Implications of Dismissal of the Review Petitions

- It means that same-sex couples in India will continue to lack legal recognition for their relationships.
- The court's decision underscores the need for legislative action to address the rights and recognition of same-sex couples.
- Until then, the LGBTQIA+ community remains dependent on the government's policy and legislative wisdom.

Source: TH

RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE STRUGGLE WITH THE PDS

Context

- The Right to Food in India faces challenges due to inefficiencies in the Public Distribution System (PDS), hindering equitable access to essential food grains.

Food Insecurity in India

- **India** has been ranked **105th out of 127 countries** in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2024, placing it in the "serious" category for hunger levels.
- The **State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023** report highlights that approximately 224 million people in India experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2021-2022.

Recognition of the Right to food

- The right to food is recognized in the **Universal Declaration on Human Rights** and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**.
- **In India**, the right to food was recognised as a fundamental right **Article 21** of the Constitution in the case, **People's Union of Civil Liberties vs Union of India**.

What is a PDS System?

- **The Public Distribution System (PDS)** is a food security system in India that distributes food and other items to the poor at subsidized prices.
 - ◆ The PDS is a joint responsibility of the central and state governments.
- **The central government**, through the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)**, procures, stores, transports, and allocates food grains to the states.
- **State governments** manage the system at the ground level, including allocating food within the state, identifying eligible families, and issuing ration cards.

Challenges with the PDS System

- **Diversion of Food Grains:** A significant portion of food grains is leaked during transportation or diverted to the black market.
- **Exclusion Due to Biometric Verification:** Many individuals lose access to monthly rations as their names are removed from PDS rolls after biometric mismatches during Aadhaar-based verification.
- **Corruption at Fair Price Shops (FPS)**, such as under-weighting food grains, selling poor-quality goods, or charging higher prices, undermines the system's effectiveness.

- **Inadequate warehousing facilities** lead to spoilage and wastage of food grains.

Reforms and Modernization Efforts

- **National Food Security Act, 2013:** Enacted to provide legal entitlement to subsidized food grains to two-thirds of India's population.
 - ♦ Ensures the coverage of 75% of rural and 50% of urban population.
- **The Targeted Public Distribution System (Control) Order of 2015** was issued by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
 - ♦ It established responsibilities for the Centre and States, and set up a grievance redressal mechanism.
- **Digital Ration Cards:** The introduction of digital ration cards and Aadhaar-based biometric authentication aims to eliminate fake and duplicate ration cards.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** In some regions, DBT has been implemented, where money is transferred directly to the bank accounts of beneficiaries instead of providing food grains.
- **End-to-End Computerization:** The PDS system is being computerized to improve transparency, minimize leakages, and make distribution more efficient.
- **Food Safety and Quality Monitoring:** Various measures have been taken to improve the quality control of food grains provided under the PDS.

Way Ahead

- **Infrastructure Expansion:** Strengthen storage and transportation facilities to support the growing scale of operations.
- **Technological Integration:** Leverage artificial intelligence and blockchain for real-time tracking and reducing inefficiencies.
- **Implement social audits and public grievance redressal mechanisms** to hold PDS stakeholders accountable and address issues like corruption and leakages.

Source: TH

WILDFIRES IN CALIFORNIA

In News

- The US declared an emergency in Los Angeles as the wildfire spread to nearly 3000 acres.

What are Wildfires?

- A wildfire is an unplanned fire that burns in a natural area such as a forest, grassland, or prairie.

- Wildfires are triggered by both **natural events** which include lightning and volcanic eruption etc and **human activity** which includes unattended campfires, discarded cigarettes, arson, slash-and-burn farming.

Factors causing wildfires

- **Anthropogenic Activities:** Increased development near forested areas, also known as the **Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)**, heightens fire risks from human activities. **Careless actions**, such as illegal campfires or bonfires or use of fireworks during dry conditions.
 - ♦ **Also, loss of forests** reduces natural fire barriers and heightens fire risk.
- **Dry Winter:** Southern California experiences negligible rainfall from October onwards, leading to extremely dry vegetation prone to burning.
- **Santa Ana Winds:** They are common in California in this season, but this year, they are unusually strong.
 - ♦ Thus, once a fire started in the prevailing dry conditions, the strong winds made the flames get bigger and spread faster.
- **Climate Change:** Longer and more intense dry seasons increase vegetation stress due to lack of moisture, exacerbating fire risks.

Impacts of Wildfires

- **Toxic Pollutants:** Wildfire smoke contains harmful pollutants like PM2.5, NO, ozone, and aromatic hydrocarbons.
 - ♦ These pollutants cause respiratory and heart issues, especially in vulnerable populations.
- **Climate Change Intensification:** Wildfires release large amounts of CO and methane, contributing to global warming.
- **Social & Economic Losses:** Destruction of property, infrastructure, and businesses. Communities prone to wildfire areas are often forced to evacuate, losing homes and livelihoods.
- **Soil and Land Degradation:** Destruction of soil organisms and loss of organic matter.
 - ♦ Increased soil erosion, leading to loss of fertile land.

Way Forward

- **Enhanced Monitoring and Early Warning Systems:** Expanding satellite technology and GIS tools to improve early detection and monitoring of fires in real time.
 - ♦ **Ex:** The Forest Survey of India developed VAN AGNI, a portal that provides alerts and real-time data on forest fires.

- **Global Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Strengthening international cooperation to share data, research, and best practices in wildfire prevention and response.
 - ♦ Forming partnerships between governments, NGOs, and private sectors for coordinated efforts in fire management.
- **Addressing Climate Change:** Implementing policies to combat climate change and reduce global temperatures, which contribute to prolonged fire seasons.
 - ♦ Focusing on carbon sequestration strategies, such as forest conservation and reforestation, to mitigate the long-term impacts of wildfires.

Forest Fires in India

- India witnesses around 50,000 to 60,000 forest fire incidents annually, particularly during the **dry season (March to June)**.
- The fires are mainly concentrated in states like **Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh**.
- Dry deciduous forests are most prone to severe fires.
 - ♦ Evergreen, semi-evergreen, and montane temperate forests are less prone to fires.
- **Fire-Prone Forest Areas:** Over 36% of India's forest cover is prone to frequent fires.
 - ♦ 4% of forest cover is extremely prone, and 6% is very highly fire-prone.
 - ♦ 54.40% of India's forests are exposed to occasional fires.

Source: IE

GROWTH IN ORGANIC FARMING SECTOR OF INDIA

Context

- The Union Commerce and Industry Minister announced that India's organic exports are projected to touch Rs 20,000 crore in the next three years.

About

- **Leading Exporter:** The organic farming sector has witnessed robust growth over the years, with India emerging as one of the world's leading exporters of organic products.
- **Organic Export Market:** Currently India's organic product exports are at Rs 5,000-6,000 crore.
 - ♦ By 2028 India can achieve Rs 20,000 crore exports, about 3-3.5 times increase from the current level.

- ♦ Major export items include organic cereals, pulses, oilseeds, spices, tea, coffee, and fresh produce. They are in high demand in countries such as the United States, the European Union, and Japan.

Organic Farming

- Organic farming is a method of agriculture that avoids the use of synthetic chemicals, pesticides, and fertilizers.
- It focuses on using **natural processes and inputs** like compost, crop rotation, and biological pest control to maintain soil health and biodiversity.
- The goal is to produce food in an environmentally sustainable way, promoting healthier ecosystems and reducing the impact on the environment.

Organic Farming in India

- As of March 2024, India has 1,764,677.15 hectares of organic farming land, 3,627,115.82 hectares of land being converted to organic farming.
- India ranks at **4th place** in terms of **certified area** globally as per the report published by International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Statistics 2022.
 - ♦ **Madhya Pradesh** has the largest area under organic certification followed by Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka.
- **Sikkim** is India's first fully organic state, with implementing organic practices on around 75,000 hectares of agricultural land.
- **India ranks first** globally in terms of number of **farmers practicing organic farming**.

Factors Supporting the Growth of Organic Farming in India

- **Health Awareness:** Increasing consumer demand for healthier, chemical-free food due to rising health concerns.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Organic farming promotes soil health, reduces pollution, and conserves water, aligning with sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Government Support:** Various initiatives like subsidies, training programs, and organic certification schemes encourage farmers to adopt organic practices.
- **Global Market Demand:** Rising global demand for organic products opens export opportunities for Indian farmers.
- **Cultural and Traditional Practices:** Many regions in India have a tradition of sustainable farming, which naturally supports organic methods.

- **Climate Change Resilience:** Organic farming is seen as a more resilient alternative to conventional agriculture, which is vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Challenges

- **High Initial Costs:** Transitioning to organic farming requires investment in training, certification, and inputs like organic seeds and fertilizers, which can be expensive.
- **Knowledge and Skill Gaps:** Many farmers lack adequate knowledge and expertise in organic farming techniques, hindering adoption.
- **Limited Access to Inputs:** Organic inputs like bio-pesticides and fertilizers are often scarce or costly.
- **Certification Issues:** Obtaining organic certification can be a complex and time-consuming process, limiting market access for small-scale farmers.
- **Lower Yields:** Organic farming often results in lower crop yields initially, which can impact farmers' income.
- **Market Demand and Infrastructure:** Limited infrastructure and market channels for organic products reduce profitability and reach for farmers.
- **Pest and Disease Management:** Controlling pests and diseases without chemicals can be challenging, especially during unfavorable weather conditions.

Organic Certifications Systems in India

- **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP):** It is under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for development of the export market.
 - ♦ It is a **third party certification programme** where the production and handling of activities at all stages such as production, processing, trading and export requirements for organic products is covered.
- **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS-India):** In the operation stakeholders (including farmers/producers) are involved in decision making and essential decisions about the operation of the PGS-India certification itself by assessing, inspecting and verifying the production practices of each other and collectively declaring produce as organic.
 - ♦ It is under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare for meeting the demand of the **domestic market**.
- Food Safety Regulation has made it mandatory for organic products to be certified under NPOP or PGS for being sold in the domestic market under the **Jaivik Bharat logo**.

Government Initiatives for organic farming

- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** The schemes stress on end-to-end support to farmers engaged in organic farming i.e. from production to processing, certification and marketing and post-harvest management.
 - ♦ Training and Capacity Building are integral parts of the scheme.
- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCNDR):** The scheme is being implemented exclusively in the Northeast States to support farmers engaged in organic farming.
- **National Mission on Organic Farming (NMOF):** Aims to promote organic farming practices, provide financial assistance, and support certification processes.
- **Soil Health Management:** Programs that encourage the use of organic manure, compost, and other sustainable practices to improve soil health.
- **Support for Market Linkages:** Initiatives like the Organic Farming Export Promotion Program (OFEP) facilitate the export of organic products by connecting farmers with international markets.

Way Ahead

- **Branding:** The government can promote India's organic products under a unified brand to enhance visibility and competitiveness in global markets.
- **Enhance Domestic Consumption:** Encouraging domestic consumption of organic produce, will help farmers diversify and adopt sustainable farming practices.
- The sector's growth is expected to positively impact farmers, generate employment, and contribute significantly to the economy while reinforcing the country's reputation as a global hub for organic agriculture.

Source: ET

PESTICIDE POISONING AND REGULATIONS

Context

- A new study has revealed that over 70 per cent of wild bee species, crucial for pollinating food crops, face alarming risks from **pesticide residues in soil**.

What is Pesticide?

- Pesticides are substances or mixtures of substances that are used to **prevent, destroy, repel, or mitigate pests**.

- **Pests can include** insects, rodents, fungi, weeds, and other organisms that can **negatively impact agriculture**.
- Pesticides are commonly used in **agriculture to protect crops from pests and increase yields**.
- The main categories of pesticides include:
 - ♦ **Insecticides:** Designed to control or kill insects.
 - ♦ **Herbicides:** Used to control or eliminate unwanted plants (weeds).
 - ♦ **Fungicides:** Target fungi and prevent or control fungal diseases.
 - ♦ **Rodenticides:** Designed to control rodents, such as mice and rats.
 - ♦ **Bactericides and Virucides:** Target bacteria and viruses, respectively.
 - ♦ **Nematicides:** Control nematodes, which are microscopic worms that can damage plant roots.

Concerns with Use of Pesticides

- **Health Risks:** Pesticide exposure poses serious health risks to farmers, and communities living in close proximity to agricultural areas.
 - ♦ Short-term effects may include nausea, dizziness, and skin irritation, while long-term exposure may lead to chronic health problems, including respiratory issues and certain types of cancer.
- **Environmental Impact:** Runoff from fields treated with pesticides contaminate water sources, leading to water pollution.
- **Residue in Food:** Residues of pesticides remain on crops and find their way into the food supply.
- **Impact on Non-Target Organisms:** Beneficial insects, pollinators, and natural predators can be harmed by pesticide applications, disrupting ecosystems and agricultural sustainability.
- **Resistant Pests:** Over time, pests can develop resistance to certain pesticides, rendering them less effective.
 - ♦ This results in a cycle of increased pesticide use, which further contributes to environmental and health issues.

Regulation of Pesticides in India

- **Insecticide Act, 1968:** Pesticides are regulated by the Ministry of Agriculture through the Central Insecticide Board and Registration Committee (CIB & RC) constituted under the Insecticide Act, 1968.
 - ♦ The CIB & RC regulate the manufacturing, import, transport, storage of pesticides and accordingly the pesticides are registered/banned/restricted by CIB & RC.

- FSSAI aligns with the updated standards of maximum residue limit (MRL) (pesticides **0.01 milligrammes per kilogramme (mg / kg) to 0.1 mg / kg in herbs**) set by **Codex Alimentarius Commission** (an International Food Safety and Quality Standard setting body created by WHO and FAO of UN) and the European Union.
- **Anupam Verma Committee:** It was constituted by the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to review **66 pesticides which are banned/restricted** in other countries but continued to be registered for use in India.

Way Ahead

- **Organic farming:** Organic farming avoids the use of pesticides which results in food products that are free from harmful chemical residues with higher levels of essential nutrients.
 - ♦ The government is promoting use of **biopesticides**, which are generally safer than chemical pesticides.
- FSSAI has also asked State Food Safety Commissioners to undertake an **awareness campaign on pesticides/insecticides residues** in fruits and vegetables.
- **Promotion of Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** IPM involves a combination of biological, cultural, physical, and chemical control methods to manage pests in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Concluding remarks

- Pesticides remain a vital tool in modern agriculture, contributing to food security and economic stability.
- However, their use must be carefully managed to balance agricultural productivity with environmental sustainability and human health.

Source: DTE

NEWS IN SHORT

PRESIDENT'S INVITE FOR 'AT HOME' TO HONOUR CRAFTS FROM SOUTH

Context

- The Rashtrapati Bhavan's revamped "At Home" reception for the 75th Indian Republic Day showcases India's rich cultural heritage by including a curated box of Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged handcrafted items from five southern states.

About

- The craft products in the invitation box are all made in the southern States, have **GI (geographical indicator) tags**, and are drawn from the “**One District One Product**” scheme.
- The elements of the invitation include:
 - ♦ **A box made of bamboo weave with Kalamkari paintings**, an ancient art form using natural dyes, on it done by **Nimmalakunta artisans**.

Art in a box

President Droupadi Murmu’s guests are set to receive a gift box containing the best of south India’s GI-tagged crafts. **Here are some products featured in the hamper:**



Pochampally Ikat on a pencil pouch: This Telangana staple is known for its distinct geometric patterns and bold colours



Etikoppaka toys: The soft wood and lacquer toys from the eponymous village in Andhra Pradesh are valued for the use of natural dyes and themes depicting everyday life



Kalamkari on bamboo: These goodies will arrive in a bamboo box decorated with Kalamkari motifs, pen-drawn with natural dyes



Kanchipuram silk as a pouch: The handloom silk, world renowned for its richness and elegance, makes its way from Tamil Nadu

- ♦ **An Ikat-Pochampalli cover** (Ikat involves a complex dyeing process where yarns are resist-dyed before weaving, resulting in geometric patterns).
- ♦ **A fridge magnet depicting Mysore’s Ganjifa art**, which involves intricate hand-painting with mythological themes, linked with the **Dashavatara (ten incarnations of Vishnu)**.
- ♦ **A handmade pouch of Kanjeevaram silk** from Tamil Nadu.
- ♦ **Etikopakka dolls from Andhra Pradesh**, made using the age-old Turned Wood Lacquerware, along with a bookmark made of **screw pine leaves** woven by artistes from Kerala.

Source: TH

INTERPOL INTRODUCES SILVER NOTICE

In News

- The International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) has launched its **first Silver Notice**, an initiative aimed at tracing and recovering assets laundered across borders.
 - ♦ This pilot project involves 52 countries, including India.

What is the Silver Notice?

- **About:** The Silver Notice is the latest addition to Interpol’s colour-coded alert system, designed to assist member countries in identifying, locating, and recovering criminally obtained assets. These assets can include:
 - ♦ Properties
 - ♦ Vehicles
 - ♦ Financial accounts
 - ♦ Businesses
- The notice is a crucial tool for addressing criminal activities such as:
 - ♦ Fraud
 - ♦ Corruption
 - ♦ Drug trafficking
 - ♦ Environmental crimes
- The pilot phase will run until November 2025.

How Does It Work?

- **Requesting Information:** Member countries can request information about assets suspected of being linked to criminal activities.
- **Identification and Action:** The notice aids in locating assets, enabling further legal measures such as seizure or confiscation, in accordance with national laws.
- **General Secretariat Review:** Before issuance, the Interpol General Secretariat reviews each notice to ensure compliance with organisational rules and to prevent misuse for political purposes.

India’s Role and Benefits

- India, as a participant, stands to gain significantly. India has a long-standing issue with fugitive economic offenders and unaccounted black money transferred to tax havens.
- It provides a platform to enhance India’s efforts in combating financial crimes and bringing offenders to justice.

About INTERPOL Notices

- **International Information Sharing:** INTERPOL Notices are international alerts or requests for cooperation that enable police in its 195 member countries to share vital crime-related information.



- **Types:** There are eight different types of notices, each serving a specific purpose.
- **Issued By:** The Interpol General Secretariat.
- **Requested By:** Member countries' National Central Bureaus.
 - ♦ International Criminal Tribunals and the International Criminal Court.
 - ♦ The United Nations (for implementing Security Council sanctions).

Source: BS

INDIAN CUSTOMS ELECTRONIC GATEWAY (ICEGATE)

In News

- The government has formed a committee to establish a reliable system for publishing accurate data, following discrepancies in gold import figures.
 - ♦ The errors in the data occurred due to a migration of the data transmission mechanism from the **Special Economic Zone (SEZ) system to the ICEGATE platform.**

ICEGATE (Indian Customs Electronic Commerce/ Electronic Data Interchange Gateway)

- It is a unified platform for capturing and processing trade data from ports, airports, and container depots.
- It collects Export-Import (EXIM) data from over 500 locations across India.
 - ♦ It ensures real-time transmission of trade data to the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS).
- **Functions of ICEGATE:** Captures trade data from all ports, airports, and SEZs.
 - ♦ Transmits reconciled and accurate data to DGCIS for precise trade statistics.
 - ♦ Prevents duplication by integrating trade data from both SEZs and non-SEZs.

Source: PIB

CONDUCTIVE INK

In News

- The indigenous know-how of silver nanowire-based **conductive ink technology** was successfully transferred to two promising Indian startups.

About

- This transfer marks a crucial step in **enhancing India's capabilities in the electronics sector**, particularly in the production of conductive inks and adhesives.

- The global market for **silver nanowire-based conductive ink** and adhesive is projected to exceed \$16.87 billion by 2032.

About Conductive Ink

- Conductive ink is a special type of paint that contains **silver or carbon particles**, allowing it to conduct electricity.
- Unlike traditional circuits made with copper wires, this **ink enables circuits to be directly drawn onto various surfaces.**
- Key Applications:
 - ♦ Repairing and enhancing circuits on printed circuit boards (PCBs)
 - ♦ Flexible electronics such as foldable screens, keyboards, and windshield defrosters
 - ♦ Used in RFID tags, wearable devices, sensors, displays, and solar panels
 - ♦ Holds potential for interactive marketing and signage with touch-enabled features.

Source: PIB

BLUE FLAG CERTIFICATION

Context

- **Kerala's Kappad and Chal beaches** in Kozhikode and Kannur districts, have been bestowed with the **Blue Flag certification.**

Blue Flag Certification

- **Given By:** Foundation for Environment Education in Denmark (FEE) accords the globally recognized eco-label - Blue Flag certification.
- **Stringent Criteria:** FEE gives the award to beaches, marinas, and boating operators that meet **33 criteria.**
 - ♦ Broadly, they are divided into **four categories**, covering **water quality, environmental management, safety, and environmental information and education.**
 - ♦ The standards were established by the **Copenhagen-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in 1985.**
- The certification is **updated annually**, and locations must continue to meet the criteria to retain their Blue Flag status.
- **Blue Flag Beaches:**
 - ♦ There are over 4000 Blue Flag certified beaches across the world, with Spain leading with a total of 729 blue flag sites, followed by Greece.
 - ♦ **India** has 13 such beaches, the **Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha** is the **first in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification.**

- **Significance:**

- ♦ promote sustainable tourism,
- ♦ protect ecosystems,
- ♦ and encourage environmental stewardship at recreational sites.
- ♦ It helps tourists identify destinations that prioritize environmental and safety standards.

Source: TH

ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD OF INDIA (AWBI)

In News

- The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) and NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, have signed a memorandum of understanding to train animal welfare volunteers in animal care laws and procedures.

Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)

- It was established in 1962 under the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**.
- It was founded under the leadership of humanitarian Rukmini Devi Arundale.
- **Composition:** The Board consists of **28 members**, including 6 Members of Parliament (2 from **Rajya Sabha** and 4 from **Lok Sabha**).
- **Term of Office:** The term of office for members is **3 years**.
- **Functions:** It ensures the enforcement of animal welfare laws.
 - ♦ It provides grants to Animal Welfare Organizations.
 - ♦ It advises the Government of India on animal welfare issues.

Source :TH

