

Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF)

❖ Context

- Recently, SEBI decided to set up a **corporate debt market development fund** in the form of an **AIF** with an initial corpus of **Rs 3,000 crore**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- It will act as a **backstop facility** for purchase of investment grade corporate debt securities during times of stress.
- The move is aimed at **instilling confidence amongst the participants in the corporate bond market** and to generally enhance secondary market liquidity.
- The government has allowed a **10x usage of this corpus** to be availed taking the available fund to Rs 33,000 crore and this additional corpus is also guaranteed by the central credit guarantee corporation.
- CDMDF, based on a guarantee to be provided by **National Credit Guarantee Trust Company (NCGTC)** may raise funds, for purchase of corporate debt securities during market dislocation.
- Specified mutual fund schemes will have access to the fund for selling securities during market dislocation.
- This access is proportional to the contribution made to the fund at a mutual fund level.

❖ Backstop Facility:

- Essentially, the definition of a “backstop” indicates supporting or reinforcing something.
- A backstop in the stock market is a financial arrangement that requires setting up a secondary source of finance if the primary source of funds is insufficient to meet current needs.
- It is the **last resort of support for fund seekers**.
- The backstop provider takes the risk and thus mitigates the uncertainties of fund requirements.
- To some extent, it is similar to an insurance policy as it covers the need of scarcity of source of funds.

❖ Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

- It is the **regulator of the securities and commodity market** in India owned by the Government of India.
- It was **established in 1988 and given statutory status through the SEBI Act, 1992**.
- SEBI is responsible for the **needs of three groups**:
 - **Issuers** of securities.
 - **Investors**.
 - **Market intermediaries**.
- **Functions**:
 - **Quasi-legislative** – Drafts regulations.
 - **Quasi-judicial** – Passes rulings and orders.
 - **Quasi-executive** – Conducts investigation and enforcement action.
- **Powers** :
 - To **approve by-laws of Securities exchanges**.
 - To **require the Securities Exchange to amend its by-laws**.
 - **Inspect the books of accounts and call for periodical returns** from recognised Securities exchanges.
 - Inspect the books of **accounts of financial intermediaries**.
 - **Compel certain companies** to list their shares in one or more Securities exchanges.
 - **Registration** of Brokers and sub-brokers.
- **Appeals** : Appeals against orders of SEBI and the stock exchanges can be made to the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) comprising three members.
 - Appeals from the SAT can be made to the Supreme Court.

News in Between the Lines

Pakistan Bill To Curb Chief Justice's Powers



❖ Context

- Pakistan's National Assembly and Senate have passed a Bill that aims to curtail the **discretionary powers of the Chief Justice**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Bill has three significant provisions:
 - a committee will decide what **suo motu** cases can be taken up instead of only the Chief Justice;
 - benches to hear these cases will also be decided by the committee instead of the top judge;
 - and decisions made in such cases will be **open to appeals**.
- The Bill has sparked concerns among legal experts about the implications it could have for the **independence of the judiciary in Pakistan**.
- The passing of the Bill comes at a time of growing political instability in Pakistan, with the country facing a range of economic, security, and governance challenges.
- The passage of the Bill has also drawn **international attention**, with some human rights organizations and democratic governments expressing concern about the implications it could have for the rule of law and democratic governance in Pakistan.

Face to Face Centres

5.6 Billion Dollar Support Package For Ukraine



❖ Context

- The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has approved a 15.6 billion US dollar support package for Ukraine to assist with the conflict-hit country's economic recovery.

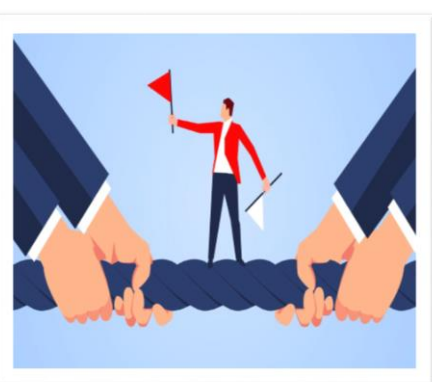
❖ Key Highlights:

- The loan is part of a broader 115 billion US dollar international support package to help the country meet urgent funding needs.
- Of the total amount approved by the IMF, **2.7 billion dollar** is being made available to Ukraine immediately and the rest of the funds are due to be released over the next four years.

❖ Extended Fund Facility:

- Extended Fund Facility is the first major financing programme approved by the IMF for a country involved in a **large-scale war**.
- It is provided to countries facing serious balance-of-payments problems.
- The EFF is designed to support a country's economic reform program and provide funding for a longer period of time than other IMF financing programs.
- The EFF is a medium-term program that typically provides financial assistance for three to four years, with repayments usually due over a **period of four to ten years**.
- The program is designed to help countries implement economic policies that will address their balance-of-payments problems & promote sustainable economic growth.
- To qualify for an EFF, a country must demonstrate that it has a **sustainable economic** reform program that addresses the underlying causes of its balance-of-payments problems.
- The IMF reviews the country's program regularly to **ensure that it remains on track**, and disbursements of financial assistance are conditional on the country's continued implementation of the program.

Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2023



❖ Context

- The Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2023 has been passed by the Lok Sabha, amending the Competition Act, 2022.

❖ Key Highlights:

- One major change in the amended law is that it allows the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to penalize entities found engaging in **anti-competitive behavior based on their global turnover**.
- This provision may pose a challenge for Big Tech companies as their revenue earned from Indian operations is typically smaller than their income from other regions.
- The consideration of total turnover may lead to unfair outcomes and discrimination between enterprises that commit a similar contravention but are **penalized differently** depending on the expansion of their business.
- The changes also afford the CCI a greater say in mergers and acquisitions as entities will have to seek its approval if the deal value is worth more than Rs 2,000 crore and both parties have a substantial business operation in India.
- The CCI may also **incentivize parties** in ongoing cartel investigations to disclose information regarding other cartels in terms of a lesser penalty.

❖ What is Anti-competitive Behaviour?

- Anti-competitive behavior refers to actions taken by firms that distort or undermine competition in a market.
- Such behaviour can **harm consumers, other businesses**, and the overall economy by reducing competition and leading to higher prices, reduced product quality, and decreased innovation.
- Some **examples** of anti-competitive behavior include:
 - **Price-fixing:** When firms agree to set prices at a certain level, this reduces competition and harms consumers.
 - **Market allocation:** When firms agree to divide up markets or customers, this limits competition and harms consumers.
 - **Exclusive dealing:** When a firm requires its customers or suppliers to deal only with it, this can limit competition and harm other businesses

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India's First Cloned Female Calf



❖ Context

- The National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) in Karnal, Haryana has produced India's first cloned female calf of the desi breed Gir, **named 'Ganga.'**

❖ Key Highlights:

- Gir, Sahiwal, Tharparkar, and Red-Sindhi are **indigenous cattle** breeds in India that play a pivotal role in milk production and the growth of the Indian dairy industry.
- Among these, Gir is well-known for its tolerance to conditions of stress and resistance to various tropical diseases.
- The cloned Gir female calf can produce more than 15 liters of milk per day, which has the potential to significantly contribute to milk production.
- The **NDRI collaborated with Uttarakhand Livestock Development** Board to clone high-yield desi breeds such as Gir, Red Sindhi, and Sahiwal breeds.
- **The Gir was** cloned by isolating the oocytes from live animals using ultrasound-guided needles.
- The somatic cells of elite cows are used as donor genomes, which are fused with **OPU-derived enucleated oocytes**. After chemical activation and in-vitro culture, the developed blastocysts are transferred into recipient mothers to deliver the Gir calf.
- Gir cattle are hardy and have been exported to **Brazil, the United States, Mexico, and Venezuela for the development of zebu cows.**

❖ Significance:

- The export of Gir cattle can help to increase the **popularity of the breed worldwide** and strengthen India's position in the dairy industry.
- It is a significant milestone in the field of animal **science and is expected** to have a positive impact on India's dairy industry.

Bedaquiline



❖ Context

- The patent office in India rejected the secondary patent of the Johnson and Johnson's TB medication **bedaquiline**, used for the treatment of those with drug resistant infections.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The decision prevented the best drug in the class from being locked up in patent for another four years after its primary patent expires in July this year.
- Experts, health activists, and survivors welcomed the decision as generic versions are likely to bring down the cost of the medicine and improve access.

❖ Bedaquiline:

- In 2012, bedaquiline became the first new TB therapy to become available after a period of 40 years.
- The drug 1st became available in India under the government's TB programme in 2015.
- Bedaquiline is considered to be one of the most effective treatments available for drug resistant tuberculosis.
 - It has minimal side-effects as compared to the existing drugs such as **Kanamycin** that can lead to kidney damage and permanent hearing loss.
- The drug also prompted **development of shorter-courses of treatment** for such resistant TB – more than halving it from two years to nine month to one year course.
- It is also an oral medicine unlike Kanamycin or Streptomycin.
 - A shorter-course, all-oral medicine is likely to increase odds of people completing their treatment and preventing more cases of drug resistant TB.

Piezoelectric Effect

❖ Context

- For the first time, scientists have reported evidence of the piezoelectric effect in liquids.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The effect has been known for **143 years** and in this time has been observed only in solids.
- The new finding challenges the theory that describes this effect as well as opens the door to previously unanticipated applications in electronic and mechanical systems.

❖ Piezoelectric Effect:

- The piezoelectric effect was **discovered in 1880, in quartz.**

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- In the piezoelectric effect, a **body develops an electric current when it is squeezed**.
- Quartz is the most famous piezoelectric crystal: it is used in this capacity in analog wristwatches and clocks. Such crystals are also used in cigarette lighters, electric guitars, TV remote controls, audio transducers, and other instruments where converting mechanical stress to a current is useful.
- **Quartz** : Quartz is **silicon dioxide (SiO₂)**.
 - The quartz crystal consists of silicon and oxygen atoms at the four vertices of a three-sided pyramid; each oxygen atom is shared by two pyramids. These pyramids repeat themselves to form the crystal.
 - The effective charge of each pyramid is located slightly away from the centre.
 - When a mechanical stress is applied – i.e. when the crystal is squeezed – the position of the **charge is pushed further from the centre**, giving rise to a small voltage. This is the source of the effect.

Vaikom Satyagraha



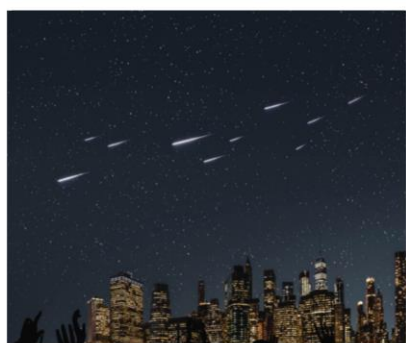
❖ Context

- Kerala Chief Minister and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, will inaugurate the centenary celebrations of the **Vaikom Satyagraha**, on Saturday (April 1, 2023).

❖ Key Highlights:

- On March 30, 1924, in the temple town of **Vaikom in the princely state of Travancore**, a non-violent agitation started, marking the beginning of “**temple entry movements**” across the country.
- At the time, **caste discrimination and untouchability** was rife across India, with some of the most rigid and dehumanising norms documented in Travancore.
- Lower castes like the **Ezhavas and Pulayas** were considered polluting and various rules were in place to distance them from upper castes.
- These included a prohibition, not just on temple entry, but even on walking on the roads surrounding temples.
- The **Vaikom Satyagraha was launched in opposition to this**.
- **Gandhiji, Chatampi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru and E V Ramaswami Naicker (Periyar)** supported the movement.
- **Leaders**: K P Kesava Menon and T K Madhavan.
- **Effects** : On 23rd November 1925, all the gates of the temple were opened to Hindus except the eastern gate.
 - In 1928, backward castes got the right to walk on public roads leading to all temples in Travancore.

Sky Canvas Project



❖ Context

- **Tokyo-based ALE** is set to launch the satellite in 2025 and it hopes to give people all over the world “the opportunity to view the world’s 1st live human-made meteor shower.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The project is called **Sky Canvas** and it is designed to collect atmospheric data in the **mesosphere**, which is the third layer of the atmosphere.
- The Mesosphere is too low to be observed by satellites and too high for weather balloons or aircraft.
- The satellite was initially scheduled to launch in 2020 but a malfunction in one of the satellites meant that the launch had to be delayed.
- **Mechanism** : ALE hopes to reproduce the effect of natural meteor showers by using metal “shooting star” particles that are around 1 centimetre in size.
 - These grains will be taken to a **low-Earth orbit about 400 kilometres** above the planet by small satellites.
 - Once the satellites’ orbit stabilises, they will release the particles.
 - The particles will then travel around part of the planet before entering the atmosphere at an altitude of 60 to 80 kilometres.
- **Meteor Shower** : A natural meteor shower happens when our planet passes through the trail of debris left by a comet or an asteroid.
 - Meteors are chunks of rocks and ice that are ejected from comets as they orbit the Sun.

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