

Wildlife Protection Act

❖ Context

- Recently, a 35-year-old man from Uttar Pradesh, was booked under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**, for “illegally” keeping and nursing an injured Sarus crane (*Grus Antigone*) he found in his village.



❖ About Wildlife Protection Act:

- The Wildlife Protection Act came into force on **September 9, 1972**.
- It “provide for the **protection**” of **wild animals, birds and plants** to ensure the “ecological and environmental security of the country.”

❖ Features:

- It aims to conserve **protected species** in two main ways:
 - By prohibiting their hunting.
 - By protecting their habitat through the creation and regulation of sanctuaries, national parks, reserves, etc.
- Further, the Act **prohibits capturing or hunting** any species of animals listed under Schedules I-IV, barring a few exceptions (only be killed if permission from the **Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) of the state** is granted) such as
 - Hunting a diseased or dangerous animal or bird constituting a threat to human life or property or for scientific research or management.
- It **does not permit the uprooting, damaging, possessing or selling of any specified plant** from any forest land or any protected area.
- The Central Government can **declare any given area as a Wildlife Sanctuary**, provided the area is of adequate significance in terms of ecology, fauna, flora, geomorphology etc.
- It also provides for the constitution of bodies to be set up under this act. For example, the **National and State Board for Wildlife, Central Zoo Authority, National Tiger Conservation Authority etc.**
- The wild animals that are hunted, animal articles or meat of a wild animal etc. are considered to be the **property of the Central Government**.
- It provides legal powers to officers to punish the offenders.
- It provides trade and commerce in some wildlife species within a license for sale, possession, transfer etc,
- It imposes a ban on trade & commerce in scheduled animals.

❖ Schedules listed in the Act:

- The Act protects wild and captive animals or birds which belong to a species listed under Schedules I-IV.
- **Schedules I and II :**
 - Species falling under Schedules I and II are classified as “Strictly Protected Species.”
 - No wild or captive animal or any products derived from them, like their fur, skin, tusks, etc., can be possessed without an ownership certificate under Section 42.
 - These animals cannot be transferred or acquired by any means other than inheritance, barring exceptions like peacock tail feathers or captive elephants.
- **Schedules III and IV :**
 - Species that are not endangered are included under Schedule III and IV.
 - This includes protected species with hunting prohibited but the penalty for any violation is less compared to the first two schedules.
- **Schedule V :**
 - This schedule contains animals that are considered as **vermin** (small wild animals that carry disease and destroy plants and food).
 - **These animals can be hunted.**
 - This schedule includes rats, common crows, mice, fruit bats, jackal, bats..
- **Schedule VI :**
 - This list comprises plants that are not allowed to be cultivated.
 - Both cultivation and trade of specified plants **can only be carried out with prior permission of competent authority.**
 - It includes **blue vanda, red vanda, pitcher plant, kuth, beddomes cycad, ladies slipper orchids, pitcher plant.**

Unified Payments Interface

❖ Context

- Recently, **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**, the retail payments and settlement body, clarified that there are no charges for bank account-to-bank account-based UPI payments, which are the “normal” UPI payments for most people.



❖ Key Highlights:

- NPCI said that an interchange charge has been introduced for **PPI (prepaid payment instrument)** merchant transactions - but customers will not be charged.
- NPCI said that as per recent regulatory guidelines, PPI wallets have been permitted to be part of the interoperable UPI ecosystem.

❖ Prepaid payment instruments (PPI)

- Prepaid payment instruments (PPI) include **online wallets (like Paytm Wallet, Amazon Pay Wallet, PhonePe Wallet, etc.)** and preloaded gift cards.
- A PPI payment done via UPI refers to a transaction done via such a wallet through a UPI QR code.

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❖ **NPCI:**

- The NPCI was formed in 2009 as an initiative of the RBI and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- NPCI's goal is to create a robust payment and settlement infrastructure.

❖ **Side Note:**

- Indians travelling abroad can now pay foreign merchants via UPI in UAE, Singapore, Nepal & Bhutan.

❖ **UPI:**

- **About :** The UPI was **launched in 2016**. It is **operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**. .

• **Functioning :**

- UPI operates on top of the **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)** which was created by the NPCI for immediate fund transfers.
- UPI based payments **function broadly through three steps**.
 - **First**, one's bank account is mapped to a **Virtual Payment Address (VPA)**.
 - A VPA **eliminates the risk of mentioning account details** in every transaction.
 - It can be created in a couple of minutes using a UPI app.
 - The only prerequisite is that your bank account be linked to a mobile number.
- Secondly, a **Payment Service Provider** (typically a bank) takes care of the **to-and-fro transactions** to this VPA.
- Finally, the **UPI software organizes the fund movement** from a customer's VPA to a target VPA and completes the transaction

News in Between the Lines

Children With Type 1 Diabetes (T1D)



❖ **Context**

- The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** has written to the Chairman/Secretary Education Boards of all States and Union Territories, stating it is the duty of schools to ensure that children with Type 1 diabetes (T1D) are provided with **proper care and required facilities**.

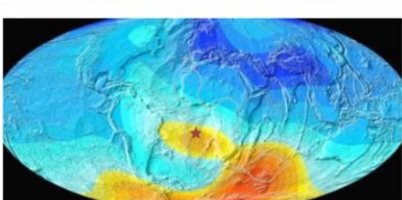
❖ **Key Highlights:**

- According to data from the **International Diabetes Federation Atlas 2021**, India has the world's **highest number of children** and adolescents living with Type I Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM), at over 2.4 lakh, in the southeast Asia region.
- As per the note, a child with T1D who requires a **mid-afternoon snack should be permitted** by the class teacher to consume it.
- Those writing exams may be **allowed to carry medicines**, snacks and water with them, a **glucometer and glucose testing strips** to test blood sugar and continuous/flash glucose monitoring devices or insulin pumps.
- **The NCPCR has appealed** to States that in case a smartphone is required to monitor sugar levels, it should be allowed and **can be held by the invigilator in the hall**.
- **Note:** Tamil Nadu had been providing free insulin for its children **with T1D since 1988**.

❖ **About Type 1 Diabetes (T1D)**

- Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) is a **chronic autoimmune disorder** in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks & destroys the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas.
- As a result, the body is unable to produce insulin, a hormone that regulates blood sugar levels.
- **T1D usually** develops in children and young adults, although it can occur at any age.
- The exact cause of T1D is unknown, but it is **believed to be a combination** of genetic and environmental factors.
- **Symptoms** of T1D may include increased thirst and urination, constant hunger, unexplained weight loss, fatigue, blurred vision, and frequent infections.
- If left untreated, T1D can lead to **serious complications** such as diabetic ketoacidosis, a life-threatening condition that can cause coma or death.
- Treatment involves taking multiple **injections of insulin daily, lifelong**.

South Atlantic Anomaly



❖ **Context**

- An **anomalous magnetic region** in the **South Atlantic Ocean** is growing.

❖ **Key Highlights:**

- The South Atlantic Anomaly is a weak spot in Earth's magnetic field, which **protects the planet from high doses of solar wind and cosmic radiation**.
- This anomaly exists because the **Earth's inner Van Allen radiation belt** comes closest to the planet's surface, causing an increased flux of energetic particles.
- In turn, this anomaly also **causes technical disturbances in satellites and spacecraft orbiting Earth**.

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Essential Medicines



❖ Context

- Prices of **384 essential drugs** and over 1,000 formulations are set to see a hike of over 11%, due to a sharp rise in the **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The price surge to set in from April 1 2023 will mean that consumers have to **pay more for routine and essential drugs, including painkillers, anti-infection drugs, cardiac drugs, and antibiotics.**
- Annual hikes in the prices of drugs listed in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) are based on the WPI.**

❖ What are Essential Medicines?

- Essential medicines are usually **inexpensive and widely available**, and they are intended to be affordable and accessible to all who need them.
- They play a critical role in **improving the health of populations**, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where access to healthcare and essential medicines may be limited.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** maintains a list of essential medicines, which includes drugs for the treatment of common health conditions such as pain, infections, and chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension.
- The list is periodically updated to reflect **new scientific evidence** and changes in public health needs.

❖ Wholesale Price Index (WPI):

- It is an index that **measures the average change** in the price of goods at the wholesale level in a given economy.
- Wholesale prices are the prices paid by **retailers and other businesses** for goods they purchase from manufacturers and distributors.
- The Wholesale Price Index is used by **economists, policymakers, and businesses** to track inflation and understand price movements in the economy.

Power From Defunct Gold Mines



❖ Context

- An Australian renewable-energy company's unique scheme to generate electricity may resuscitate the fortunes of one of India's iconic but defunct gold mines, **namely the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), in Karnataka.**

❖ Key Highlights:

- A hiccup that makes renewable energy unreliable, from solar or wind power, is that there is no power during nights or windless days.
- **Green Gravity's idea** is to address this challenge by relying on low-tech gravity.

❖ How it is going to Function?

- Their plan is to find defunct mines, which often go hundreds or even thousands of metres deep, and **haul a 'weighted block'** - this could be as much as 40 tonnes - up to the top of the mine shaft using renewable power during the day when such power is available.
- When backup power is required, the heavy block will fall, under gravity, and the ensuing momentum will power a generator via a connected shaft.
- The depth to which the block can slip can be determined via a **braking system**, thus giving control over the amount of power that can be produced.
- The same principle underlies the **'pumped hydropower' storage.**

❖ Significance:

- Decommissioned mines can be put to use and the environmental costs and challenges of moving water up can be avoided.
- This approach also avoids the consumption of critical water, land, and chemicals that other storage technologies rely on.
- At mines such as Kolar, we can produce up to **100 or even thousands** of megawatt-hours of power.
- **Issues Involved:** The implementation of this idea would **require significant investment** and infrastructure, and further research would be needed to assess its feasibility and sustainability.

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Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)



Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India

❖ Context

- Recently, The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has lifted limits on the payment of commissions to insurance intermediaries. .

❖ Key Highlights:

- With this, life and non-life players will have more freedom in offering commissions – the compensation paid to and received by an insurance agent from an insurer for soliciting and procuring an insurance policy.

❖ About IRDAI:

- The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** is a **statutory body** under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Finance.
- It was constituted by the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999**, an Act of Parliament passed by the Government of India.
- It is tasked with regulating and licensing the insurance and re-insurance industries in India.
- **Functions :**
 - Issuing & regulating the registration certificates to insurance companies
 - Protecting the interest of policyholders
 - Providing licences to insurance intermediaries and setting the necessary code/norms of conduct for them.
- The agency's **headquarters are in Hyderabad, Telangana**, where it moved from Delhi in 2001.
- IRDAI is a **10-member body** including the chairman, five full-time and four part-time members appointed by the government of India.

Project Elephant

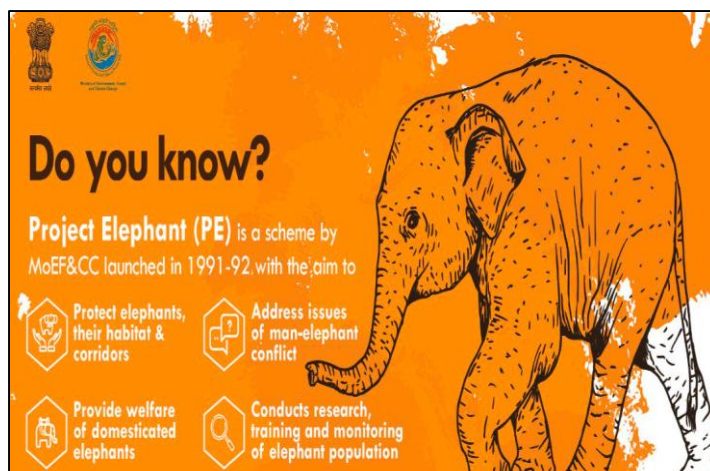


❖ Context

- President of India will inaugurate a two-day "**Gaj Utsav**" on **April 7, 2023** in **Assam's Kaziranga National Park** to commemorate the successful completion of 30 years of Project Elephant and to give more impetus to conservation efforts.

❖ Project Elephant:

- India launched **Project Elephant in 1991-92** as a centrally-sponsored scheme.
- Its objective is to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, prevent human-elephant conflict and to ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India.
- States are receiving both financial and technical assistance to help them achieve the Project's goals.
- Other states with small elephant populations are also helped with censuses, field staff training, and human-elephant conflict mitigation.
- Elephant is a national heritage animal protected under **Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972**.
- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species classifies Asian elephants as "**Endangered**."
- **India accounts for more than 60%** of the global wild elephant population.



- These are distributed majorly in southern and north-eastern India, east-central and northern regions.
- **Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).**
- **Elephant Corridor :** An elephant corridor is a stretch of forested (or otherwise) land that connects larger habitats with elephant populations and serves as a conduit for animal movement between the habitats.

• Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme :

- The MIKE programme, mandated by a CITES COP resolution, began in South Asia in **2003**.
- MIKE is an international collaboration that tracks elephant mortality rates, trends, and causes.

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