

Mid Day Meal Scheme

❖ Context

- Recently, The **Union Minister for Education** approved the proposal to provide monetary assistance to 11.8 Crore students (118 Million Students) through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** of the **cooking cost component** of the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme, to all eligible children, as a special welfare measure.

❖ Key Highlights:

- This is in **addition to the Government's announcement** of distribution of **free-of-cost food grains @ 5 Kg per person per month** to nearly 80 Crore beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY).
- This decision will help safeguard the nutritional levels of children and aid in protecting their immunity during the challenging pandemic times.

❖ About Midday Meal Scheme:

- The current version of the programme, **renamed PM Poshan Shakti Nirman or PM Poshan in 2021**.
- It was **launched in 1995**.
- **Scheme Type**- Centrally Sponsored
- **Nodal Ministry**- Ministry of Education
- **Students up to Class VIII** are guaranteed one nutritional cooked meal at least 200 days in a year.
- Initially it was launched for students up to Class 5.
 - In 2007, the UPA government expanded it to Class 8.
- The **scheme covers 11.80 crore children** across Classes 1 to 8 (age group 6 to 14) in 11.20 lakh government and government-aided schools.
- It is a **legal entitlement** of all school-going children in primary and upper primary classes, through the **NFSA, 2013**, as well as the Supreme Court's ruling.

• Objective

- To address **hunger and malnutrition**.
- To **increase enrolment and attendance** in school.
- To **improve socialization among castes**.
- To provide **employment at grassroot level especially to women**.

• Menu

- The menu varies from one state or Union Territory to another.
- Authorities need to ensure that the nutritional component of the **meal is made up of rice, pulses, vegetables, oil and fat**.
- For **primary grades**- at least 450 calories and 12 gm protein
- For **upper primary children**- 700 calories and 20 gm protein.

• Finances

- **60:40** for normal states.
- **90:10** with the Northeastern states and Hilly States
- **100%** of the costs in UTs without legislature
- The central government provides grains and financing for other food.
- Costs for facilities, transportation, and labour are shared by the federal and state governments.

• Regulation

- The **State Steering-cum Monitoring Committee (SSMC)** oversees the implementation of the scheme.

Exoplanet Discovered

❖ Context

- Recently Indian scientists discovered a new exoplanet with a mass 13 times that of Jupiter.

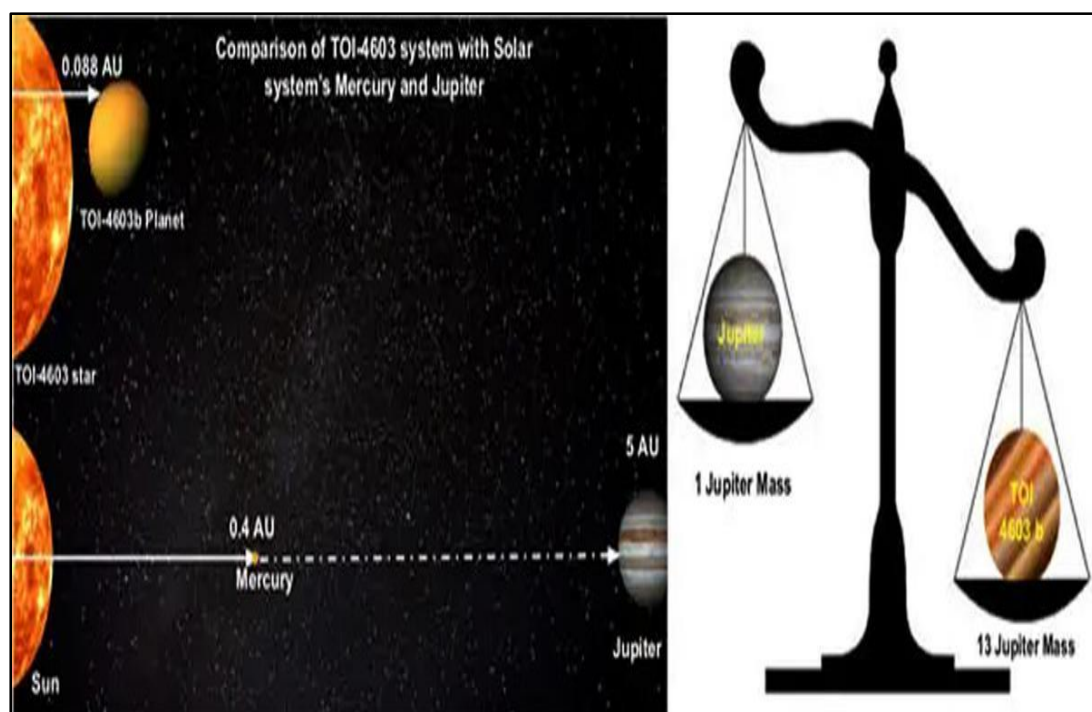
❖ Key Highlights:

- The discovery of this exoplanet has been made using the indigenously made PRL **Advanced Radial-velocity Abu-sky Search spectrograph (PARAS)** at the 1.2 m telescope of PRL at its **Gurushikhar Observatory** in Mt. Abu by measuring the mass of the planet precisely.
- The planet discovered by scientists from India, Germany, Switzerland and the USA is with a density of **~14 g/cm³**.
- The exoplanet, named **TOI 4603b or HD 245134b**, is located around the star **TOI4603 or HD 245134** and is situated **731 light years away**.
- The newly discovered exoplanet orbits very close to its host star at a distance less than 1/10th the distance between our Sun and Earth.

❖ Side Note:

- An exoplanet is any planet beyond the solar system.
- Massive giant exoplanets are those having mass greater than four times that of Jupiter.

- **Third by India:** This discovery marks the third exoplanet discovery by India, and by the PRL scientists using **PARAS** spectrograph and the PRL 1.2m telescope, following the discoveries in **2018 (K2-236b)** and **2021 (TOI-1789b)**.



Face to Face Centres



India-ASEAN Women UNPK Initiative

❖ Context

- India plans two initiatives for women in UN Peacekeeping operations in collaboration with ASEAN, following Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's proposal.

Key Highlights:

- The first initiative involves **tailor-made courses** for women peacekeepers from ASEAN member-states at the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in India in September 2023. Twenty peacekeepers, two from each country, will be trained.
- The second initiative is a **'Table Top Exercise'** for women officers from ASEAN, incorporating aspects of UNPK challenges. It is scheduled to be conducted in December 2023.

India's Contribution to UNPK:

- India is one of the largest troop-contributing nations to UNPK, with approximately 5,900 troops deployed in 12 UN Missions.
- March 29 marks the 75th UN Peacekeepers Day, commemorating the beginning of the first UN peacekeeping mission, the **"UN Truce Supervision Organisation,"** in Palestine in 1948.
- India has contributed around **275,000 troops** to peacekeeping missions and has lost **159 Indian Army soldiers** in these operations.
- Apart from the current deployment, India has pledged additional troops, including an **Infantry Battalion Group, a Navy Corvette with Helicopter**, an Engineer Company, & a Signal Company, to be deployed at the behest of the UN.

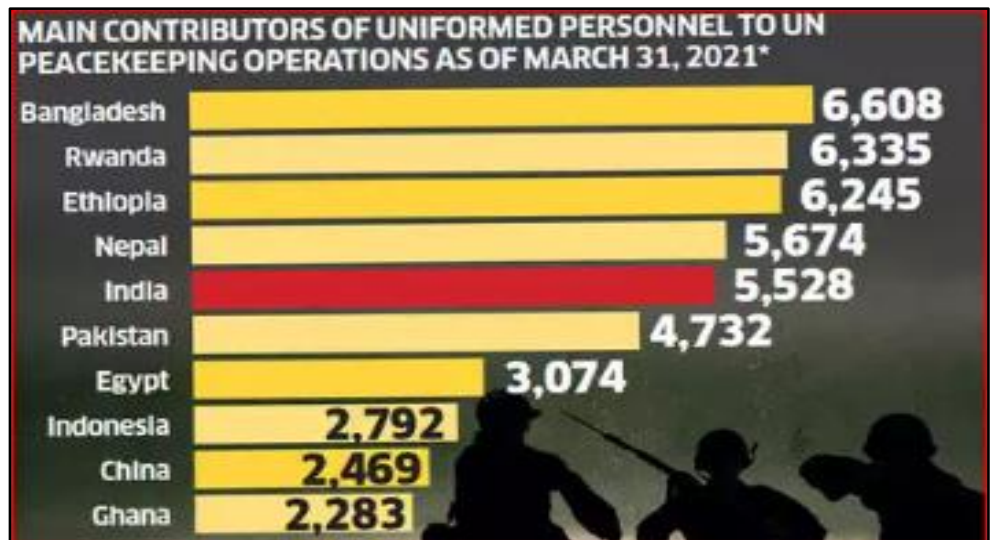
❖ India's Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK):

- The Indian Army has established the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi.

- CUNPK imparts training in peacekeeping operations & trains over 12,000 troops annually.
- The centre also shares best practices **by hosting foreign delegations** and dispatches mobile training teams to Friendly Foreign Countries for capacity building in UNPK.

❖ India's Contribution of Women Peacekeepers:

- India has deployed Female Engagement Teams in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo & the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, making it the second-largest women contingent after Liberia.
- India has also deployed Women Military Police in the **United Nations Disengagement Observer Force**, along with women staff officers and military observers in various missions.



News in Between the Lines

Sickle cell anaemia (SCA)

Massive exercise

Sickle cell disease is a genetic condition that affects an estimated 15 lakh people in India

- The Ministry plans to screen 7 crore persons in 17 highly affected States by 2025-26. One crore screenings had been scheduled for 2022-23
- So far, a little over one lakh persons have been screened
- The Health Ministry is working on maintaining a central registry of SCD patients
- India seeks to eliminate the sickle cell disease by 2047

❖ Context

- Tribal populations residing in the southern, central, and western States are most vulnerable to Sickle cell anaemia (SCA).

❖ Key Highlights:

- In her 2023 Budget speech, Finance Minister said that India aims to eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047.

❖ Sickle Cell Disease:

- Sickle cell disease is a genetic disorder in which the red blood cells of the patient turn into a sickle-shaped crescent shape, become rigid and sticky, and get clogged in the blood vessels.
- The capacity of these cells to carry oxygen reduces, which leads to excruciating pain and organ damage in the affected patients.
- SCA negatively impacts the average life expectancy of a patient, with the average life expectancy being 54 years.
- **Treatment**
 - Bone marrow or stem cell transplantation.
- **Side Note**
 - Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is widespread among the tribal population in India where about 1 in 86 births among STs have SCD.

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Evergreening of Loans



❖ Context

- Recently, the RBI Governor raised red flags over banks adopting innovative methods for evergreening of loans – covering up the real status of stressed loans of corporates – to project an artificial clean image in cahoots with corporates.

❖ Evergreening of Loans:

- The process of evergreening of loans, a form of zombie lending, is typically a temporary fix for a bank.
- If an account turns into a non-performing asset (NPA), banks are required to make higher provisions which will impact their profitability.
- A loan turns into a non performing asset, or NPA, if the interest or installment remains unpaid even after the due date — & remains unpaid for a period of more than 90 days.
- So, to avoid classifying a loan as an NPA, banks adopt the evergreening of loans.
- In the past, many banks had indulged in dressing up bad loans and given additional funds to companies who didn't have the capacity to repay.
- This is purely misgovernance, so that bad loans are made to look good many a time by additional lending to troubled borrowers.

Indigent Person



❖ Context

- The case in Delhi HC against BBC has been filed by Justice For All under Order 33 of the Code of Civil Procedure, "seeking permission to file as an indigent person".

❖ Indigent Person:

- Under Indian law, Order 33 of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908, deals with suits filed by indigent persons.
- Under Rule 1, Order 33, CPC, a person is an indigent person if he does not have sufficient means other than property excused from attachment in execution of the degree, to enable him to pay prescribed fees.
- The word 'person' includes not only a natural person but other juridical persons.
- Earlier, the suits filed by indigent persons were also referred to as "pauper suits", and they can be filed only by those who are unable to pay on account of poverty.

Poppy Straw



❖ Context:

- The Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) Madhya Pradesh unit recently seized ₹1 crore worth of poppy straw.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Poppy straw is produced in regions where opium poppy cultivation is prevalent, such as certain parts of Asia, including Afghanistan, India, and Myanmar.
- **Alkaloid Content:** The primary alkaloids found in poppy straw are morphine and codeine. These alkaloids have pain-relieving and sedative properties.
- **Illicit Drug Production:** Poppy straw serves as a precursor for the illicit production of opioids, particularly heroin. The alkaloids present in poppy straw can be extracted and chemically processed to produce heroin, which is a highly addictive and illegal drug.

"Mo Ghara" Scheme



❖ Context:

- Odisha government, led by Naveen Patnaik, has introduced the "Mo Ghara" or "My Home" housing scheme.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The scheme aims to convert kutchha houses (traditional mud houses) into pucca houses (houses with durable construction).
- Eligible beneficiaries can avail a housing loan of up to Rs 3 lakh under the scheme.
- The repayment period for the loan is set at 10 years, providing flexibility for beneficiaries.
- Families residing in kutchha houses or possessing at least one pucca room with a solid concrete roof are eligible for the scheme.
- Families with four-wheelers, members in government service, or possessing irrigated land of five acres or more are ineligible for the loan.
- Additional subsidies will be provided to beneficiaries belonging to the SC/ST category and the differently-abled.

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Copper Import



❖ Context

- India's copper imports witnessed a **15% year-on-year jump** in the financial year 2022-23.

❖ Key Highlights:

- As per Commerce Ministry data, India imported 2,75,341 tonnes of copper in the previous financial year.
- These include **both refined and finished copper**.
- **Refined copper** is the end product where impurities are removed from copper ore.
- **Finished copper**, on the other hand, refers to copper that has been processed and shaped into its final form such as wires, tubes, pipes, sheets etc.
- India used to be a **net exporter of copper until FY18**.
- Copper is the third most used industrial metal after steel and aluminum.
- **Reasons for the Increased Copper Demand**
 - Post Covid, strong growth was witnessed in key sectors such as power, automobile, infrastructure & construction, which have spiked the demand for copper.
 - Usage of copper in **EVs manufacturing** is 2-3 times higher as compared to fuel-based vehicles.
- **Requirement of Copper in Energy Sector**
 - India has set a target of 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.
 - According to estimates, 3,000 kg of copper is required for generating 1 MW of power via the solar photovoltaic and onshore wind platforms.
 - Power generation via offshore wind is even more copper-intensive, requiring over 8,000 kg of copper per MW.

Spiking imports

Year	Values in tonnes		
	Exports	Imports	Net
FY18	4,19,138	2,38,874	1,80,264
FY19	61,516	3,44,748	(2,83,233)
FY20	42,293	3,57,423	(3,15,130)
FY21	93,900	2,38,483	(1,44,583)
FY22	1,20,302	2,38,694	(1,18,392)
FY23	61,057	2,75,341	(2,14,284)

Source: Ministry of Commerce #Figures include refined and finished copper

• Leading countries in World Copper Production

- Chile (27%), Peru the Democratic Republic of the Congo China the United States, Russia.
- India ranks at the 30th position in copper production.

• Leading Producer of Copper in India

- Madhya Pradesh (53%), Rajasthan (43%), Jharkhand (4%)

Cambodian King Visits India



❖ Context

- Cambodia's King **Norodom Sihamoni** has embarked on his first state visit to India, marking the culmination of the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries established in **1952**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The visit is significant as it is the first visit by a **Cambodian king** to India since King **Norodom Sihanouk's** visit in 1963.
- India and Cambodia actively collaborate in various areas, including capacity building, human resource development, and developmental projects.
- **Bilateral trade** between India and Cambodia amounted to **USD 366 million** in the fiscal year 2022-2023, with Indian investments in sectors like pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and mining reaching **approximately USD 115 million**.

❖ About Cambodia:

- **Geography:** Cambodia shares borders with Thailand to the west and northwest, Laos to the northeast, Vietnam to the east, and the Gulf of Thailand to the southwest.



- The **Mekong River runs** through the country, providing fertile plains and contributing to the country's agriculture.
- **Capital:** Phnom Penh which is also the largest city.
- **Religion:** The majority of Cambodians practice **Theravada Buddhism**.
- **Khmer** is the official language, and the Khmer script is used for writing.
- **Angkor Wat**, located in Cambodia is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

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