

Human Trafficking

❖ Context

- Details of the conviction of cases involving human trafficking shared in Parliament earlier this month points out that the **conviction rate in human trafficking cases has been declining** over the past four years.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The number of **Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTU)** in the country has increased to 696.
 - AHTUs are specialized investigation units with the law enforcement that were created upon the directive of the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2008, by state governments in their respective states.
- The conviction rate of cases related to human trafficking dropped from **27.8% in 2016 to 10.6% in 2020**.
- Between 2018 and 2019 the conviction rate in such cases increased **from 19.4% to 22.5%**.

❖ Reasons for Declining the Rate:

- **Absence of a strong and robust mechanism** to investigate human trafficking cases that often span across state borders leading to acquittal of traffickers across the country.
- Problems and **fallacies in the investigation**.
 - The crime is usually an organized and an interstate one, the investigation is rarely interstate.

❖ Suggestions:

- **More robust interstate investigations** that do not solely depend on the testimony of the survivors in order to prosecute the traffickers.
- **Need of comprehensive legislation** that provides for a strong investigation mechanism clarifying the roles and responsibilities of investigating agencies such as AHTUs and the NIA (National Investigation Agency).
- **The proposed Trafficking In Persons Bill 2021** is one of the instruments that can really help in addressing all aspects of human trafficking and increasing conviction rate

❖ Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 23:**
 - Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labor
 - The offense is punishable in accordance with law.

• Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986:

- This legislation aims to stop immoral trafficking and prostitution in India

❖ Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021

- **Objective:**
 - To **prevent and counter-trafficking in persons**, especially women and children.
 - To provide for **care, protection, and rehabilitation** to the victims, while respecting their rights, and creating a supportive legal, economic and social environment for them.
- **Key Points of the Bill:**
 - The law will **apply to all citizens of India**, within and outside the country,
 - It will apply to **every offense of trafficking** in persons with cross-border implications.
 - It **widens the definition of the “victim”** by including transgenders, besides women and children.
 - Set up a **National Anti Trafficking Committee** at central level while state governments will set up these committees at state and district levels to ensure effective implementation.
 - **Punishment-** 7-10 Years Imprisonment, at least 1 Lakhs rupees fine.

Cure Against HIV

❖ Context

- Recently, scientists reported that a **woman living with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)** and administered an experimental treatment is likely ‘cured’.

❖ Key Highlights

- The US patient is believed to be the **third person in the world**, and first woman, to be cured of HIV.
- Scientists **used a cutting-edge stem cell transplant method**.
- The woman has now been free of the virus for 14 months.

❖ About HIV

- HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a **virus that attacks cells** that help the body fight infection, making a person more vulnerable to other infections and diseases.
- **Transmission**
 - It spreads **by contact with certain bodily fluids** of a person with HIV.

❖ About Stem Cells

- Stem cells are **undifferentiated cells** that are capable of developing into other types of cells with specific functions.
- A normal cell in the body can undergo division to form only cells of its own type.
- These cells are **present in both animals and plants**.
- **Differentiation:**
 - The process by which the stem cell is converted into a mature cell with a specific function is called differentiation.
- **Types of Stem Cells**
 - **Embryonic Stem Cells**

Face to Face Centres

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- Most commonly during **unprotected sex** (sex without a condom or HIV medicine to prevent or treat HIV)
- **Through sharing injection** drug equipment.
- **AIDS:**
 - If left untreated, **HIV can lead to the disease AIDS** (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).
 - AIDS is the **late stage of HIV** infection that occurs when the body's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus.
- **Cure:**
 - The human body can't get rid of HIV and **no effective HIV cure exists**.
 - So, once you have HIV, you have it for life.
 - However, by taking HIV medicine (**called antiretroviral therapy or ART**), people with HIV can live long and healthy lives and prevent transmitting HIV to their sexual partners.
 - In addition, there are effective methods to prevent getting HIV through sex or drug use, including **pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)** and **post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)**.

- These stem cells come from embryos that are three to five days old.
- At this stage, an **embryo is called a blastocyst** and has about 150 cells.
- These are pluripotent (plooo-RIP-uh-tunt) stem cells, meaning they can divide into more stem cells or can become any type of cell in the body.
- This versatility allows embryonic stem cells to be used to regenerate or repair diseased tissue and organs.
- **Adult Stem Cells:**
 - These stem cells are found in small numbers in most adult tissues, such as bone marrow or fat.
 - Compared with embryonic stem cells, adult stem cells have a more limited ability to give rise to various cells of the body.
- **Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells:**
 - These are stem cells that are derived from somatic cells.
 - It is a pluripotent stem cell generated by introducing 'reprogramming factors' called Yamanaka factors into mature cells.

Guidelines on Plastic Packaging

❖ Context

- The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has notified the **Guidelines on Extended Producers Responsibility on plastic packaging** under **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Guidelines provide a **framework to strengthen the circular economy of plastic packaging waste**, promote development of **new alternatives** to plastics and for moving towards **sustainable plastic packaging** by businesses.
- Extended Producer Responsibility shall be **applicable to both pre-consumer and post-consumer plastic packaging waste**.
- The Extended Producer Responsibility Guidelines **covers** the following with respect to plastic packaging namely: - **(i) Reuse; (ii) Recycling; (iii) Use of recycled plastic content; (iv) End of life disposal**.
- **Reuse of rigid plastic packaging material** has been **mandated** in the guidelines to reduce the use of fresh plastic material for packaging.
- Producers, importers & brand owners, may operate schemes such as deposit refund system or buy back or any other model, in order to prevent mixing of plastic packaging waste with solid waste.
- The **implementation** of EPR will be done **through a customised online platform developed by CPCB**. State Pollution Control Board or Pollution Control Committee will do the registrations.
- It will act as the digital backbone of the system. The online platform will allow **tracking and monitoring of EPR obligations** and will reduce the compliance burden for companies through **online registration and filing of annual returns**.
- In order to ensure fulfilment of EPR obligations, the guidelines have prescribed a **system of verification and audit of enterprises**.
- The Guidelines prescribe a framework for **levy of environmental compensation based upon polluter pays principle**, with respect to non-fulfilment of extended producer responsibility targets by producers, importers & brand owners
- The funds collected shall be utilised for collection, recycling and end of life disposal of uncollected plastic waste in an environmentally sound manner.
- In a significant first, the guidelines allow for **sale and purchase of surplus extended producer responsibility certificates**, thus setting up a market mechanism for plastic waste management.

Green Hydrogen/Green Ammonia Policy

❖ Context

- **Ministry of Power** notifies Green Hydrogen/ Green Ammonia Policy.

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❖ Key Highlights

- The **National Hydrogen Mission** aims to make **India a green hydrogen hub**. This will help in meeting the target of production of **5 million tonnes of Green hydrogen by 2030** and the related development of renewable energy capacity.
- Hydrogen and Ammonia** are envisaged to be the **future fuels** to replace fossil fuels. Production of these fuels by using power from renewable energy, termed as green hydrogen and green ammonia, is one of the major requirements towards **environmentally sustainable energy security** of the nation.
- The implementation of this Policy will provide **clean fuel** to the common people of the country. This will **reduce dependence on fossil fuel** and also **reduce crude oil imports**. It will help to make **India an export Hub for Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia**.
- Green Hydrogen / Ammonia manufacturers **may purchase renewable power from the power exchange or set up renewable energy capacity themselves** or through any other developer, anywhere.
- Open access** will be granted within 15 days of receipt of application.
- They can **bank their unconsumed renewable power, up to 30 days**, with a distribution company and take it back when required.
- Waiver of inter-state transmission charges for a period of 25 years** will be allowed to the manufacturers for the projects commissioned before 30th June 2025.
- The manufacturers of Green Hydrogen / Ammonia and the renewable energy plant shall be given **connectivity to the grid on priority basis to avoid any procedural delays**.
- The **benefit of Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) will be granted** as incentive to the hydrogen/Ammonia manufacturer and the Distribution licensee for consumption of renewable power.
- To ensure ease of doing business a single portal for carrying out all the activities including statutory clearances in a time bound manner will be set up by MNRE.
- Manufacturers of Green Hydrogen / Green Ammonia shall be allowed to **set up bunkers near Ports** for storage of Green Ammonia for export / use by shipping. The land for the storage for this purpose shall be provided by the respective Port Authorities at applicable charges.

News in Between the Lines

REWARD project



❖ Context

- The **Government of India**, the State Governments of **Karnataka** and **Odisha** and the **World Bank** have signed a **\$115 million (INR 869 crore)** Programme (**Rejuvenating Watersheds for Agricultural Resilience through Innovative Development Programme**).

❖ Key Highlights

- It will help national and state institutions adopt **improved watershed management practises** to help increase farmers' resilience to climate change, promote higher productivity and better incomes.
- The Government of India has committed to restoring **26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030** vide **Delhi Declaration** adopted at **UNCCD COP 14** in 2019.
- The new program will help the participating state governments in their efforts to **transform watershed planning and execution** and adopt **science-based planning** that could be replicated across the country.

❖ Other related initiatives

- The **Department of Land Resources**, Ministry of Rural Development is implementing an area development program called **Integrated Watershed Management Program (IWMP)** with effect from 26.02.2009, basically for the development of **rainfed portions of net holding area and cultivable barren land**. The programme was **subsumed** under **Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY)** in 2015.
- World bank is providing technical assistance to the program under **NEERANCHAL- National Watershed Management Project**.

Nepal adopts UPI

❖ Context

- Nepal will be **the first country to adopt India's UPI system**.

❖ Key Highlights

- NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL)**, the international arm of NPCI, has

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joined hands with **Gateway Payments Service (GPS)** and Manam Infotech to provide the services in Nepal.

- GPS is the authorised payment system operator in Nepal and Manam Infotech will deploy Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in that country.
- The collaboration will serve the larger digital public good in Nepal and bolster interoperable **real-time person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions** in the neighbouring country.

RCEP

❖ Context

- New Zealand has said that it will not deal with Myanmar and will not recognize its instrument of ratification to the free trade pact as it opposes its military led government.

❖ Key Highlights

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is a **Free Trade Agreement between 15 countries - 10 ASEAN nations & China, Australia, Japan, South Korea & New Zealand.**
- It is the largest free trading bloc which accounts for **30% of the world's population, about 30% of global GDP**, and over a **quarter of global trade in goods and services**, and **31% of global FDI inflows**.
- It is expected to **eliminate about 90% of the tariffs** on imports between signatories within 20 years of coming into force .
- The RCEP was conceived at the **2011 ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia**, while negotiations formally launched during the **2012 ASEAN Summit in Cambodia**. Formally signed in **Nov 2020**, it **entered into force on 01.01.2022** for Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Japan, Lao PDR, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Indian Neutrino Observatory (INO)

❖ Context

- Recently, Tamil Nadu has made clear to the Supreme Court that **it does not want the Indian Neutrino Observatory (INO) to be set up** in a sensitive ecological zone in the Western Ghats.

❖ Key Highlights

- The State said the project would be a source of distress to the **shy tigers and cause "enormous" irreversible damage** to the already bogged down Western Ghats.
- The project in questions falls exactly on the hill slopes of this part of the Western Ghats, which align within it a significant tiger corridor, namely the Mathikettan-Periyar tiger corridor.
- This **corridor links the Periyar Tiger Reserve** along the Kerala and Tamil Nadu borders and the Mathikettan Shola National Park.
- The proposed project area also **ecologically links to the eastern habitats**, where Srivilliputhur Meghamalai Tiger Reserve is located.
 - It **hosts tigers from this region and helps in genetic dispersal**.
- The project area is a **significant watershed and catchment zone** for the rivers **Sambhal and Kottakudi**.

❖ Indian Neutrino Observatory (INO)

- It is a proposed **particle physics research mega project**.
- **Objective:**
 - To study neutrinos in a 1,200-meter deep cave.
- **Significance:**
 - This observation will tell us more about the **properties of neutrino particles**, whose main source is the Sun and the Earth's atmosphere.
 - This will also help in **developing a model of physics** beyond the so-called Standard Model of Particle Physics.
 - It would also have a **great impact on diverse fields such as nuclear and particle physics, astrophysics and cosmology, medical imaging etc.**
- If completed, the project **will have a 50 kilotonne magnet**, the world's biggest.

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Minsk Accord



❖ Context

- Recently, at a meeting at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) called by Russia to discuss the Ukraine crisis, on the **seventh anniversary of the Minsk II ceasefire agreement**, India called for a diplomatic solution to the tensions.

❖ About MINSK II

- The **Minsk II Agreement is a peace agreement** that helped avert an open conflict in 2015. This too was under the mediation of France and Germany.
- The **agreement sought to end the fighting in the region** and to hand over the control of the border areas to Ukrainian troops.
- **It required Ukraine to delegate more power to the rebel regions** by introducing constitutional reforms and codifying their special status.

Water Taxi Service



❖ Context

- Recently, India's first **Water Taxi Service** was inaugurated in Maharashtra.

❖ Key Highlights

- It will **connect the Navi Mumbai area to mainland Mumbai**.
- This fast and reliable transport services **will help in reducing the traveling time**.
- This **₹8.37-crore project** will presently run on **three routes and the State** and the Center have each shared 50% of the expenditure.
 - The three routes include Belapur to Ferry Wharf – the domestic cruise terminal, Belapur to Elephanta Caves and Belapur to JNPT.

Kunsnyoms



❖ Context

- Ladakh **Autonomous Hill Development Council**, Leh has launched a new scheme **Kunsnyoms** for **differently-abled persons** in the district. **Kunsnyoms, meant Equal for All, Fair for All**, aims inclusive and accessible Ladakh

❖ Key Highlights

- Under the **New Scheme Leh Hill Council** is providing assistive devices, technologies to needy people at **90 percent subsidy**.
- Launching the new scheme on Monday, LAHDC Leh Chief Executive Councillor and Chairman and his executive councilors have handed over **28 tri scooters, battery-run wheelchair, walking aids** and other aids required for special needs of the individuals.
- After becoming Union Territory, financially empowered with sufficient allocations of budget.

NCB Organises Darkathon -2022



❖ Context

- The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** is organising a **“Darkathon-2022”** to find solutions to counter **drug trafficking** through **darknet**. The agency recently smashed three groups of drug peddlers that were operating on the network that is accessed through **encryption software** which enables anonymity of users.

❖ Key Highlights

- **NCB Director-General** inaugurated the event which is being held in three phases till April 22. **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** Chairman and **National Cyber Security Coordinator**.
- The prize money for the **first winner is ₹2.50 lakh**, the runner-up would get **₹2 lakh** and the **third winner ₹1.50 lakh**.
- Rise in drug trafficking through **the maritime routes and darknet**. Citing the **UNODC World Drug Report-2021**, **94%** of the sales in the darknet markets are related to drugs. **Effective enforcement** activities had resulted in the enhanced seizures of all major drugs in the recent years.
- **NCB** and directed to find solution to the problem of **trafficking via darknet** by organising a **“hackathon”** primarily **involving youth and technical students** of the country.

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