

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

❖ Context

- India's exports to the UAE are expected to touch an 'all-time high' of USD 32 billion by the end of this fiscal due to the benefits of free trade agreement (CEPA) between the countries.

❖ Key Highlights:

- India's exports of gems and jewellery, automobiles, coffee, tea, and articles of iron and steel, recorded a growth during June 2022-February 2023 as compared to the same period a year ago.
- India's overall goods exports to the UAE **rose 10.4 per cent** on-year in June 2022-February 2023 at USD 23.03 billion, while imports increased 12.9 per cent at USD 38.95 billion.
- Apparel exports declined due to the global headwinds while shipments of iron and steel fell despite the government removing export restrictions on them.
- A review of the trade agreement (CEPA), which came into force on May 1, 2022, is likely in May.
- **Side Note :**
 - Apart from negotiations with UAE, India has long-standing negotiations underway with **Canada** while CEPAs with **South Korea** and Japan are in place.
 - Additionally, in late November 2021, Commerce & Industry Minister said India was looking to advance a CEPA with **Bangladesh**.

❖ About CEPA:

- CEPA is a type of **trade agreement** that covers services and investment, and other areas of economic partnership.
- It may even cover areas such as **trade facilitation and customs cooperation, competition, and Intellectual Property Rights**.
- CEPA also looks into the regulatory aspect of trade and encompasses an agreement covering the regulatory issues.
- **CEPA and FTA :** CEPA is a more comprehensive agreement than a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) - an agreement to form a free-trade area between the cooperating states, as CEPA is a partnership.
- **CEPA and CECA :**
 - India also signs Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements (CECA) with various countries.
 - While CECA is synonymous with CEPA, the big difference is that CECA involves only tariff reduction or elimination in a phased manner on listed or all items.



National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme & PENCIL Portal

❖ Context

- Recently, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment informed Rajya Sabha about the PENCIL portal and implementation of the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme.

❖ NCLP Scheme:

- **Ministry of Labour & Employment** has been implementing National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme for rehabilitation of child labourers through **District Project Societies** under the chairmanship of the District Magistrate.
- Under the NCLP scheme, the children in the **age group of 9-14 years** are rescued / withdrawn from work and enrolled in the NCLP Special Training Centres (STCs).
- They are provided with **bridge education, vocational training, mid-day meal, stipend, health care, etc.** before being mainstreamed into formal education system.
- NCLP scheme has now been subsumed under **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** Scheme with effect from 01.04.2021.

❖ PENCIL Portal:

- **Aim:**
 - PENCIL is an electronic platform that aims at involving Centre, State, District, Governments, civil society and the general public in achieving the target of child labour free society.
- **Components:**
 - Child Tracking System, Complaint Corner, State Government, National Child Labour Project and Convergence.
- **Nodal Ministry:**
 - The Ministry of Labour and Employment created it.
- **Implementation:**
 - The Districts will nominate District Nodal Officers (DNOs) who will receive the complaints and within 48 hours of receiving, they will check the genuineness of the complaint and take the rescue measures in coordination with police, if the complaint is found to be genuine.
 - Till date, 7 states/UTs have appointed the DNOs.

Face to Face Centres

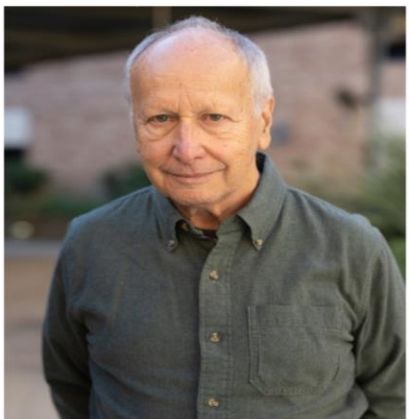
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News in Between the Lines

Abel Prize



❖ Context

- Recently, Luis Caffarelli, 74, won the 2023 Abel Prize “for his seminal contributions to regularity theory for nonlinear partial differential equations including free-boundary problems and the Monge-Ampère equation”.

❖ About Abel Prize:

- The Abel Prize is a **scientific prize, awarded annually** within the discipline of mathematics.
- It is often considered to be an equivalent of the Nobel prize – which does not have a category for mathematics – and has been modelled as such.
- The Abel Prize is named in honor of the **Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel (1802 – 1829)**.
- It was **established by the Norwegian Government in 2002** and is managed by The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.
- The **first Abel Prize**, awarded in 2003, went to French mathematician **Jean- Pierre Serre**.
- The only **person of Indian** origin to have won this prize is **Srinivasa S.R. Varadhan**. He is at the Courant Institute, New York University, and won it in 2007.
- So far, the prize has gone to only **one woman mathematician, Karen Keskulla Uhlenbeck** of University of Texas, U.S.A.
- The prize includes a monetary award of 7.5 million kroner (roughly \$ 720,000) and a glass plaque designed by Norwegian artist Henrik Haugan.

Bio Transformation Technology



❖ Context

- A UK-based startup, claims to have **developed a technology that could alter the state of plastics and make them biodegradable**. The company calls the process “**biotransformation**”.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The tech was co-developed by the Imperial College in London, UK, and a Britain-based startup, Polymateria.
- It claims the technology would digest the plastic packaging waste naturally with the help of microbes and biodegrade the waste without leaving behind any microplastics.

❖ Bio Transformation Technology:

- Biotransformation technology is a novel approach to ensure plastics that escape refuse streams are processed efficiently and broken down.
- **Plastics made using this technology are given a pre-programmed time during which the manufactured material looks and feels like conventional plastics without compromising on quality.**
- Once the product expires and is exposed to the external environment, it self-destructs and biotransforms into **bioavailable wax**.
- This wax is then consumed by microorganisms, converting waste into water, CO2, and biomass. This biotransformation technology is the world’s first that ensures polyolefins fully biodegrade in an open environment causing no microplastics.

Hosakerehalli Lake



❖ Context

- The dumping of huge mounds of mud into Bengaluru's Hosakerehalli lake has caused alarm among environmentalists and local residents.

❖ About the Lake:

- Hosakerehalli Lake is a man-made lake located in the Hosakerehalli locality of Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.
- The lake was built in the 16th century during the reign of Kempegowda, the founder of Bangalore, and is spread over an area of **approximately 36 acres**.
- The lake serves as a crucial water resource for the surrounding areas and also acts as a natural ecosystem for various species of plants and animals.
- In recent years, the lake has been facing several issues such as **encroachment, dumping of waste, and pollution, leading to a decline in the water quality and degradation of the ecosystem.**

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A Push For The Semiconductor Industry



❖ Context

- In a bid to make India's **\$10 billion chip-making initiative more attractive** to investors, the Centre on September 21 2022, approved changes to the scheme for the development of a semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in the country.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Semiconductors are the thumbnail-sized building blocks of almost every modern electronic device from smartphones to connected devices in the **Internet of Things (IoT)**. They help give computational power to devices.
- The global semiconductor industry is currently valued at **\$500-\$600 billion** and caters to the global electronics industry currently valued at about \$3 trillion.
- The basic component of a **semiconductor chip is a sliver of silicon**, which is etched with billions of microscopic transistors and projected to specific minerals & gases, forming patterns to control the flow of current while following different computational instructions.
- The most-advanced semiconductor technology nodes are available today are the **3 nanometre (nm) and the 5nm ones**. Semiconductors having higher nanometre value are applied in **automobiles, consumer electronics and so on**, while those with lower values are used in devices such as **smartphones and laptops**.
- The chip-making industry is a highly-concentrated one, with the big players **being Taiwan, South Korea and the U.S. among others**.
- 90% of 5nm (nanometre) chips are mass-produced in Taiwan, by the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC).
- Semiconductor demand in India would increase **to \$70-\$80 billion by 2026** with the growing demand for digital devices and electronic products.

International Liquid Mirror Telescope



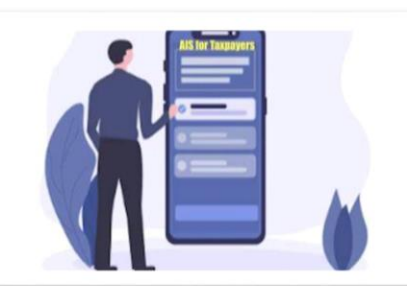
❖ Context

- Recently, India inaugurated the largest International Liquid Mirror Telescope (ILMT) in **Devasthal, Uttarakhand**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The **ILMT** is a four-meter telescope located in **Devasthal, Uttarakhand**, designed exclusively for astronomical observations. The telescope has a rotating mirror made up of a **thin layer of liquid mercury**, which is highly reflective & is designed to survey the strip of the sky passing overhead each night.
- Equipped with a **4k × 4k CCD camera and sophisticated multi-lens** optical corrector, the telescope will detect transient or variable celestial objects such as **supernovae, gravitational lenses, space debris, and asteroids**.
- This is a significant moment for astronomy in India as the Devasthal observatory is equipped with the **largest aperture telescope** in India that will use Big Data and Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML) algorithms to classify objects in the sky.
- The data gathered by the telescope will be **analyzed quickly using AI** and machine learning to catalogue the objects in the sky, including variable & transient stellar sources.
- Over an operational time of five years, the data collected from the ILMT will be ideally suited to perform a **deep photometric and astrometric variability survey**.

AIS for Taxpayer App



❖ Context

- Recently, the AIS for Taxpayer app was launched by the Income Tax Department.

❖ Key Highlights:

- It aims to provide taxpayers with a comprehensive view of their **Annual Information Statement (AIS) on their mobile phones**.
- The app offers an easy way to access all information related to the AIS/TIS to the taxpayer, displaying information collected from various sources pertaining to the taxpayer. The app is expected to simplify the process of accessing taxpayer information by providing all available data related to the **tax deducted or collected at source**, interest, dividends, and share transactions on a single platform.
- It also offers taxpayers the option to provide feedback in case of **discrepancies in the data received from banks or registration offices**.

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Article 102 of the Indian Constitution



❖ Context

- In a recent famous political leader and MP's **disqualification case**, the last point (if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by Parliament) of **Article 102 of the Indian Constitution** applies.
- The law under which he has been disqualified is the Representation of People Act, 1951.

❖ Article 102:

- Article 102 deals with the disqualification of MPs from either house of the Parliament.
- Part (1) of the article lists the reasons why an MP can be disqualified.
- These include :
 - a) if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State, other than an office declared by Parliament by law not to disqualify its holder;
 - b) if he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court;
 - c) if he is an undischarged insolvent;
 - d) if he is not a citizen of India, or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State, or is under any acknowledgment of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State;
 - e) if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by Parliament."

Vayu Prahar



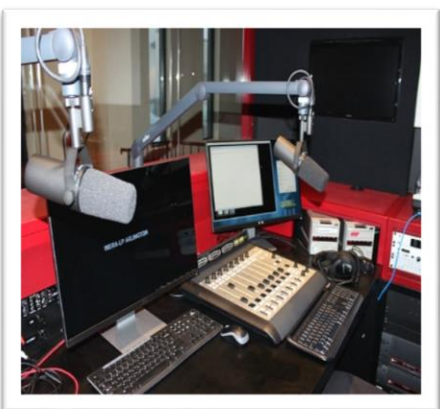
❖ Context

- Recently, the Indian Army and Air Force have conducted a 96-hour multi-domain air and land exercise, 'Vayu Prahar', in the eastern sector.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The main aim, was to formulate plans that can lead to synergy in multi-domain operations.
- Essentially, multi-domain operations are used to coordinate activities across multiple branches of the military to achieve converging results.
- The conduct of Vayu Prahar exercise enabled coordination and rehearsal among various agencies for quick mobilisation, transportation and deployment of forces within a theatre which can be executed across theatres.

Community Radio Station



❖ Context

- The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** recently released its recommendations on issues related to community radio stations (CRS).

❖ Key Highlights:

- The recommendations made by TRAI seem to be aimed at promoting the growth and sustainability of community radio stations in India.
- By extending the permission period for CRS and increasing the advertisement duration, TRAI is trying to improve the financial sustainability of CRS.
- The recommendation to restrict the number of CRS by one organization aims to promote diversity in ownership and prevent concentration.
- The recommendation for a **single window system** for approval is a **positive step towards reducing bureaucratic hurdles**.
- Lastly, the recommendation for support from **central and state governments** shows that TRAI recognizes the importance of CRS and wants to promote its growth.
- Overall, these recommendations are likely to have a **positive impact on the development of CRS in India**.

❖ About CRS:

- Community radio stations are **non-profit radio stations** that are owned, operated and programmed by the communities they serve.
- They typically operate on a **small scale, covering a specific geographic area** and often have a specific focus such as music, news or cultural programming.
- Community radio stations provide a **platform for local voices** to be heard, and they play an important role in promoting local culture and identity, as well as providing information and entertainment to their listeners.
- They are often run by volunteers and rely on community support & funding to operate.

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