

NEWS TODAY

G20 CONSTITUTED EXPERT GROUP ON STRENGTHENING MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS (MDBs)

- Under India's G20 Presidency, 11-member expert group has been set up to **explore measures to strengthen MDBs**.
- MDB is a **financial institution** established by multiple member countries and falls **under international law**. E.g. World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank etc.
 - Its purpose is to **facilitate financing and provide advisory services** for developing countries.
- **Importance of MDBs**
 - **Stabilizing global financial system** during time of crisis and uncertainty.
 - Provide **long-term financing for various projects like infrastructure, energy, education** etc. within developing countries.
 - Unlike commercial banks, MDBs provide lower-cost financing with **goal to reduce economic inequality and poverty** in developing countries.
 - Supports coordinated responses to regional and global challenges.
- **Need for Strengthening MDBs**
 - **Structural issues**, i.e. **Dominance of Developed Countries** (under-representation of Global South), **Crowd Out Private Funding** in developing countries etc.
 - **Functional issues**, i.e. **Imposition of Conditionality in loans** (undermining borrower country), **Lack of Transparency and Accountability** (largely driven by self-regulatory frameworks), **Greater focus on moving capital** instead of delivering results etc.
 - Amid **Covid-19 pandemic and high geopolitical uncertainties**, MDBs strengthening becomes critical for a **resilient and sustainable recovery**.

ACCELERATE GRANTING OF INSTITUTE OF EMINENCE (IOE) STATUS: PARLIAMENTARY PANEL TELLS CENTRE

- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports has **sought status notes on 2 public and 5 private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** which await final IoE status in absence of formal agreements with government.
 - Panel also recommended that **IoE scheme be "realigned" with National Education Policy, 2020**.
- IoE is a **recognition scheme** initiated by **University Grants Commission (UGC)** in 2017 to **empower HEIs** and to **help them become world-class teaching and research institutions**.
 - Under it, **20 institutions - 10 public and 10 private** institutions would be selected for **IoE status**.
 - So far, 8 public and 4 private institutes have been granted IoE status.
- **Difference between IoEs and other Universities**
 - **IoEs are free from most UGC regulations** which are binding on other universities.
 - They can **recruit foreign faculty up to 25% of faculty strength and admit 30% foreign students on merit**.
 - They have **flexibility of course structure** and not required to adhere to UGC mandated curriculum.
 - They shall be **free to enter into academic collaborations** with other institutions of India.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN INSTITUTE TO BECOME AN IOE

- 1 It should rank among top 50 institutions in their category in the National Institution Ranking Framework (NIRF) or top 500 in internationally recognised rankings
- 2 It should preferably be multi-disciplinary and have both teaching and research focus of an exceptionally high quality
- 3 There should be a reasonable mix of domestic and foreign students; and of foreign or foreign qualified faculty
- 4 It should have reasonably large owned campus with student amenities comparable with that of globally reputed institutions and adequate space for expansion

AFINDEX 2023: BOOSTING INDIA-AFRICA DEFENCE TIES

- Recently, first edition of **India-Africa Army Chiefs' Conclave** was organized on sidelines of **2nd Africa-India Joint Exercise 'AFINDEX 2023'**.
 - Exercise focuses on **Humanitarian Mine Assistance and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations**. First AFINDEX was held in 2019.
- India-Africa Defence Relations**
 - India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD)** on sidelines of DefExpo 2022 led to adoption of **Gandhinagar Declaration** to enhance cooperation in fields of **training & military exercises**.
 - Their defence relationship is guided by principles of '**SAGAR** or Security and Growth for All in the Region', and '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**', i.e. world is a family.
 - As per **Exim Bank** report, India is a **leading defence exporter to African countries**.
 - Within Africa, **Mauritius** accounted for **6.6%** of India's arms exports during **2017-2021**, followed by **Mozambique (5%)** and **Seychelles (2.3%)**.
- Importance of Africa for India**
 - Horn of Africa region** (refer map) is **critical to India's security** because of its **proximity with India**. The threat of radicalism, piracy, organized crime emerges from this region.
 - Horn is home to four Eastern Africa countries, **Somalia, Ethiopia (largest country), Djibouti, and Eritrea**.
 - Support of African countries is **important for India's aim of gaining a permanent seat in UNSC**.
 - With abundant mineral reserves, oil and natural gas reserves, **Africa can help India's quest for energy security**.



PARLIAMENTARY PANEL SEEKS IMPLEMENTATION OF E-PHARMACY RULES

- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce in its report 'Promotion and Regulation of E-Commerce in India' has **recommended Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH&FW) to finalise draft e-pharmacy rules and implement them** without further delay.
- Other key observation of panel**
 - Online sale of medicines has not been regulated** despite objections and concerns (raised primarily by chemist shops).
 - Expressed concerns over distribution of **illegal or unethical medicines or outdated, substituted, or counterfeit medications** amid absence of regulations.
- E- Pharmacy is a pharmacy that **sells medicines on the internet and delivers them to customers**.
 - Advantages:** **Easy to order** prescription drugs, **saves money and time**, offers a much wider range of options than traditional pharmacy etc.
 - Disadvantages:** Lack of physical evaluation capability, Can dispense medicines to patients without requiring a prescription, concerns about privacy of personal and financial information etc.
- Recommendations**
 - MoH&FW should **formulate comprehensive guidelines** that encompasses
 - Due diligence measures** to be undertaken by e-pharmacy/e-health platform; **Mandatory registration** with appropriate authority **for sale of drugs etc.**
 - Finalisation and **enactment of Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 is crucial** as this will provide guiding principles for formulation of rules regarding ownership and storage etc.

RELATED NEWS

- After an inspection by Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), Drug licences of 18 pharma firms were cancelled for manufacturing poor-quality medicines.**
 - DCGI acts as an **appellate authority** if there is any dispute with respect to drugs quality.

SCHOOL ENROLMENT UP, BUDGET FOR MIDDAY MEALS ACCORDINGLY: PARLIAMENTARY PANEL

- Key observations**
 - Ensure that increased numbers of enrolled students (11.80 crores in 2020-21 to 12.21 crores in 2021-22) are **covered under PM POSHAN Scheme**.
 - Include **more millet and coarse grains** in diets of school going children under PM POSHAN Scheme.
- Need to include millets** is attributed to
 - Plethora of **health and nutritional benefits**.
 - Low water and input requirements** make it suitable for being grown even in harsh climates.
 - Promote regional food culture to bridge dietary gaps** and develop sustainable health.
- Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman Scheme (PM POSHAN) was earlier known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
 - It is a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme** which has been **launched for five years period** (2021-22 to 2025-26) and being implemented by **Ministry of Education**.
 - It covers **all school children** studying in **Classes I-VIII** of Government, **Government-Aided schools and children studying in Bal Vatika** (just before class I) in Government primary schools.
 - It addresses **hunger and education problems** for majority of children in India.
 - Centre shares the cost with states and Union territories in 60:40 ratio and contributes 100% in Union territories without a legislature.

WORLD BANK RELEASES 'STRIVING FOR CLEAN AIR: AIR POLLUTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN SOUTH ASIA' REPORT

• Report uses **Greenhouse Gas and Air Pollution Interactions and Synergies (GAINS)** model to quantify particulate matter (PM) emissions and how they disperse in atmosphere.

• Key findings

➤ **Fine PM concentration** such as **soot and small dust (PM 2.5)** is up to **20 times higher** than **WHO standard of 5 microgram per cubic metre** in some areas.

➤ **Main causes behind Air Pollution in South Asia** are Solid fuel combustion, small industries, municipal waste management practices (e.g. burning of plastics) etc.

➤ Identifies **six major airsheds in South Asia** where **spatial interdependence in air quality is high**.

➤ An airshed can be defined as a region that shares a common flow of air, which may become uniformly polluted and stagnant.

➤ Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, share a common airshed that spans Indo Gangetic Plain.

• Recommendations

➤ Have **coordinated trans-boundary actions** through additional and joint-targets, **focusing beyond power plants, large factories and transportation**, i.e. include agriculture, waste management etc. to reduce PM 2.5 concentration across South Asia.

➤ **Mainstream air quality in economy** through taxation of air pollution, creation of markets for emission-permit funding etc.

Four modeled scenarios for AQM in South Asia

Scenario 1: Ad-hoc selection of measures

- Scaling-up of measures that are currently taken in parts of South Asia to all its regions
- Each region acts independently

Scenario 3: Compliance with WHO Interim Target 1 everywhere in South Asia

- In all regions, mean population exposure is reduced to 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
- Regions cooperate to the extent they are contributing to pollution hotspots

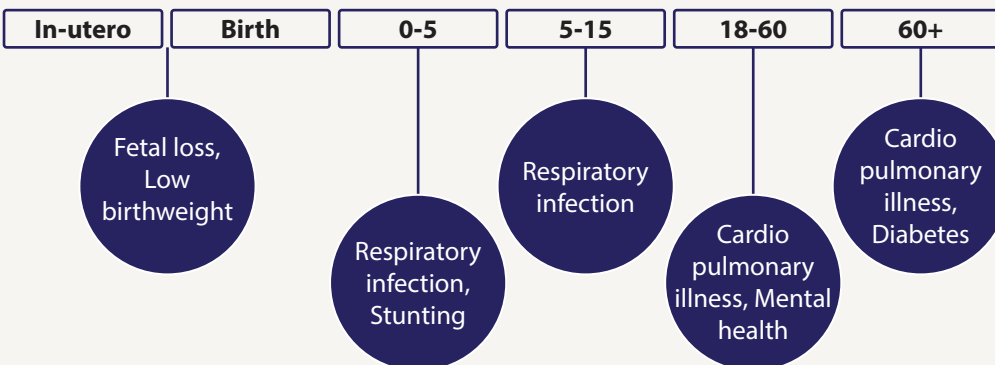
Scenario 2: Maximum technically feasible emissions reductions

- Full implementation of all technical emission controls that are available on the world market
- No regional coordination

Scenario 2: Maximum technically feasible emissions reductions

- Reduce the present difference of PM, exposure by 90% to the next lower WHO Interim Target in each region
- Full coordination across regions to maximize cost-effectiveness

Potential Health Effects of Air Pollution across the Lifecycle



ALSO IN NEWS









Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for High Efficiency Solar PV Modules

- Government allocated a total capacity of 39,600 MW of domestic Solar PV module manufacturing capacity under **Tranche-II of PLI Scheme**.
- **PLI scheme for High Efficiency Solar PV Modules** was approved by **cabinet in 2020**.
 - **Total domestic capacity allocated** under PLI Scheme is **48,337 MW**, with a cumulative support of **more than Rs. 18,500 Crore** by Government.
- **Objectives**
 - Build up **solar PV manufacturing capacity** of high efficiency modules.
 - **Bring cutting edge technology** to India for manufacturing high efficiency modules.
 - **Promote setting up of integrated plants** for better quality control and competitiveness etc.



National Agricultural Higher Education Project's (NAHEP)

- **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** and **World Bank** have issued '**Delhi Declaration**' on Modernisation of **Agricultural Education System (AES)** at International Conference on Blended Learning Ecosystem.
- Conference was held as part of **NAHEP's Resilient Agricultural Education System (RAES)** development initiative.
 - NAHEP is a **five-year project** initiated in **2018** by **World Bank** and Central Government to strengthen **National AES**.
- ICAR (HQ: **New Delhi**) is an **autonomous organisation for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education** in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in India.

 <p>Bitumen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Road Transport and Highways stated that making bitumen, a key input for laying roads, from agricultural waste like rice husk can save upto ₹30,000 crore annually in import bills. Bitumen is a low-grade crude oil that is composed of complex, heavy hydrocarbons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In an oil reservoir, bitumen is a thick, viscous fluid and must be extracted from the ground. It is generally composed of asphaltene resin and is main fossil fuel component of oil sands. Bitumen is known for its waterproofing and adhesive properties.
 <p>Kolar Gold Fields (KGF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 KGF in Karnataka. Operated by Bharat Gold Mines Limited (BGML), a public sector undertaking under Ministry of Mines, KGF was one of the world's deepest gold mines at a depth of 3,000 metres. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gold fields lie in Kolar schist belt estimated to be about 80 km long and 3-4 km wide. History of gold mines at KGF dates back to Chola dynasty (3 BC).
 <p>Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary (AMS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assam High Court has sought a report on demarcation of borders of AMS. AMS is a small but naturally rich habitat on eastern fringe of Guwahati city. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It falls under East-Kamrup division with Brahmaputra River to its North. It was declared as a wildlife sanctuary in 2004 by Government of Assam. It is home to Mammals (Flying Fox, Assamese Macaque, Slow Loris, Hoolock gibbon etc.), Birds (Lesser and Greater Adjutant, White-backed Vulture, Slender-billed Vulture), Reptiles (Python, Monitor Lizard, Indian Cobra etc.).
 <p>Sea slugs (Scientific Name: Nudibranchia)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently, scientists documented a unique species of nudibranch sea slugs from Visakhapatnam coast. Sea slugs are small, slow-moving ocean creatures known for their bright colors and intricate patterns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They belong to Phylum Mollusca and Class Gastropoda. They are found in both shallow and deep areas of oceans. There are also slugs that live on land. Threats: Affected by human activities such as reclamation and pollution, Trampling by careless visitors and over-collection etc.
 <p>Piezoelectric effect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the first time, scientists have reported evidence of piezoelectric effect in liquids. Piezoelectric effect is the ability of certain materials to generate an electric charge in response to applied mechanical stress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In piezoelectric effect, a body develops an electric current when it is squeezed. Quartz is most famous piezoelectric crystal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Such crystals are used in cigarette lighters, electric guitars, TV remote controls, wristwatches etc. This effect has only been expected in solids thus far because the body being squeezed needs to have an organised structure, like pyramids of quartz. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquids don't have such structure. Instead, they take shape of their container.
 <p>Black Hole (BH)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers have discovered that a supermassive black hole has changed its direction and is directly facing toward the Earth. BH refers to a point in space where matter is so compressed as to create a gravity field from which even light cannot escape. Black holes are generally divided into three categories according to their mass. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stellar-mass (around 20 times the Sun's mass or more), Supermassive (hundreds of thousands to billions of times the Sun's mass), Intermediate-mass (range from around one hundred to hundreds of thousands of times the Sun's mass).