

NEWS TODAY

'MONUMENTS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE (MNI) - URGENT NEED FOR RATIONALISATION' REPORT BY ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL TO PRIME MINISTER (EAC-PM)

• Currently, India has **3695 MNI** under **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958**.

➤ Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for protection, conservation and maintenance of such monuments.

• **Key observations**

Issues with present list of MNI	Recommendations of Report	Criteria for declaration of monument as national importance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection Errors: Around quarter of current MNI may not have national importance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Minor monuments considered as MNI (Example - Kos Minars, graves of British officers). ➤ Movable antiquities treated as MNI (Standalone antiquities like sculpture pieces, statues, cannons etc.). ➤ Untraceable monuments still being considered as MNI (Around 50 monuments missing). • Over 60% monuments located in five states i.e., UP, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, MP and Maharashtra. • Inadequate expenditure on conservation and maintenance of MNI. • Source of problems is absence of definition of term 'national importance' and lack of prescribed substantive process/criteria for identifying MNI in AMASR Act or National Policy for Conservation 2014. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASI should come up with substantive criteria for declaring MNI. • Amend AMASR Act or introduce executive order for defining national importance. • Handover monuments of local importance to states. • Remove standalone antiquities from the list of MNI. • De-notify untraceable and minor monuments. • Add new monuments to address geographical imbalance. • Increase fund allocation for protecting MNI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ancient monument or archaeological site is not less than 100 years old. ➤ It has special historical, archaeological or artistic interest. ➤ Interested public do not have major objections to declare them as of national importance. • Additionally, UNESCO designated Historic Centre of Odesa- World Heritage- in Danger site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is a strategic port city on Ukraine's Black Sea coast.

SUPREME COURT EASES NORMS FOR PASSIVE EUTHANASIA

• SC altered the existing guidelines for 'living wills', as laid down in **Common Cause vs. Union of India & Anr (2018)**, which allowed **passive euthanasia**. (refer image)

➤ Living will is a **written document that specifies what actions should be taken** if person is unable to make their own medical decisions in future.

• Euthanasia is practice of **ending life of a patient to limit the patient's suffering**.

➤ It can be **administered only by a physician**.

• Euthanasia can be **either 'active' or 'passive'**.

➤ **Active euthanasia** involves an **active intervention to end a person's life with substances or external force**, such as administering lethal injection.

■ Allowed in Netherland, Belgium, Canada etc.

➤ **Passive euthanasia** refers to **withdrawing life support or treatment** that is essential to keep a terminally ill person alive.

■ Allowed in India, Finland, Germany etc.

• **Major judgements related to Euthanasia**

➤ **P. Rathinam Case (1994):** Struck down section 309 of IPC (attempt to suicide) as unconstitutional.

➤ **Aruna Shanbaug Case (2011):** SC allowed passive euthanasia for first time.

THE CHANGES BROUGHT

	NOW	EARLIER
Living will	An attestation by a notary or a Gazetted officer to be sufficient for a living will	It was necessary that a judicial magistrate attest or countersign a living will
Access to the living will	Living will a part of national health record which can be accessed by Indian hospitals	Living will was kept in the custody of the district court concerned
Primary board to examine patient's condition	Three doctors, including treating physician and two other doctors with five years of experience in the specialty, will comprise the primary board of doctors	Primary board of doctors needs at least four experts from general medicine, cardiology, neurology, nephrology, psychiatry or oncology with overall standing of at least 20 years
Time taken to decide	Primary/secondary board to decide within 48 hours on withdrawal of further treatment	The 2018 judgment did not specify any outer limit on withdrawal of treatment
Secondary board	Hospital must immediately constitute a secondary board of medical experts	The district collector had to constitute the second board of medical experts

SEVERAL COUNTRIES ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH GENETICALLY ENGINEERED (GE) TREES

- US developed and field-tested **GE version of American chestnut tree (named as Darling 58)** and is awaiting clearances from government agencies to grow them in wild.
- Other countries have been experimenting with **GE tree varieties for commercial plantations**.
 - **China allowed commercial plantations** of two varieties of **GE insect-resistant poplar trees**.
 - **India** has been experimenting with **GE variety of rubber tree** by inserting additional copies of gene **MnSOD (manganese-containing superoxide dismutase)** which enables plant to **tolerate extreme climatic stress**.
 - GE variety will allow non-traditional rubber states (Assam, Mizoram) to **cultivate better quality rubber**.
- GE tree is a **tree whose DNA has been modified using genetic engineering techniques**. In most cases, it introduces novel traits to plants which do not occur naturally within species.
 - Whereas GM crop is a plant that has a novel combination of genetic material obtained through use of modern biotechnology.
- **Significance of GE Trees**
 - **Fight climate change by creating trees** that grow bigger, faster, resist disease and enhance carbon sequestration.
 - **Boost production of products such as biofuels and wood** from such trees.
 - **Economic benefits** for timber, pulp and paper industry.

INDIA, EGYPT ELEVATES BILATERAL TIES TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

- Discussions on India-Egypt relationship were held during Egyptian President's visit as a Chief guest at India's 74th Republic Day Celebrations.

Major outcomes

- **Four elements of strategic partnership include** political, defence, and security; economic engagement; scientific and academic collaboration; and cultural and people-to-people contacts.
- **Both sides signed five MoUs** covering culture, cooperation on youth matters, cyber security, information and technology and public broadcasting.
- Both sides reiterated **support for Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**.
 - **India and Egypt are founding partners of NAM** along with Yugoslavia, Ghana, and Indonesia.
- Egypt is considering designating a **special area of land for Indian Industries at Suez Canal Economic Zone**.
 - Suez canal is one of the **busiest commerce routes** (facilitating 12% of world trade every day) in world, which **links Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea**.
 - It **separates African continent from Asia** and is the fastest crossing from Atlantic Ocean to Indian Ocean.
- Both sides called for **'zero tolerance' for terrorism**.
- Both sides set a target of **increasing annual bilateral trade from \$7 billion (2021-22) to \$12 billion** over next five years.



EGYPT'S IMPORTANCE FOR INDIA

- Trade through Suez Canal, **especially oil trade for India**.
- Most populous country and a **key player in West Asia**.
- Market for Indian defence exports and act as a **gateway to Europe and Africa**.

CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH GE TREES

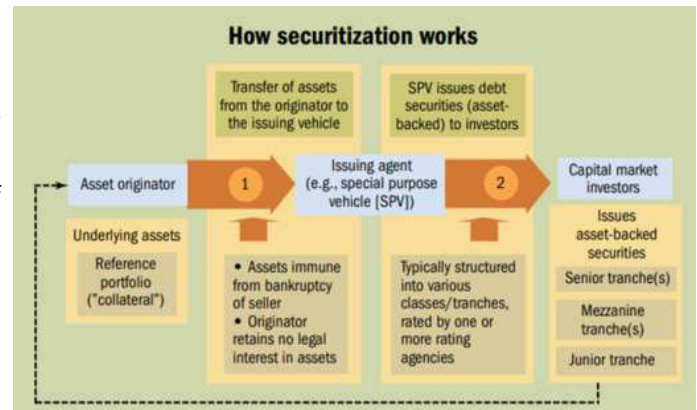
- **High risk of contaminating other trees** along with animal and insect species that rely on them.
- **Lack of information** on how a GE tree will behave as it ages.
- **Sign of potential invasiveness** (Woody plant species such as eucalyptus can take over 100 years to demonstrate invasive impacts).

SOUTH AFRICA INKS MOU TO SEND 12 CHEETAHS TO KUNO NATIONAL PARK (KNP)

- **12 Cheetah from South Africa** is expected to arrive by February-March 2023. Earlier in September 2022, KNP had received **eight cheetahs from Namibia**.
- **Project Cheetah**, approved by Supreme Court in 2020, **aims to reintroduce at least 50 cheetahs over next five years**.
 - It is world's **first inter-continental large wild carnivore translocation project**.
 - **National Tiger Conservation Authority is nodal agency authorized** for funding and supervision of project.
- **Significance of Cheetah restoration**
 - **Restoring open forest and grassland ecosystems** in India.
 - **Conserve biodiversity and enhance ecosystem services** like water security, carbon sequestration etc.
 - **Enhanced livelihood opportunities for local community** through eco-development and ecotourism activities.
- Cheetah is a **keystone species** (organism that helps define an entire ecosystem) of dry forests, scrub forests, and savannahs.
 - It is the **only large wild mammalian species** that went extinct from India.
 - Protected under **Appendix 1 of CITES**.
 - IUCN status: **African Cheetah (Vulnerable) and Asiatic Cheetah (Critically endangered)**.
 - **Major Cheetah range countries:** Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, and Kenya in Africa, and **Iran and India** in Asia.
- **KNP is situated in Vindhyan Hills in Madhya Pradesh**.
 - It falls under **Kathiawar-Gir dry deciduous forest eco-region** and vegetation is dominated by **Kardhai, Khair and Salai trees**.

RBI RELEASES DISCUSSION PAPER ON SECURITISATION OF STRESSED ASSETS FRAMEWORK (SSAF)

- Discussion paper aims to **develop a strong and robust securitisation market in India**, while facilitating simpler securitisation structures.
- Securitisation involves **pooling of loans and then selling them to a Special Purpose Entity (SPE)** which then issues securities backed by loan pool.
 - Currently, there is no corresponding mechanism for Securitisation of Stressed Asset (SSA) through SPE route.
- SSA is a **financial structure whereby an originator of NPAs sells these to a SPE** that funds such an acquisition by issuing securitisation notes.
 - In turn, **SPE appoints a servicing entity to manage stressed assets**, typically with a fee structure that incentivises them to maximize recoveries on underlying loans.
- Till now, **Securitisation is allowed only in case of standard assets** while lenders have to largely **rely on Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) for bad assets** under SARFAESI Act, 2002.
- Difference between securitisation of stressed assets and standard assets is related to**
 - Lower degree of certainty of cash flows from resolution of stressed assets.
 - Extent of involvement of third-party expert entities or Resolution Managers and their role in resolution of underlying assets.



ALSO IN NEWS



World Economic situation and prospects 2023 report

- It is produced by **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)**, in partnership with UN Conference on Trade and Development and five UN regional economic commissions.
- Key highlights**
 - COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine battered world economy in 2022.
 - World output growth is projected to decelerate** from an estimated 3.0 percent in 2022 to 1.9 percent in 2023.
- Recommendations**
 - Reallocation and **reprioritization of public expenditures**.
 - Strengthening social protection** systems.
 - Strategic public investments in education, health, digital infrastructure** etc.



T+1 settlement

- After China, India became **second country** in world to start **'trade-plus-one' (T+1) settlement cycle** in top listed securities.
 - Until 2001, stock markets had weekly settlement system, then T+3, and then moved to **T+2 in 2003**.
- Under T+1, **trade-related settlements must be done within a day, or 24 hours**, of completion of a transaction.
- Benefits of T+1:** Better liquidity with investors; Faster rolling of funds and stocks; Decreases unsettled trade exposure to clearing corporation by 50%; Reduces capital blocked to cover risk of trades etc.



Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

- Food Corporation of India (FCI) will off load 30 LMT wheat from Central pool stock to market through various routes under OMSS (Domestic).
 - Move will **help containing rising prices of wheat** and will **bring relief to common man**.
- Under OMSS, FCI sells **surplus stocks of wheat and rice** at pre-determined prices through **e-auction** in open market from time to time.
 - It aims to enhance **supply of food grains**, especially wheat **during lean season** and thereby **moderate the open market prices**.



Tech neck Syndrome (new carpal tunnel syndrome)

- New York based doctor stated that smartphones and laptops like tech tools have given rise to a new physical condition called 'tech neck'.
- It refers to **onset of cervical spinal degeneration** that results from repeated stress of frequent forward head flexion while we look down at mobile devices and text for longer periods of time.
- Symptoms** - Neck pain, headaches, Back pain.



Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs)

- RBI issued **maiden SGrBs worth ₹8,000 crore.**
 - SGrBs were announced in Union Budget 2022-23 and framework for SGrBs was issued (by Ministry of Finance) in November 2022.
- Green bonds are financial instruments that generate **proceeds for investment in environmentally sustainable and climate-suitable projects.**
- Proceeds from these bonds will be deployed in **public sector projects to reduce carbon emission**, including projects of renewable energy, clean transportation, climate change adaptation, sustainable water and waste management etc.



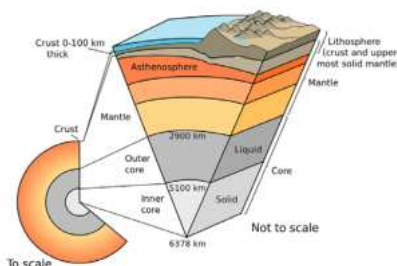
Lakes in news

- Lake Victoria (also called as Victoria Nyanza)**
- Recently Delhi-based non-profit Centre for Science and Environment released a report on managing Lake Victoria water quality in Tanzania.
 - **Lake Victoria is largest lake in Africa** and chief reservoir of Nile.
 - It is shared by three countries, **Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.**
 - Among **freshwater lakes** of world, it is exceeded in size only by Lake Superior in North America.
 - **Major threats to lake:** Deforestation, wetland degradation, discharge from urban areas etc.
- Lake Chad**
- Recently, a report highlighted **Climate change fuelling conflict in Lake Chad Basin.**
 - It is **freshwater lake** located in **Sahelian zone of west-central Africa at conjunction of Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger.**



Earth's inner core

- New research published in journal Nature Geoscience analyzed seismic waves from repeating earthquakes over last six decades.
- **Key highlights**
 - **Inner core started rotating slightly faster** than rest of the planet in early 1970s.
 - It had been **slowing down before coming in sync with Earth's rotation** around 2009.
 - Negative trend i.e., **inner core is now rotating slower than surface.**
 - Predicted that next change would occur in mid-2040.



Padma awards

- Union Ministry of Home Affairs announced winners of Padma Awards.
- Padma Awards, instituted in 1954, are **one of the highest civilian honours of India** announced annually on eve of Republic Day.
- These are given in three categories
 - **Padma Vibhushan** for exceptional and distinguished service.
 - **Padma Bhushan** for distinguished service of a high order.
 - **Padma Shri** for distinguished service.
- Total number of awards to be given in a year (excluding posthumous awards and to NRI/foreigners/OCIs) **should not be more than 120.**
- Awardees are **presented a Sanad (certificate)** signed by President and a medallion. There is **no cash prize.**



Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards-2022

- President approved conferment of Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards-2022.
- Awards is **given to a person for meritorious act of human nature in saving the life of a person.**
 - It is **given in three categories**, namely Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak; Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak and Jeevan Raksha Padak.
 - Persons of all walks of life are eligible for these awards.
 - It can also be **conferred posthumously.**

Errata: In News Today Dated 21st January 2023, it was incorrectly mentioned that "Caste was included as a parameter in Census data only during the 1931 Census". Correct statement is "**Caste Census included as a parameter in Census data only till the 1931 Census**". As per this, data was collected for caste in 1872, 1881, 1901 and so on till 1931.