

NEWS TODAY

INDIA AND US STEP UP STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE - INITIATIVE ON CRITICAL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY (ICET)

• iCET aims to:

- **Position two countries as trusted technology partners** by building **technology value chains** and support the co-development and co-production of items.
- **Address regulatory restrictions, export controls and mobility barriers** through a standing mechanism.

• During **inaugural dialogue** of iCET, two sides announced a **set of programs** to increase **bilateral cooperation**:

- **Strengthen Innovation ecosystem.** E.g. Establishment of **Indo-US Quantum Coordination Mechanism** to facilitate research and industry collaboration.
- **Promote Defense Innovation and Technology Cooperation.** E.g. Launching a new **Innovation Bridge** to connect defense startups of India and USA.
- **Build Resilient Semiconductor Supply Chains.** E.g. **Readiness Assessment** development by a task force involving India's Semiconductor Mission, India Electronics Semiconductor Association (IESA) and the US Semiconductor Industry Association (SIA).

- Similar initiatives are taken in other fields (see **image**) while the fields of **biotechnology, advanced materials, and rare earth processing technology** are identified as **areas for future cooperation**.

• **Potential Benefits:**

- **Ease export barriers** to India in critical areas such as **High Performance Computing**.
- **Strengthen linkages** between the startup ecosystems of India and USA.
- Foster an **open, accessible, and secure technology ecosystem**, based on **mutual trust** and **confidence**.



UNION BUDGET 2023-24: VISION FOR AMRIT KAAL PRESENTED IN PARLIAMENT

• A budget is 'an **estimation of revenue and expenses over a specified future period of time and is utilized by governments, businesses, and individuals at any income level**'.

- Under **Article 112**, the Union Budget is referred to as the '**Annual Financial Statement**' - a statement of the **estimated receipts and expenditure** of the government for that particular year (April 1 to March 31).

• Union Budget is **not a single document rather a list of 13 documents**.

- 3 documents i.e. Annual Financial Statement, Demands for Grants, and Finance Bill are mandated by **Article 112, 113 and 110(a)** of Constitution.
- 2 documents presented as per **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003**:
 - Macro-economic framework statement;
 - Medium term fiscal policy cum fiscal policy strategy statement.
- **Other documents are in the nature of explanatory statements** supporting the mandated documents.

• **Vision for Amrit Kaal - an Empowered and Inclusive Economy**

- First budget of India's Amrit Kaal, the vision includes a **technology-driven and knowledge-based economy** with **strong public finances**, and a **robust financial sector**.

- Also, the Union Budget is guided by **seven priorities** that complement each other and act as the **Saptarishi** (see image).

Note: The detailed summary of the budget will be released separately.



INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY (ISA) AND MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES EXCHANGED PMN (POLYMETALLIC NODULES) EXPLORATION EXTENSION CONTRACT

- Contract for same was **initially signed in 2002** for a period of 15 years. It was extended by ISA twice for 5 years period, **during 2017 and 2022**.
 - India has been assigned an area of **about 75,000 sq km in Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) for PMN exploration**.
- PMN refers to small **potato-like rounded accretions** composed of minerals such as **manganese, nickel, cobalt, copper and iron hydroxide**.
 - These have **immense economic and strategic importance**.
- ISA, an **autonomous international organisation** established under **1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**, allots '**area**' for **deep-sea mining**.
 - Deep-sea mining is process of **retrieving mineral deposits** from deep seabed i.e. ocean **below 200m**.
 - India was **first country** to receive **status of a 'Pioneer Investor'** in 1987.
- Significance of deep sea mining:**
 - Metals extracted from PMN can be used in **electronic devices, smartphones, solar panels** etc.
- By just **utilizing 10%** of PMN reserve available in allotted area, India can meet its **energy requirements for the next 100 years**.
- Concerns related to deep sea mining:**
 - May cause **unavoidable, irreversible harm** to deep-sea ecosystems;
 - Can have a **deleterious impact** on marine species;
 - Risk of accidents like **leaks and spills of fuel** etc.

SUPREME COURT (SC) SEEKS CENTRE'S RESPONSE ON STATUTORY BODY FOR ELEPHANT SAFETY

- In **2010**, the '**Gajah report**' from Elephant Task Force made a slew of recommendations to protect and preserve the elephant population, including the:

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ELEPHANT TASK FORCE

ESTABLISH BETTER GOVERNANCE MODEL

- Form **National Elephant Conservation Authority (NECA)**.
- Encourage **direct recruitment at top levels**.

UPGRADE RESEARCH & MONITORING SYSTEMS

- Establish **National Elephant Baselines and estimation protocols by Consortium for Elephant Research and Estimation anchored by NECA**.
- Promote long term dedicated research through **Elephant Reserve Research Stations**.

Establish **open-air forest labs in elephant landscapes adjacent to PAS**. Identify institutions of excellence to run them.

SECURE ELEPHANT LANDSCAPES

- Rationalise boundaries of Elephant reserves. Let-go Human dominated landscapes.
- Declare as **Slow-go areas** through rest of Elephant Reserve and prioritised corridors.
- Consolidate **No-go areas** in these reserves as Protected Area network or critical wildlife habitat or other conservation zones.

CONFLICT MITIGATION

- Establish high conflict zone mitigation task forces to develop & oversee protocols.
- No culling; captures/translocations in dire situations. Moratorium on Elephant Proof Trenches and Fences till standards in place.

STOP POACHING

- Fill frontline vacancies with motivated local youth.
- Boost intelligence gathering and anti-wildlife crime technologies.

- Constitution of a statutory **National Elephant Conservation Authority (NECA)** on the lines of **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**.

- About **Asian Elephants (Elephas maximus)**

- It is a **keystone species** playing a critical role in sustenance of **wildlife and biodiversity**.

- It is listed:

- IUCN Status:** Endangered

- In **Appendix I** of the **Convention of the Migratory species**.

- In **Schedule I** of the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.

- More than 60 % of the population** of Asian elephants is found in India.

- Concerns:**

- Frequent Human-Elephant conflict and high number of unnatural deaths** of elephants.

- As of December 2022, India has lost 494 elephants to **train accidents, electrocution, poaching and poisoning over the past five years**.

- Initiatives for Elephant Safety**

- Project Elephant**, a **centrally sponsored scheme** launched in **1992** for management of wildlife and its habitats in the country.

- In **2010**, it was declared India's **National Heritage Animal**.

- Approval to **33 Elephant Reserves** by Centre with a total area of nearly 80,000 sq km.

- In **2022**, **Terai Elephant Reserve (TER)** was set up in **Uttar Pradesh**.

YAYA TSO TO BECOME LADAKH'S FIRST BIODIVERSITY HERITAGE SITE (BHS)

- Local **Biodiversity Management Committee**, concerned panchayat, along with **SECURE Himalaya Project** recently resolved to **declare Yaya Tso as Ladakh's first BHS**.

- Yaya Tso is a **nesting habitat** for a large number of birds and animals, such as the bar-headed goose, black-necked crane and brahmny duck.

- It is one of the **highest breeding sites** of the black-necked crane in India.

- BHS** are areas that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems having rich biodiversity.

- Under Biological Diversity Act (BDA) 2002**, the State Governments are empowered to notify BHS, in consultation with 'local bodies', areas of biodiversity importance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites.

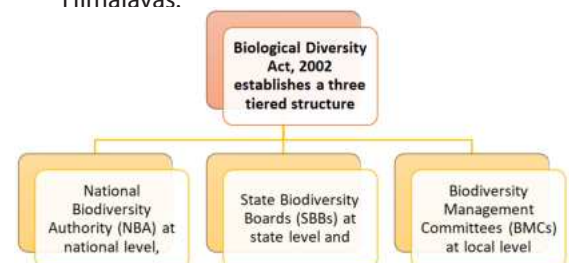
- Criteria for BHS:** includes species richness, high endemism, presence of rare, endemic and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance etc.

- There are **36 BHS in India**, **Mahendragiri hill (Odisha)** is the last BHS added in 2022.

- About SECURE Himalaya:**

- It is a joint project of **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, funded by **Global Environment Facility**.

- It is aimed at **conservation and protection** of the high-altitude ecosystems of the Himalayas.



ALSO IN NEWS



New START Treaty

- The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), is an **agreement between the U.S. and Russia that sets limits on strategic arms.**
- It has **set central limits on strategic offensive arms and both** sides are obligated to maintain those limits for as long as the treaty remains in force.
- It includes strategic nuclear warheads, launchers and **heavy bombers.**
- Signed in 2010, **New START caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads** that can be deployed by Russia and US. **In 2021 it was extended till 2026.**



Follow-on Public Offer (FPO)

- Recently, the Adani group called off its FPO.
- FPO, also known as a **secondary offering**, is the **additional issuance of shares to investors** after the **initial public offering (IPO)**, i.e. stocks already listed on the stock exchange.
- **Purpose:** To diversify equity base, raise additional capital for expansion or pay off debt.
- **Types of FPOs:**
 - **Dilutive FPO**, i.e. issuance of additional fresh shares to the public to raise capital.
 - **Non-Dilutive FPO**, i.e. issuance of existing private shares by largest shareholders.
 - **At-the-Market FPO**, allowing companies to raise funds on the current market price of the shares in real-time.



Bal Mitra

- It is a WhatsApp chatbot launched by **Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights.**
 - **Chatbot** is a computer program that uses **artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) to understand customer** questions and give responses to them.
- It will **enable communication between people and the child rights panel.**
- It aims to **provide authentic information on various matters related to children and their rights**, and ensure confidentiality of the matters reported through it.



Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR & Adjoining Areas (CAQM)

- **CAQM recently held review meeting** in view of significant improvement in overall Air Quality Index of Delhi.
- **About CAQM:**
 - It was set up for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas for better **co-ordination, research, identification and resolution** of air quality problems.
 - It was established under **Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021.**
 - It replaced the now-dissolved **Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA).**



Turnersuchus hingleyae (Thalattosuchian)

- Palaeontologists have discovered fossils of the ancient '**marine crocodile Turnersuchus hingleyae**', which is the only complete **thalattosuchian** of its age.
 - **Thalattosuchian** are ancient cousins of modern-day crocodiles.
- Its age **dates back to the early Jurassic, Pliensbachian period, which was about 185 million years ago.**
- As per Palaeontologists, they **first appeared in the Triassic and survived the end-Triassic mass extinction.**



Draft Global Pandemic Agreement

- Commonly known as the **pandemic treaty**, the early draft from WHO talks of **vaccine equity** and pushes for:
 - **20% reservation** of any **tests, vaccines or treatments** developed for **use in poorer countries.**
 - **Waiver of Intellectual Property Rights** during pandemics for wider access to life-saving drugs and vaccines.
 - New **WHO Global Pandemic Supply Chain and Logistics Network** for better and fairer distribution of counter-measures.
 - **WHO Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System** to share pathogens and genomic sequences "within hours".
- **Vaccine equity** means that vaccines should be allocated across all countries based on needs and regardless of their economic status.



Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)

- The failure analysis of the SSLV-D1 mission of ISRO has identified vibration disturbance as the reason behind the mission failure.
 - SSLV-D1 failed during its **maiden launch** in August last year.
 - SSLV-D2 is scheduled to be launched in the first quarter of 2023.
- ISRO's SSLV is designed as a **launch-on-demand** platform for **Mini, Micro and Nano satellites**.
- It is a **three-stage vehicle** with all solid propulsion stages and liquid propulsion-based Velocity Trimming Module (VTM) as the terminal stage.
- **Other Features of Launcher:** Low turn-around time, flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites, minimal launch infrastructure requirements, etc.



Place in News

Myanmar (Capital: Naypyidaw)

- Military rule in Myanmar has completed two years. In 2021, the elected government was toppled through a coup.
- **Political Boundaries**
 - Bordered by **China** to the **north and northeast**, **Laos** to the **east**, **Thailand** to the **southeast**, **Bangladesh** to the **west**, and **India** to the **northwest**.
 - **Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal** are situated in the south and southwest.
- **Geographical features**
 - **Highest peak:** Mount Hkakabo
 - **Main rivers:** Irrawaddy and Salween (Thanlwin).

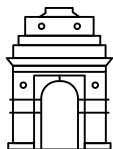


Lebanon (Capital: Beirut)

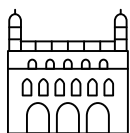
- Lebanon has devalued its official exchange rate by 90%.
- Lebanon is a **mountainous nation** in the **Levant region**, located on the eastern coastline of the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Political Boundaries:**
 - It shares its borders with **Israel** and **Syria** as part of the **Middle East region**.
 - It shares its **Maritime Borders** with **Cyprus**.
- **Geographical Features:**
 - **Highest Point:** Qurnat as Sawda.
 - **Lowest Point:** Mediterranean Sea.
 - **Biggest River:** Litani River.



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DELHI



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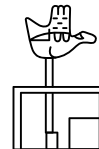
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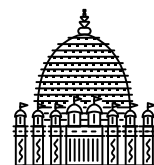
PUNE



AHMEDABAD



CHANDIGARH



GUWAHATI