

NEWS TODAY

BLOCKCHAIN TO BE USED TO PUSH FARM EXPORTS

- **NITI Aayog has launched a pilot project** using blockchain technology, in collaboration with Himachal Pradesh government, **on apple farming that will be replicated for other products** such as grapes, mangoes etc.
 - **India ranks second in fruits and vegetable production** in the world, after China, but **its share in global fruits and vegetable market is just 1%.**
 - **Lack of quality produce and traceability has hampered India's food exports** apart from disincentivising growers.
- **Blockchain will help bridge this gap by removing redundant processes, ensuring quality control and monitoring produce** across entire storage and supply chain.
 - **IoT sensors will be used** to generate crop data and its storage, distribution of grown crops to food processing companies, supply of processed food to wholesalers and retailers and its storage.
- **Other opportunities of using blockchain technology in agriculture**
 - **Self-executing smart contracts:** Especially in agricultural insurance, green bonds, and traceability, together with automated payments.
 - **Land registrations:** To provide an incorruptible ledger of land records.
 - **Supply chains:** To provide an immutable record from farm to retail store.
 - **Streamline subsidy distribution:** Direct payments without need for documents or multiple points of authorization.

Blockchain is a **distributed or decentralised ledger technology.**

It **consists of a series of blocks**, where each block contains **details of transactions executed** over the network, hash (address) of the previous block, timestamp etc.

Data and transactions stored in blocks are **secured against tampering using cryptography** and are **validated and verified through consensus** across nodes of Blockchain network.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN (NCW) ISSUES ADVISORY TO ENSURE SAFETY OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- **Chief Secretaries of all the States and UTs are advised to direct all coaching institutes/educational institution to:**
 - **Ensure strict implementation** of 'Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013' (also referred to as PoSH Act).
 - **Conduct awareness programmes** for better reporting of cases.
 - **Conduct a background check** on those responsible for running coaching centres.
- **PoSH Act was enacted for making workplaces safer for women by preventing, prohibiting and redressing acts of sexual harassment against them in the workplace.**
 - Act is **based on Vishaka guidelines** laid down by Supreme Court in 1997.
- **Features of PoSH Act:**
 - **Defines sexual harassment** at workplace and **creates a mechanism for redressal of complaints.**
 - **Wide definition of aggrieved woman** to cover all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and whether in **organized or unorganized sectors, public or private, and covers clients, customers and domestic workers as well.**
 - An **internal complaints committee (ICC) is mandatory in every private or public organisation** that has 10 or more employees.
 - **District Officer** to constitute **Local Committee** to receive complaints from organisations with **less than 10 workers or if complaint is against the employer itself.**

FIRE AFTER BLAST AT NASHIK CHEMICAL PLANT LEAVES TWO WORKERS DEAD

- According to Minister of Labour and Employment, **6,500 employees died on duty at factories, ports, mines and construction sites in five years.**
- **Major Reasons behind Industrial Accidents in India**
 - **Relaxed inspections and licensing** to allow self-certification.
 - **Low investment** in health and safety by companies.
 - **Old and decrepit machinery with lack of training to workers** for operating machinery.
 - **Shortage of health and safety inspectors** with issues of corruption in administration of safety laws.
 - Industries in **small and medium sectors lacks ability** to invest in industrial safety.
- **Provisions to deal with industrial accidents**
 - **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code** to regulate health and safety conditions of workers in establishments with 10 or more workers, and in all mines and docks.
 - **NDMA guidelines on chemical disasters.**
 - **Doctrine of absolute liability** propounded in **M.C. Mehta v. UOI** (Oleum Gas leak case), 1986
 - Under this, **enterprises engaged in hazardous** or inherently dangerous **activities shall be liable for compensation** if any accident in its operation results in escape of toxic substances.
 - **Environment Relief Fund**, a central fund under Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991, to provide immediate relief to victims of chemical disasters.

INDIA ASSUMED CHAIRMANSHIP OF WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT (WA) FOR ONE YEAR FROM JANUARY 1ST

- **42-member WA** is a **voluntary Multilateral Export Control Regime (MECR)** to **promote transparency and greater responsibility** in transfers of **conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies** by facilitating:
 - **Information sharing** among WA participating states.
 - **Standards setting** on export controls of conventional arms and Dual-use goods and technologies.
- **India joined WA (HQ: Vienna) in 2017.**
- MECR are **voluntary and non-binding agreements**. It prevents proliferation of **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)** which includes nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological or other weapon.
- **Other MECR includes**

	About	Whether India a member
Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG), 1975	Prevents nuclear proliferation by implementing guidelines for nuclear and nuclear-related exports.	No
Australia Group, 1985	Ensures that exports do not contribute to development of chemical or biological weapons.	Yes
Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), 1987	Prevent proliferation of missile and unmanned aerial vehicle technology capable of delivering WMD.	Yes
Zangger Committee, 1971	Formed following coming into force of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It maintains a Trigger List (triggering safeguards as a condition of supply) of nuclear-related strategic goods.	No

50 OF INDIA'S 3,693 CENTRALLY PROTECTED MONUMENTS (CPMs) MISSING

- Finding is **part of a submission made by Ministry of Culture (MoC) to a Parliamentary Standing Committee** for a report titled 'Issues relating to Untraceable Monuments and Protection of Monuments in India'.
 - As per Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), these monuments have become untraceable **due to rapid urbanisation, submergence by reservoirs/dams, difficulties in tracing in remote locations, non-availability of their proper location** etc.
- **ASI**, an attached office of MoC, **is in charge of protection and maintenance of CPMs** which have been **declared so under provisions of Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958.**
 - Also, **National Monuments Authority (NMA)** is responsible for protection of such sites through **management of prohibited and regulated area around CPMs.**
 - NMA, under MoC, has been **setup under provisions of AMASR (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010.**
- **Recommendations by Standing Committee**
 - **Physical survey of all CPMs** must mandatorily be carried out by ASI from time to time.
 - **Thorough assessment of security requirements and budgetary allocation** required for the same.
 - **Involving Local Panchayats and police** in safeguarding monuments.
 - **Use satellite imagery to try and trace monuments** which are untraceable at present.

ALSO IN NEWS



Rule of Law Index

- After improvement in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings, now **government has turned its attention to scoring better in Rule of Law Index.**
- Index is **published by the World Justice Project (WJP)**, a US based civil society group.
 - **In 2022, India was ranked 77th out of 140 countries.**
- **Eight factors that the Rule of Law Index measures:** Constraint on government powers, Absence of corruption, Open government, Fundamental rights, Order and security, Regulatory enforcement, Civil justice, Criminal justice.



Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)

- IEPF will launch an **outreach programme to create awareness of cryptocurrencies and online gaming.**
- **IEPF was created**, under Companies Act, 2013, **to protect investors' interests and promote awareness.**
- **IEPF is utilised for:**
 - **Refund in respect of unclaimed dividends**, matured deposits, matured debenture etc.
 - **Reimbursement of legal expenses** incurred by members, debenture holders or depositors.
- IEPF is **administered by the IEPF Authority** consisting of a chairperson, a chief executive officer and such other members, not exceeding seven, appointed by the Central Government.



Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)

- HEFA has fallen way **short of government's target of mobilising Rs 1 lakh crore by 2022.**
- **HEFA is a joint venture** between Union Ministry of Education and Canara Bank **to finance infrastructure development in premier educational institutions** through long-term loans.
 - HEFA was set up as a **non-profit Non-Banking Financing Company (NBFC).**
- Government had **expanded scope of HEFA in 2018 under Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education** or RISE by 2022 initiative, **bringing Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, medical institutions etc. under its ambit.**
 - HEFA was also **made nodal body in infrastructure financing** in the education sector.



Prajwala Challenge

- It was launched, by **Ministry of Rural Development**, to invite **ideas, solutions and actions that can transform rural economy.**
- **Ideas are invited** from individuals, Social Enterprises, Start up, Private Sector, Civil Society, etc. **into several categories including:**
 - Focus on Women and Marginalized section of community.
 - Localised Models.
 - Cost-effective solutions.
- It is **launched under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).**
 - DAY-NRLM aims at **mobilizing rural poor households into SHGs** and provide them long-term support such that they **diversify their livelihoods, improve their incomes etc.**



Promotion to cooperatives

- Union Home and Cooperation Minister stated that **two lakh Cooperative Committees at the Panchayat level will be set up** in the next three years.
- **Other initiatives to support cooperatives**
 - **A multi-state cooperative society** will be set up **to take up export of products** supplied by the cooperatives.
 - **A cooperative University** will be set up to train manpower required.
 - **A database of all the cooperatives** and a **new Cooperative policy** is on the anvil.
 - **To promote transparency** and affix responsibilities in the cooperative sector **model Bill is referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee.**

 <p>Namami Gange</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PM discussed ways to strengthen Namami Gange initiative in National Ganga Council meet. Launched in 2014, Namami Gange is flagship programme to integrate the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga River in a comprehensive manner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is implemented by National Mission for Clean Ganga under Ministry of Jal Shakti. Main pillars of Namami Gange include Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure, River-Front development, Afforestation, Bio-diversity etc. It has rejuvenated 1,500 km of the 2,525 km river and 30,000 ha of forests.
 <p>Lumpi-ProVacInd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed Lumpi-ProVacInd vaccine for Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaccine has been jointly developed by ICAR's National Research Centre on Equines (NRCE) at Hisar, Haryana and Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) at Izatnagar, UP. It is a homologous, live attenuated vaccine to protect cattle against LSD virus. LSD is a viral disease, caused by Capripoxvirus, that affects cattle. It does not affect humans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is genetically related to goatpox and sheeppox virus family. It is transmitted by blood-feeding insects, such as certain species of flies and mosquitoes, or ticks.
 <p>Spear Phishing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Home Affairs issued a cyber alert for the G20 summit against targeted spear phishing. Spear phishing is an email or electronic communications scam targeted towards a specific individual, organization or business. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It attempts to trick a person or group into giving private information over the internet or by email, especially by sending emails that seem to be from someone they know. It may also intend to install malware on a targeted user's computer.
<p>Personality in News</p> 	<p>Satyendra Nath Bose (1894- 1974)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> His 129th birth anniversary was celebrated on 1st January. Key achievements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> His work involves theoretical physics and he has made some fundamental conceptual contributions in development of Quantum Mechanics and Quantum Statistics. He went on to work with Einstein and together they developed Bose-Einstein statistics. Derived Planck's law for black body radiation (which refers to spectrum of light emitted by any hot object) without any reference to classical electrodynamics. Joined laboratory of Maurice de Broglie where he learnt techniques of X-ray spectroscopy and crystallography. Was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 1954. Personality traits: excellence, determination, scientific rigour, etc
<p>Places in News</p>	<p>Croatia (Capital: Zagreb)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia switched to Euro (bidding farewell to its Kuna Currency) and joined Europe's passport-free Schengen Zone. Situated in southeast Europe, Croatia lies on the north western edge of Balkan Peninsula. It shares its border with Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina and Montenegro. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Danube (2nd biggest river of Europe, after Volga), forms its far north-eastern border with Serbia. It shares its maritime border with Italy along the Adriatic Sea. Geographical Features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highest Peak: Dinara (Sinjal). Biggest River: Danube. 