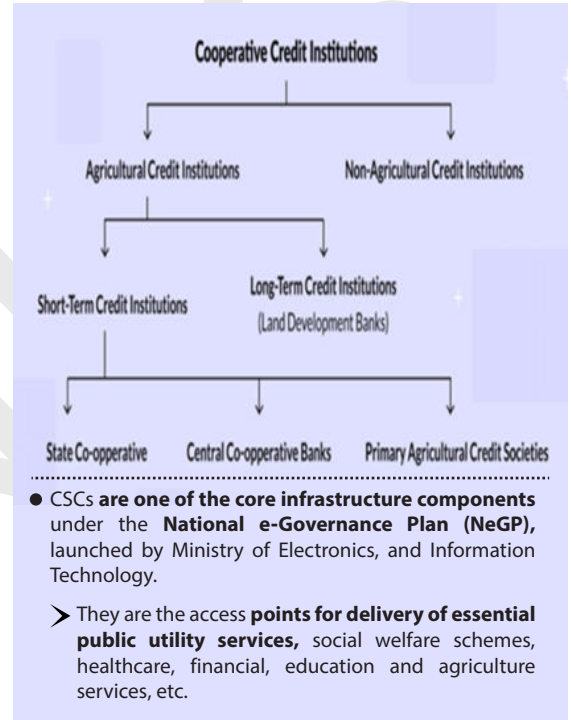


NEWS TODAY

PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL CREDIT SOCIETIES (PACS) TO PROVIDE SERVICES OFFERED BY COMMON SERVICE CENTRES (CSC)

- MoU was signed **between the Ministry of Cooperation, the Ministry of Electronics, and Information Technology** and others for PACS to provide CSC services.
 - **Around 63,000 PACS are functional in India**; providing various facilities such as input facilities, agricultural implements, and storage facilities.
 - Union Budget 2023-24 has a provision to make **2 lakh PACS in next 5 years** and create a **multi-purpose PACS in every Panchayat**.
- PACSs will now be **able to function as Common Service Centres (CSCs)**.
 - Plus they will be able to **provide all the services listed on the Digital Seva Portal of CSC** scheme to citizens.
 - Such **services include banking, insurance, Aadhaar enrolment/update, legal services, agri-inputs like farm equipment, PAN card, etc.**
- About PACS**
 - PACS, registered as cooperative societies, at the village level (**one of the three-tier**) provide short-term cooperative credit.
 - **Other two tiers: State Cooperative Banks at state level and District central cooperative banks.**
 - PACS are outside the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and hence not regulated by RBI.



TRAFFIC FACTSHEET HIGHLIGHTS RED SANDERS IS INDIA'S MOST EXPLOITED TREE SPECIES

- TRAFFIC** was established in 1976 by WWF and IUCN as a **wildlife trade monitoring network** to undertake data collection, recommendations on wildlife trade.
- Key highlights of the factsheet**
 - The CITES Trade Database recorded **28 incidents of Red Sanders illegal trade seizure**.
 - **China** remains the **largest importer**.
 - It highlights the threats of rampant illegal logging and smuggling of trees especially in **Chittoor, Kadapa, Nellore & Kurnool** districts in **Andhra Pradesh**.
- About Red Sanders**
 - Red Sanders is a **flora-species** that is endemic to a distinct tract of forests in **Eastern Ghats**.
 - It is a very slow-growing tree species that attains maturity after **25 – 40 years**.
 - It is **fire-hardy** and **resistant to droughts**.
 - It is locally known as Yerra Chandanam, Rakta Chandanam.
 - It is exploited for the extraction of **Santalin** (a red pigment used as dye and colorant in food), medicine, cosmetics.
 - It is also a **good raw material** for musical instruments and luxury furniture.
- Initiatives taken by India**
 - The **export** of Red Sanders from India is **prohibited under Foreign Trade Policy**.
 - **Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF)-2015**.
 - **Operation Rakth Chandan**.

Conservation Status	
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Endangered
Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, India	Schedule IV
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)	Appendix II

MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS (MOHUA) SIGNS MOU WITH ENGINEERS INDIA LIMITED TO DEVELOP WASTE TO WEALTH PLANTS IN MILLION PLUS CITIES

- The MoU was signed to develop **Waste to Energy (WTE) and bio-methanation projects** in million plus cities.
 - Bio-methanation is **anaerobic digestion of organic materials** which is converted into **biogas, containing mostly methane (~60%), and carbon dioxide (~40%)**.
 - In addition to this, **WTE uses technologies like incineration, gasification and pyrolysis**.
- Under the '**Green Growth**' segment of Union Budget 2023-24, **500 new Waste to Wealth plants** will be established under the **GOBARdhan scheme**.
- **GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) - dhan scheme** is being implemented as part of **Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)** under Ministry of Drinking water and Sanitation.
 - It focuses on **managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste on farms into compost, biogas, and bio-CNG**.
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0** also aims at creating garbage-free cities and has provisions for bio-methanation plants linked to GOBARdhan and SATAT schemes.
- **Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) initiative** envisages setting up of **5000 Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants** for production of 15 Million Metric Ton (MMT) per annum of CBG by 2023-24.
 - It has been **launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.

111 PAYLOADS AND 105 SPACE DEBRIS IDENTIFIED AS INDIAN OBJECTS ORBITING THE EARTH

- **USSPACECOM tracked and catalogued a total of 111 payloads and 105 Space Debris** identified as Indian Objects orbiting the Earth.

➤ U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) is one of the unified commands of the **Department of Defence of the US government**.

- Space junk or debris consist of **spent rocket stages, dead satellites, fragments of space objects and debris resulting from Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT)**.

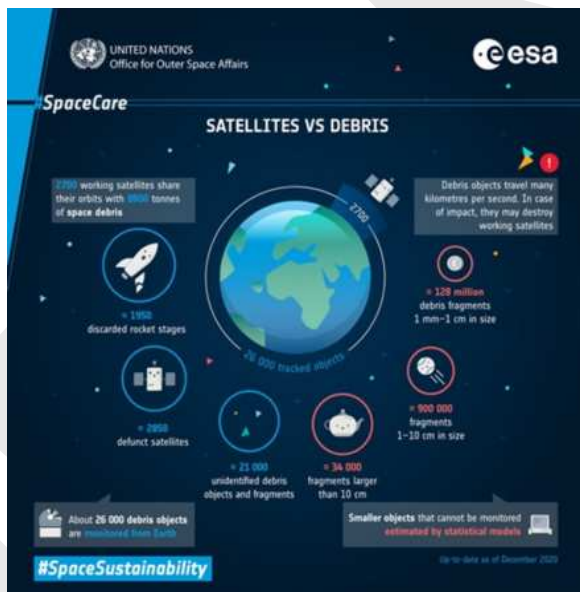
➤ Hurtling at an **average speed of 27,000 kmph** in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), these objects pose a very real **threat of collisions as studied under the Kessler Syndrome**.

- The Kessler Syndrome is a **phenomenon in which the density of objects in the Low Earth Orbit grows so high that collisions** between two objects could cause a massive cascade.

- **Space debris safety measures by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO):**

➤ In 2022, **ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Operations Management (IS4OM)** has been established to **continually monitor the objects posing collision threat** and undertake activities to **mitigate the risk** posed by space debris.

➤ ISRO is deploying new radars and optical telescopes under the **Network for Space Objects Tracking and Analysis (NETRA) project**.



RELIANCE RETAIL BECOMES FIRST RETAILER TO ACCEPT PAYMENTS VIA E-RUPEE AT STORES

- Reliance Retail has partnered with **Innoviti Technologies, ICICI Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank** to enable acceptance of **RBI-issued Digital Rupee**.

- RBI launched **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or e-Rupee (₹-R)** in 2022 for retail markets in a pilot mode.

➤ It is in the **form of a digital token that represents legal tender**.

- RBI classifies it into **two broad categories: Retail and Wholesale**.

➤ **Wholesale CBDC** is designed for **restricted access to select financial institutions**.

- It has the potential to **transform the settlement systems used by banks in the government securities (G-Sec) segment, capital market, etc.**

➤ The retail e-rupee (₹-R) is an **electronic version of cash** meant for retail transactions.

- ₹-R is issued in the **same denominations as paper currency and coins**, and is distributed through the intermediaries, that is banks.

➤ Has **features of physical cash** like trust, safety and settlement finality.

➤ Transactions can be both **Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M)**. Payments to merchants can be made using QR codes.

➤ It **reduces cost of management of physical cash**.

➤ As in the case of cash, it will **not earn any interest and can be converted to other forms of money**, like deposits with banks.

NEW SMALL SAVINGS SCHEME FOR WOMEN, MAHILA SAMMAN SAVINGS CERTIFICATE, LAUNCHED

- **Mahila Samman Savings Certificate (MSSC) will be made available for 2 years up to March 2025.**
 - It will offer a **7.5% interest rate** and will have the benefit of a **partial withdrawal** option.
 - **Deposit facility up to Rs.2 lakh in the name of women** or girls for a tenor of 2 years.
- **About Small Saving Schemes (SSSs)**
 - SSSs are **investment tools administered** by the government to **encourage residents to save for the long term**.
 - All the money pooled from different SSSs goes to the **National Small Savings Fund (NSSF)**, established in 1999 within the **Public Account of India**.
- **3 types of SSSs:**
 - **Postal deposits:** Savings account, recurring deposits, time deposits and monthly income scheme.
 - **Savings certificates:** National Small Savings Certificate and Kisan Vikas Patra.
 - **Social security schemes:** Public Provident Fund (PPF), Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS), and Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme.
- **Significance of SSSs**
 - **Offering slightly higher interest rates** compared to bank deposits.
 - **Some SSSs have income tax benefits** and assured returns.
 - **Funds are channelized to the government** in order to finance a part of their expenditure.

ALSO IN NEWS



Section 33(7) of the Representation of People's act 1951 (RPA)

- Supreme Court quashed the pleas to set aside **the Section 33(7) of the Representation of Peoples act 1951**.
- **Section 33(7) of the RPA permits** a candidate to contest any election (parliamentary, state assembly, biennial council, or by-elections) from up to two constituencies.
 - The provision was **introduced in 1996** prior to which there was no bar on the number of constituencies from which a candidate could contest.
- **Issue:** burden on the exchequer, against the democratic spirit of elections.



Paris Club

- It is **reported that the Paris Club will provide aid to the debt laid Sri Lankan Country**.
- The **Paris Club is an informal group of creditor nations whose objective is to find workable solutions to payment problems** faced by debtor nations.
 - It has **22 permanent members**, including most of the western European and Scandinavian nations, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan.
- **India and China are not its members.**










Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)

- PMKSY is a **centrally sponsored scheme** that aim to achieve convergence of investments in **irrigation at the field level, expand cultivable area under assured irrigation**, etc.
- It is an **inter-ministerial Scheme** that has been formulated amalgamating ongoing schemes viz.
 - **Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme, Integrated Watershed Management Programme, and On Farm Water Management**, component of National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture.
- **National Executive Committee (NEC)** under the Chairmanship of the Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog oversees the implementation of the scheme.



Lab Grown Diamonds (LGD)

- **IIT-Madras** has received a grant of **₹242 crore to do research on laboratory-grown diamonds (LGDs)**.
 - The grant is for five years to **indigenise LGD manufacturing process**.
 - The **Union Budget 2023 had proposed this for LGD**.
- **LGDs are diamonds that are produced using specific technology which mimics the geological processes that grow natural diamonds**.
 - They are **not the same as "diamond simulants"** – LGDs are **chemically, physically and optically diamond** and thus are difficult to identify as "lab-grown."
 - Most common method for producing LGDs is "High pressure, high temperature" (HPHT) method. Usually **graphite is used as the "diamond seed"** and when subjected to these extreme conditions, it turns into LGD.
- Diamond simulants are materials such as **Moissanite, Cubic Zirconia (CZ), White Sapphire, YAG, etc.** which attempt to look like a diamond.

 <p>Carrying Capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued directions to the Uttarakhand Government to conduct a study of the specific carrying capacity of Mussorie hill station to avoid a Joshimath like condition. Carrying capacity refers to the number of individuals who can be supported in a given area within natural resource limits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The population must stay without degrading the natural social, cultural and economic environment for present and future generations. > It becomes difficult for the population to survive beyond the environment's carrying capacity for very long.
 <p>Asiatic Black Bear</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Jammu and Kashmir's Wildlife Protection Department recorded 2,357 Asiatic black bear attacks in the Valley between 2000 and 2020. About Asiatic Black Bear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Asiatic black bear, (<i>Ursus thibetanus</i>), also called Himalayan bear, Tibetan bear, or moon bear, is member of the bear family (Ursidae). > It has a coat of smooth black fur and can be distinguished by a V of white fur on its chest. > IUCN Status- Vulnerable.
 <p>Cytotoxins (CTXs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientists have traced the mechanisms of the toxic action of cobra venom that can help anti-venom therapy. Cobras (genus Naja) are widely distributed over Asia and Africa, and cobra bites are responsible for large mortality and morbidity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cytotoxins (CTXs) are an essential class of the non-enzymatic three-finger toxin family and are present in cobra venoms. > CTXs are also responsible for depolarizing neurons and heart muscle membranes.
 <p>World Wetlands Day, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The day is celebrated every year on 2nd February to create awareness about conservation, significance and the role of wetlands in the protection of biodiversity. Theme "It's Time for Wetlands Restoration". With 75 Ramsar sites covering over 13 lakh Hectares, India has the largest number of Wetlands in South Asia.
 <p>Dar-es-Salaam Declaration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a declaration on ending AIDS in children by 2030. The Declaration was announced at the first ministerial meeting of the Global Alliance to end AIDS in Children, which brings together the 12 African countries with UNAIDS and other health agencies.
 <p>Place in News</p>	<div> <div> <p>Malawi (Capital: Lilongwe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malawi is seeing its worst cholera outbreak with more than 1,000 deaths. Located in Southern Africa in the Great Rift Valley, Malawi is landlocked. Boundaries: Tanzania to the North, Lake Malawi (Lake Nyasa) to East, Mozambique to East and South, and Zambia to West. Geographical features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > East African Rift Valley > Shire River </div> <div>  </div> <div> <p>Canada (Capital: Ottawa)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada's House of Commons has unanimously passed a motion to take in 10,000 Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims who have left China. Located in North America, it is the second largest country in the World after Russia. Boundaries: Its southern and western border with the USA is the longest border in the world not patrolled by military forces. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > It touches the Atlantic Ocean in East, Pacific Ocean in West, Arctic Ocean in North, and Greenland in Northeast. Geographical features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lakes: Lake Superior, Lake Ontario, Great Slave Lake, Lake Erie, Great Bear Lake, Lake Huron > Rivers: Mackenzie River (Canada's longest river) > Mountains ranges: Rocky Mountains, Columbia Mountains, Laurentian Mountains. </div> </div>