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India's first indigenously manufactured UAV : 'Drishti 10 Starliner'

- Chief of Naval Staff recently flagged off the first indigenously manufactured Drishti 10 'Starliner' Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for the Navy.
- **About Drishti 10 'Starliner':**
- It is an **indigenously manufactured Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)**.
- It was developed by **Adani Defence and Aerospace**.
- It is an advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platform with 36 hours endurance and a 450 kg payload capacity.

- It is an all-weather military platform which has clearance to fly in both segregated and unsegregated airspace.
- It is designed to possess high endurance, combat-proven capabilities, and advanced features, providing a significant boost to India's naval capabilities.
- The UAV's autonomous nature, coupled with its mission effectiveness and payload configuration options, makes it an invaluable asset for strategic operations.
- One of the distinguishing features of the Drishti 10 'Starliner' is its **minimal maintenance requirements, making it cost-effective and operationally efficient.**
- This characteristic ensures increased operational readiness, reducing downtime, and maximising deployment opportunities.
- It is equipped with advanced communication systems, including satellite communication and Line-of-Sight (LOS) data links, ensuring reliable and secure data transmission.



Indian Navy Will Host The MILAN 24 Exercise In Visakhapatnam

- Indian Navy's multi-national exercise, MILAN 24 is all set to be held in **Visakhapatnam from 19-27 Feb 24**.
- Earlier 11th edition of this exercise was held in Feb-Mar 22 in Visakhapatnam under the Eastern Naval Command with the theme 'Camaraderie-Cohesion-Collaboration'.
- **MILAN** is a **biennial multi-national naval exercise** which started in 1995 with participation of four foreign countries (Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand) in consonance with India's '**Look East policy**'.
- The MILAN Exercise flourished under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar command till its 10th edition. **Visakhapatnam** is chosen as the preferred venue for future MILAN exercises.
- MILAN 24 exercise would comprise two phases - '**Harbour phase**' and '**Sea phase**'. The harbour phase, aims to promote cultural sharing amongst the participating Nations and the Sea phase includes ships with Maritime Patrol aircraft and submarines of Friendly Foreign Countries.



Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023: Indore and Surat cleanest cities

- **Indore and Surat** were declared the joint cleanest cities of India as part of the Swachh Survekshan Awards presented by President Draupadi Murmu.
- This was the **seventh time** that Indore won the accolade of the cleanest city in India.

- **Navi Mumbai** which came third in last year's awards, retained its position.
- **Saswad in Maharashtra** got the cleanest city award for urban centres with less than 1 lakh population.
- Patan in Chattisgarh and Lonavla in Maharashtra were the second and third cleanest cities in this category.
- **Varanasi and Prayagraj** were adjudged cleanest Ganga Towns.
- **MHOW Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh** was given the award for cleanest cantonment town.
- Swachh Survekshan, conducted by the **Union Ministry Of Housing And Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** under the Swachh Bharat Urban Mission since 2016, is the **world's largest urban sanitation and cleanliness survey**.
- The primary goal of Swachh Survekshan was to encourage large-scale citizen participation and create awareness amongst all sections of society about the importance of working together towards making towns and cities better places to reside in.

Global unemployment set to reach 5.2% in 2024 as per ILO reports

- According to the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** the global unemployment rate is expected to inch up to 5.2 percent this year primarily because of a rise in joblessness in advanced economies.
- ILO's 2024 '**World Employment and Social Outlook**' report forecasts that the number of unemployed people will rise by 2 million, lifting the global unemployment rate to **5.2 percent from 5.1 percent in 2023**.
- ILO, a **United Nations agency**, said that after a short growth spurt as countries recovered from the pandemic, aggregate labour productivity growth had quickly returned to the low pace seen over the previous decade.
- The report also said, the situation is particularly concerning in high-income countries, where employment growth is expected to turn negative in 2024 and only modest improvements are anticipated in 2025.

International
Labour
Organization



Chhattisgarh Launches Shri Ram Lala Darshana Scheme

- Recently, the Chhattisgarh government has decided to launch the 'Shri Ramlala Darshan scheme,' a pilgrimage to the newly built Ram temple in Ayodhya.
- Approximately 20,000 pilgrims will be taken for the Shri Ram lala Darshan annually.
- The **Chhattisgarh Tourism Board** and the **Budget Tourism Department** will facilitate the implementation of this scheme.
- The eligibility for the pilgrimage will be for Chhattisgarh natives **aged 18 to 75** who are found fit in the health examination conducted by the district medical board.
- The pilgrimage distance is approximately **900 kilometers**, and transportation will be facilitated in collaboration with the **Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)**.
- Beneficiaries will be brought to and taken back from the railway station to their residences by the respective district administration.
- A committee, under the chairmanship of the collector in each district, will be formed for the implementation of this scheme.



PM Modi To Unveil India's Longest Sea Bridge 'Atal Setu' On Jan 12

- The **Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu**, built at cost of about **Rs 17,840 crore**, is set to be unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 12th.
- The **21.8 kilometer bridge** will ease access to the satellite city of **Navi Mumbai**.
- The bridge connects **Sewri in Mumbai to Nhava Sheva in Raigad district**, reducing the travel time from the current two hours to approximately 15-20 minutes.
- Atal Setu took two decades to be built after it was conceived, during which time it has overcome environmental concerns and cost escalations. The foundation stone of the bridge was laid by PM Modi in December 2016.
- PM Modi's vision is to improve 'ease of mobility' of citizens by strengthening urban transport infrastructure and connectivity. The **Mumbai Transharbour link (MTHL)**, now named 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri - Nhava Sheva Atal Setu' has been built in line with this vision.



Tshering Tobgay to become Bhutan PM for second time

- Bhutanese voters have elected Tshering Tobgay to become prime minister for a second time after his party won nearly two-thirds of seats in parliament.
- He was leader of the opposition in Bhutan's first parliament when it was established in 2008 after the start of the reign of the present king.
- **Tshering Tobgay**, 58, a former civil servant and a conservation advocate holds a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Pittsburgh and a master's in public administration from Harvard. **He served as prime minister from 2013 to 2018.**
- India has long been Bhutan's top economic partner and helped develop the country's hydropower sector, which is among the key pillars of the country's economy.



Byrnihat 2023

INDIA'S MOST POLLUTED CITY



Byrnihat: India's Most Polluted City in 2023

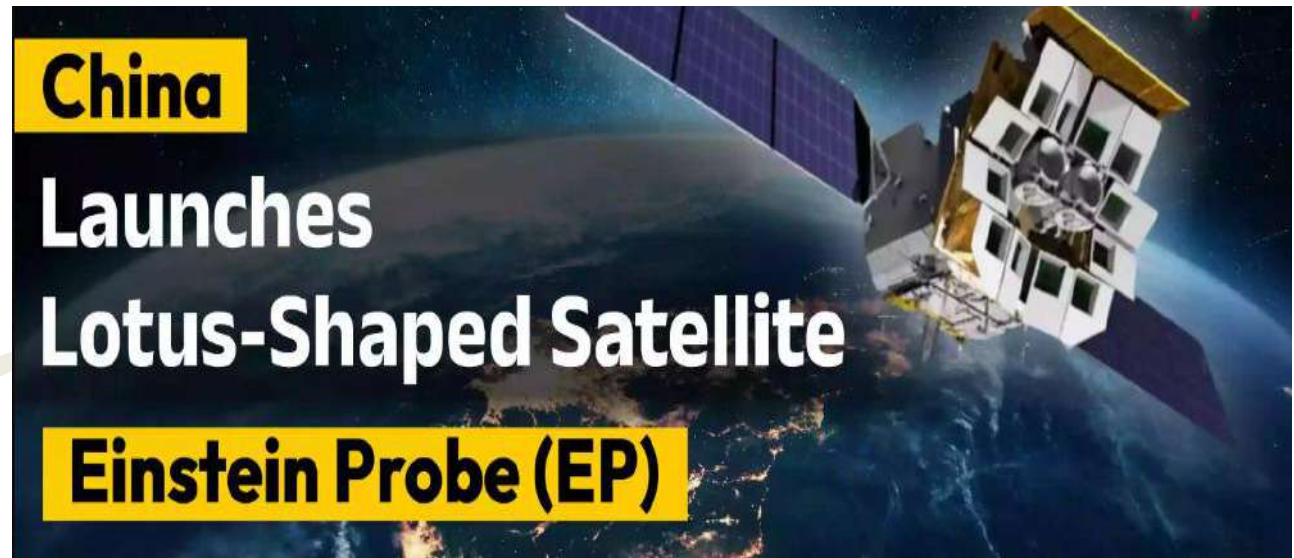
- According to a report released by the think tank **Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA)** on January 10, 2024, **Byrnihat in Meghalaya** has topped the list of polluted cities in India.
- **Byrnihat** recorded the highest annual average PM10 concentration of 301 micrograms per cubic meter in 2023.

- After this, **Begusarai of Bihar (265 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)** and **Greater Noida of Uttar Pradesh (228 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)** are in second and third place, respectively.
- **Silchar in Assam** recorded the lowest PM10 level at 29 micrograms per cubic metre.
- Of the top 50 polluted cities, **18 are from Bihar, 8 from Haryana and 8 from Rajasthan.**
- The report noted that PM10 concentrations in the top 10 polluted cities were three to five times higher than Indian standards and 13–20 times higher than World Health Organisation limits.
- **National Clean Air Program (NCAP)** was launched in January 2019 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change as a national-level strategy to tackle the problem of air pollution across the country.

China launches lotus-shaped satellite

“Einstein Probe (EP)”

- China launched the lotus-shaped satellite Einstein Probe (EP) to explore the mysteries of the universe.
- It has been launched into space by a **Long March 2C** rocket from the **Xichang Satellite Launch Center** in China's Sichuan province.
- The satellite has 12 petals, 2 stamens and 12 modules equipped with wide-field X-ray telescopes, weighing approximately 1.45 tonnes. **This satellite is shaped like a blooming lotus.**
- The aim is to explore the mysteries of the universe including supernova **explosions, black holes and to observe cosmic interactions** for the next three years.
- **Long March 2C:**
- It is a two-stage medium-lift launch vehicle from China.
- It was developed and manufactured by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology (CALT).
- The Long March 2C made its first launch in the year 1982.
- It can send up to 3,850 kg of payload to low Earth orbit and up to 1,250 kg of payload to Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO).



Maharashtra government established 'Atpadi Conservation Reserve' for endangered canids

- The Maharashtra government has established a crucial new wildlife habitat in **Sangli district**, aptly named the **Atpadi Conservation Reserve**.
- Spanning a compact 9.48 sq. km, this reserve prioritizes the protection of the **endangered 'canid' family**, including wild dogs, wolves, jackals, and foxes.
- Strategically located, Atpadi bridges the gap between the Maini Conservation Area and the Madhok Bird Sanctuary, fostering a safe wildlife corridor.
- This diverse sanctuary boasts three distinct forest types – **semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, and dry deciduous**.
- Its rich flora and fauna encompass 35 tree species, 15 shrubs, 14 vines, 116 herbs, and even a parasitic plant, creating a vibrant ecological tapestry.
- Hon. Wildlife Warden Rohan Bhate emphasizes the reserve's significance in safeguarding not only canids but also various other mammals, both large and small.
- This initiative honors the dedicated work of the **late Ajit Patil and Dr. V.C. Ben**, whose persistent efforts played a key role in bringing the reserve to fruition.



India and UK signed an agreement over defence collaboration

- The UK announced it will deploy a littoral response group, a specialised formation for amphibious warfare, in the Indian Ocean in 2024 and its carrier strike group in 2025 to train and operate with Indian forces.
- The announcement coincided with defence minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Britain, during which the two sides signed two agreements on a cadet exchange programme and collaboration between India's **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and the **UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL)**.
- This is the first visit to the UK by an Indian defence minister in 22 years.
- The deployment of the littoral response group and the carrier strike group, among the UK's most advanced naval capabilities, mark a **“decisive step in bolstering UK-India security ties.**

