

NEWS TODAY

ONLY 66% DISTRICTS IN COUNTRY FREE OF MANUAL SCAVENGING: UNION MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (MOSJE)

• According to MoSJE,

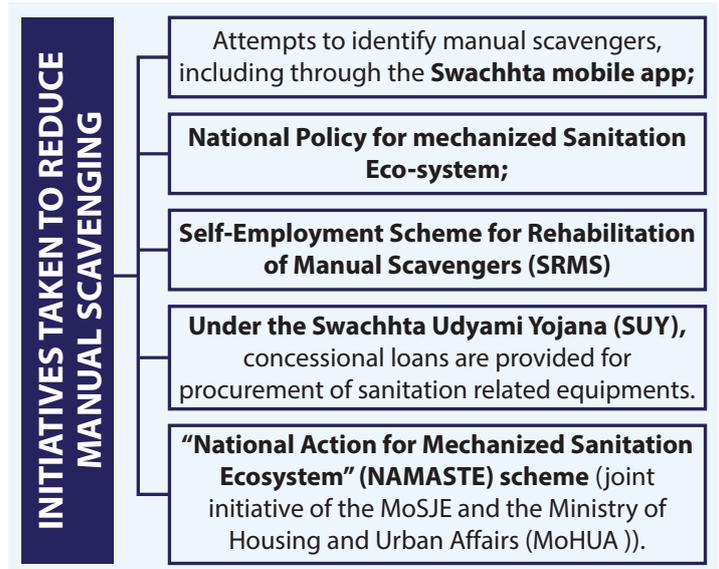
- Only 508 districts out of the total 766 districts in the country have declared themselves manual-scavenging free.
- The surveys conducted in 2013 and 2018 had identified all existing manual scavengers (about 58,000).
- No person had died from manual scavenging in the country in the last three years (2019 to 2022).
- Only remaining threat was hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

• About manual scavenging:

- Refers to the practice of removing human excreta by hand from sewers or septic tanks. The definition includes people employed to clean septic tanks, ditches, or railway tracks.
- It is banned under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (PEMSR).

➤ In case of Violation, punishment with imprisonment upto 2 years or fine upto Rs. One Lakh or both.

➤ Reasons for continued existence: Lack of enforcement of the Act, exploitation of unskilled labourers, lack of awareness etc.



IRAN UNVEILS ITS 'FIRST HYPERSONIC MISSILE'

• Iran presented its first domestically made hypersonic Missile named "Fattah" having a target range of 1,400 km.

• A hypersonic missile refers to a type of weapon that travels at speeds that exceed five times the speed of sound typically exceeding Mach 5 or approximately 6,174 km/h.

➤ Hypersonic missiles fly at a much lower altitude than conventional ballistic missiles.

• The two types of hypersonic weapons systems:

➤ Hypersonic Glide Vehicles launched from a rocket before gliding to the intended target

➤ Hypersonic Cruise Missiles powered by air-breathing high-speed engines or 'scramjets' after acquiring their target.

• Advantages of Hypersonic Weapons

➤ Use only kinetic energy and energy derived from motion to destroy unhardened targets in underground facilities.

➤ Could enable responsive, long-range, strike options against distant, defended, and/or time-critical threats (such as road-mobile missiles).

➤ Challenges in detection due to their speed, maneuverability.

• The US, Russia, and China lead in hypersonic weapons programs, while Australia, India, France, Germany, and Japan are also developing such technology.

➤ As part of its Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle program India successfully tested a Mach 6 scramjet.

➤ Hypersonic Wind Tunnel (HWT) test facility of the DRDO.



Mach Number

$$\text{ratio} = \frac{\text{Object Speed}}{\text{Speed of Sound}} = \text{Mach Number}$$



Subsonic
Mach < 1.0



Transonic
Mach = 1.0



Hypersonic
Mach > 5.0

Supersonic
Mach > 1.0

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARRIVAL OF INDIANS IN SURINAME

- The Indian President was conferred with the **highest civilian honour of Suriname** 'Grand Order of the Chain of the Yellow Star'.
- India also decided to **extend the eligibility criteria** for OCI Card up **from the fourth generation to the sixth generation** of the original Indian immigrants in Suriname.
- **Indians in Suriname**
 - On June 5, 1873, the **first group of Indians** reached the shores of Suriname, on board the ship **Lalla Rookh**.
 - The Indo-Surinamese **form the largest ethnic group** in the country, **making 27.4% of the population**.
 - In the period 1873-1916 **more than 34,000 people emigrated** from British India to Suriname to work on the plantations as indentured labourers.
 - Severe **poverty and deprivation** caused by acute famine in the **Gangetic plains** in the 19th Century acted as push factor for Indian labourers.
 - Descendants of these workers in Suriname **primarily speak Sarnami Hindustani**, a language that arose from the confluence of **Awadhi and Bhojpuri**.
 - It is the **third most spoken language in the country**.
 - India and Suriname **developed the first relations in 1976** after Suriname got independence.

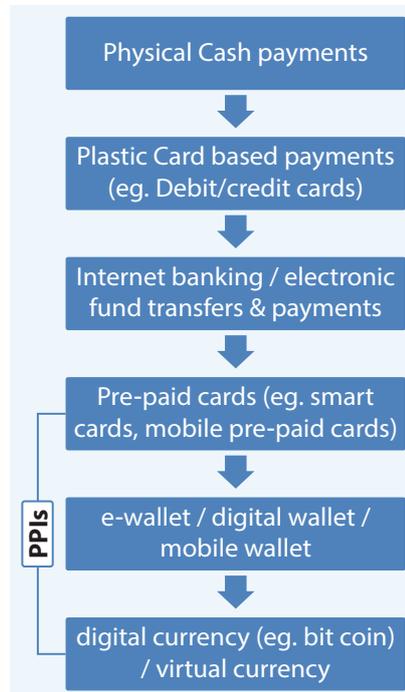
Suriname (Capital: Paramaribo)

- **Political features:**
 - **Location:** Lies on the **northeast coast** of South America.
 - **Neighbours:** Bordered by French Guiana in the east, Brazil in the south, and by Guyana in the west.
- **Geographical features:**
 - **Terrain:** Mostly rolling hills; narrow coastal plain with swamps.
 - **Major rivers:** Commewijne River, the Coppename River, the Courantyne River, Marowijne (Moroni) River etc.
 - **Highest point:** Juliana Top



DEPOSIT INSURANCE COVER FOR PREPAID PAYMENT INSTRUMENTS (PPIs)

- An RBI-appointed committee has recommended that **RBI should examine the extension of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) cover to PPIs**.
- **Presently, it is available only to bank deposits.**
- PPIs are defined in the RBI Guidelines issued under the Payment and Settlements Systems Act, 2005 as **payment instruments that facilitate purchase of goods and services, including funds transfer, against the value stored on such instruments**.
 - The value stored on such instruments **represents the value paid for by the holders by cash, by debit to a bank account, or by credit card**.
 - Cash loading of PPIs is **limited to Rs 50,000 per month**.
 - **Only those companies incorporated in India** and have a minimum paid-up capital of Rs. 5 crore and minimum positive net worth of Rs. 1 crore are permitted to issue PPIs in India.
- DICGC is an RBI subsidiary, that **provides deposit insurance coverage to various types of deposits, including savings, fixed, current, recurring, and accrued interest**.
 - **Limit of insurance:** up to a maximum of Rs 5 lakh for both principal and interest amount held by them.
 - **Cover:** commercial banks i.e., local area banks, payments banks, small finance banks, regional rural banks, and cooperative banks.



BT COTTON'S INDIA ENTRY DELAYED AS GENETIC ENGINEERING APPRAISAL COMMITTEE (GEAC) SEEKS FRESH INPUTS

- Few states have refused to give no objection certificates (NOC) of **biosafety research trials of genetically engineered (GE) cotton hybrids**, regulated by the GEAC.
 - Field trials are to be conducted in **Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Haryana**.
 - **It has been made mandatory to obtain 'NOC' from the state governments** for conducting field trials.
 - **Agriculture is a state subject** and their involvement is essential for compliance monitoring.
- **GEAC is the statutory committee** that functions in the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.
 - It is **constituted under the "Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells (Rules, 1989)"** framed under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
 - Its main function is to **approve activities involving large-scale use of hazardous and recombinants in industrial production**.
 - It **conducts experimental field trials** before releasing **any genetically engineered organism into the environment**.
- **BT (Bacillus thuringiensis) Cotton** is hybrids/varieties that cotton that contain **'cry1Ac' and 'cry2Ab' genes**, isolated from the soil bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) and coding for proteins toxic to **bollworm insect pests**.
 - Bt cotton is the **only GM crop that has been approved for commercial cultivation**.

REMOVING ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR) FROM THE 'PANDEMIC TREATY' WILL EXPOSE HUMANITY TO FUTURE PANDEMICS

• Recently, the latest version of the draft Pandemic Instrument, also referred to as the “**pandemic treaty**,” was shared at the **World Health Assembly** (the decision-making body of WHO).

➤ While earlier drafts of the Pandemic Instrument drew on guidance from AMR policy, however, **after the first round of negotiations, all of these insertions, are now at risk for removal.**

• Work on the Pandemic Instrument began in December 2021 after the WHA agreed to a global process to **draft and negotiate an international instrument** in this regard.

• About Pandemic Treaty

➤ It aims to **prevent pandemics, save lives, reduce disease burden and protect livelihoods**, through strengthening the world's capacities for preventing, preparing for and responding to, and recovery of health systems from, pandemics

➤ It fosters on an **all-of-government and all-of-society approach** and laid out aspects on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.

• Need of the treaty

➤ Enable countries to **strengthen national, regional, and global capacities** and resilience to future pandemics.

➤ **Early detection and prevention of pandemics.**

➤ **Response to any future pandemics** by ensuring **universal access to medical solutions.**

CONCERN

• Lack of focus, seems distract from **demands for better access to vaccines and treatments.**

• Most of the **provisions in the proposed pandemic treaty** are already available under International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005.

• WHO already has **binding rules known as IHR**, which set out **countries' obligations** where public health events have the potential to cross borders.

ALSO IN NEWS



OPEC+

- The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies led by Russia, or OPEC+** reached a deal to reduce overall production targets.
- OPEC+, created in 2016, refers to group of **23 oil-producing countries that includes**,
 - **13 members of OPEC** (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, and Venezuela) and
 - **10 other oil-producing countries** (Russia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, South Sudan and Sudan).
- OPEC is a **permanent intergovernmental organization** that coordinates and unifies the petroleum policies of its Member Countries.



Global Economic Prospects report

- It is **released by World Bank** which is **issued twice a year**, in January and June.
- Findings
 - The **global economy is projected to “slow substantially”** this year, with a “pronounced deceleration” in advanced economies.
 - **GDP growth for FY24 in India is seen at 6.3% compared** with a previous estimate of 6.6% in January.
 - India's **private investment was likely boosted by increasing corporate** profits while **unemployment declined to 6.8% in the first quarter of 2023.**



ANTARDRIHSTI

- **RBI governor launched a Financial Inclusion Dashboard**, named, ANTARDRIHSTI.
- It will provide the required insight to assess **and monitor the progress of financial inclusion** by capturing relevant parameters.
- It will also enable to **gauge the extent of financial exclusion at granular levels** across the country so that such areas can be addressed.
- The dashboard is **presently intended for internal use** in the RBI.



Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)

- Indian SaaS industry will reach \$26 billion in revenues by 2026 as per a report.
- **SaaS is a software licensing model** which allows access to software on a subscription basis using external servers, also known as cloud-based software.
- **SaaS allows each user to access programs via the Internet.** Thus, SaaS allows data to be accessed from any device (computer or mobile phone) with an internet connection and a web browser.
- Any **web-based email service is classified as SaaS**, e.g., Outlook, Hotmail, or Yahoo!

 <p>Price Support Scheme (PSS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Centre has removed the procurement ceiling of 40% on three pulses -tur, urad and masur- under the PSS for the 2023-24 in order to boost domestic production. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤The decision assures the procurement of these pulses from farmers at MSP without ceilings. ● PSS is under umbrella scheme Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤PSS is operationalised only when prices of agri-produce fall below the MSP. ➤It is under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
 <p>Varunastra</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Varunastra was successfully test-fired with a live warhead against an undersea target, by the Indian Navy. ● It is indigenously designed and developed ship-launched anti-submarine torpedo. ● It was designed and developed by Vizag-based Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL) under the DRDO and is manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Ltd (BDL) ● With a maximum speed of 40 knots and a maximum operating depth of 600 m, has a long range with multi-maneuvering capabilities.
 <p>Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Education Loans (CGFSEL)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education loans offered by around 30 regional rural banks (RRBs) will now have the credit shield from the CGFSEL. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤This will bring RRBs on a par with commercial banks and help them lower interest rate on such loans. ● The CGFSEL was set up by Ministry of Education in 2015 to ease education loans and extend guarantee coverage against default in education loans sanctioned by public, private, and foreign banks. ● At present, the scheme covers default on an education loan if the loan limit is ₹7.5 lakh without any collateral security or third-party guarantee.
 <p>Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Centre has decided to select 2,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) to open Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMJAK). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More than 9400 PMJAKs have already been opened across the country under PMBJP. ● About Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Genesis: In 2015, the 'Jan Aushadhi Scheme' was revamped as 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana' (PMJAY) which was again renamed as PMBJP in 2016. ➤ Launched by: Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers. ➤ Objective: To provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through dedicated outlets called PMJAK.
 <p>Pietermaritzburg, Railway Station, South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Indian Navy's primary warship, INS Trishul, arrived at Durban port in South Africa to honor the 130th anniversary of a significant incident involving Mahatma Gandhi. ● On June 7, 1893, Gandhi was evicted from a train at Pietermaritzburg railway station, an event that sparked his campaign against racial oppression. ● In the same year, Gandhi arrived in Durban to serve as a lawyer for merchant Dada Abdulla. ● This occasion also signifies 30 years since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between India and South Africa.
 <p>Mount Everest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New Zealand High Commission celebrated the 70th Anniversary of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay becoming the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest, the highest point in the world. ● Mount Everest is the highest mountain peak in the world having the highest altitude above mean sea level at 29,029 feet [8,848 meters]. ● It is a part of the Himalayas range. ● Location: lies on the border between Nepal and the Tibet ● Formation: by tectonic action as the Indian-Australian Plate moved northward and subducted under the Eurasian Plate. ● Everest is shaped like a three-sided pyramid.