

NEWS TODAY

HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY TO REFORM WORLD BANK: FM

- While speaking at discussions around evolution of multilateral development banks (MDBs), **Minister of Finance (FM) flagged two issues concerning MDB evolution:**

- **Building consensus on definition of global development challenges.**
- **Augmenting the financial and operational capacity of World Bank Group.**

- **Other areas of reform**

- **Dominance of US and other members of G7 in voting** and administration.
- Has not been able to **redefine its purpose as a lending and developmental institution** in light of emergence of non-traditional lenders such as China.

- **Reliability of World Bank reports**, and its predictions on economic performances have been questioned.
- Right **balance between climate and development assistance**, and **climate emission and adaptation priorities.**
- **Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP)s** imposed by World Bank severely affected the developing countries.
 - **SAPs enforced privatization of industries, cuts in government spending and imposition of user fees**, market-based pricing, higher interest rates and trade liberalization.

- **Suggested measures**

- **More voting power** to Developing Countries.
- Deployment of **newer forms of resource mobilization**, including an expanded role for the private sector.
- World bank **decisions should be inclusive, consensus-based, and recognize** development perspectives and priorities of client countries.



WORLD BANK GROUP


Washington DC, USA

Genesis: It is a specialized UN Agency conceived along with International Monetary Fund (IMF), also known as **Bretton Woods Twins** in July 1944 at the United Nations Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire, USA. Today, it consists of five organizations as:

- **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD):** Established in 1944, it lends to middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries.
- **International Finance Corporation (IFC):** Established in 1960, it gives interest-free loans and grants to poorest countries. **Together, IBRD and IDA form the World Bank.**
- **International Finance Corporation (IFC):** Established in 1956, it largest global development institution focused exclusively on the private sector.
- **Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA):** Created in 1988, it promotes FDI into developing countries for economic growth, poverty reduction etc.
- **International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID):** Established in 1966, it provides international facilities for conciliation and arbitration of investment disputes.

Objective: To end extreme poverty and to promote shared prosperity.

Membership: IBRD: 189, IDA: 174, IFC: 186, MIGA: 182 and ICSID: 158 member countries

Other key information:

- **Flagship Publications:** Global Financial Development Reports, World Development Reports, Global Economic Prospects.


India is member of all World Bank organizations except ICSID

NEW DETAILED MAP OF DARK MATTER AGREES WITH EINSTEIN'S THEORY OF GRAVITY

- Astronomers have made the **most detailed map of dark matter showing that both the 'lumpiness' of universe and the rate at which it is growing** are on expected lines as **predicted using Einstein's theory of gravity.**

- It provides **new insights into an ongoing debate called 'The Crisis in Cosmology,'** suggesting that dark matter was not lumpy enough.
- Crisis stems from **measurements that use a different background light**, one emitted from stars in galaxies **rather than cosmic microwave background (CMB).**

- **New map uses light from CMB-** leftover radiation from Big Bang or the time when the universe began- **and used gravitational lensing** to map the concentrations of dark matter.

- Gravitational Lensing **occurs when massive objects distort and magnify light from objects behind them**, acting as cosmic telescopes and **making distant galaxies appear brighter.**

- Unlike normal matter, **dark matter does not interact with electromagnetic force.** This means it does not absorb, reflect, or emit light, **making it extremely hard to spot.**

- Being invisible, researchers observe **how dark matter interacts with gravity of massive objects** such as galaxy clusters and lumps of dark matter.

RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION INCREASINGLY FOUND IN SCRAPS FOR RECYCLING: INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

- Findings are part of **latest data from IAEA's Incident and Trafficking Database (ITDB)** that also highlighted:

➤ **Radioactive-laced waste products** — including vehicles like ships — **are being increasingly recycled without taking care of the hazard management.**

➤ **Most common source of contamination is feed material** (often obtained from metal recycling industry) from which the product had been manufactured.

- ITDB was established by IAEA Secretariat in 1995 to:**

➤ **Assist States on incidents involving illicit trafficking** and other related unauthorized activities involving nuclear and other radioactive materials.

➤ **Maintain and analyze reported information to identifying** common threats, trends, and patterns.

- ITDB is part of the IAEA's Nuclear Security Plan that aims to**

➤ **Assist States in establishing, maintaining, and sustaining** national nuclear security regimes.

➤ **Contribute to global efforts to achieve effective nuclear security.**

➤ **Facilitate international cooperation and increasing awareness** on nuclear security.

- Initiatives by India to ensure safety from radioactive products**

➤ **Atomic Energy Act, 1962, provides regulatory framework** for all activities related to atomic energy and use of ionizing radiation.

➤ **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board** to exercise regulatory and safety functions.

➤ **Atomic Energy (Radiation Protection) Rules, 2004.**

➤ **Atomic Energy (Radiation Processing of Food and Allied Products) Rules, 2012**



CHINA WANTS TO START USING MOON SOIL TO BUILD LUNAR BASES

- It is being reported that Chinese scientists and researchers recently met to **discuss ways to build infrastructure on the moon**, making it habitable for **long-term lunar and space explorations.**

➤ A team is **designing a robot "Chinese Super Masons"** to make bricks out of lunar soil.

➤ Also, China aims to **retrieve world's first soil sample from far side of the moon** by around 2025.

- There has been **renewed interest on the Moon with several countries** including India, **planning lunar missions** in the coming years.

➤ These include **Artemis** (NASA), **Chandrayaan-3** (India), **Chang'e** (China) **Pathfinder Lunar Orbiter** (Korea), **Luna 25** (Russia), **SLIM** (Japan) etc.

- Reasons for renewed interest**

➤ **Economic:** Helium-3 (an isotope of the element helium) is abundant on Moon. It is a potential fuel for nuclear fusion.

➤ **Base for future space exploration:** To test how life reacts to harsh conditions of space.

➤ **To study Earth:** as Moon and Earth share a common past studying moon can help to better understand volcanic activities, seismic activities on Earth.

ZERO BUDGET NATURAL FARMING (ZBNF) IN ANDHRA PRADESH (AP) YIELDED MORE PRODUCE THAN CONVENTIONAL METHODS

- A recent study on **ZBNF highlighted significantly higher crop yield and unaffected nutrient availability** compared to organic or conventional (synthetic fertilisers and pesticides) farming.

➤ AP has been **pushing towards chemical-free agriculture under Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF)** programme.

- About ZBNF**

➤ It is a **natural farming technique in which farming is done without use of chemicals and without using any credits** or spending any money on purchased inputs.

➤ It is a **method of chemical-free agriculture** drawing from traditional Indian practises based on **4 pillars (refer image).**

➤ **ZBNF reduces the cost of production down to zero** due to utilisation of all the natural resources available in and around the crops.

➤ It was originally promoted by **Maharashtrian agriculturist Subhash Palekar.**

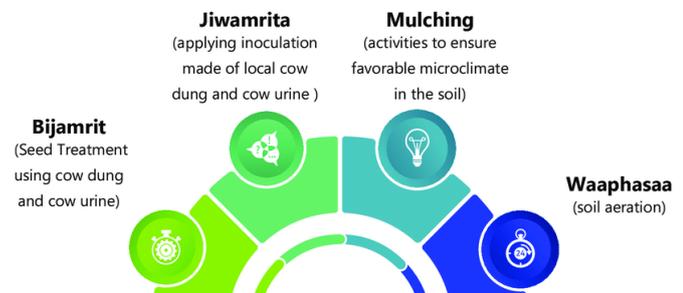
➤ ZBNF was introduced in **Union Budget 2019- 20.**

- Benefits of ZBNF:**

➤ **Requires very less amount of water and electricity** than what is required under chemical farming,

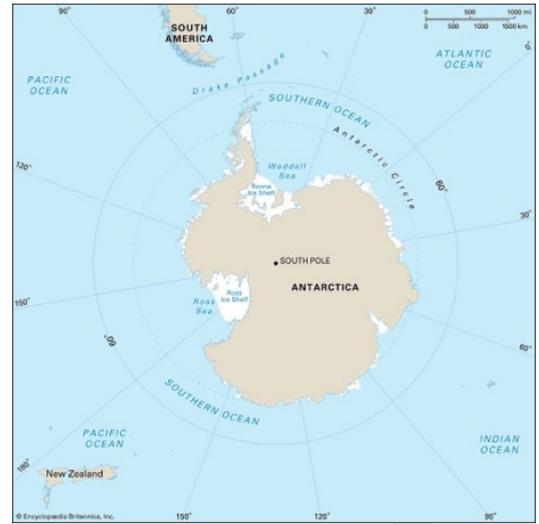
➤ **Reduces farming costs** by using in-situ resources.

➤ **Manage soil nutrition, fertility, pests and seeds.**



GROWING COMMERCIAL INTEREST IN SOUTHERN OCEAN'S RESOURCES THWARTS PROTECTION EFFORTS AROUND ANTARCTICA

- Southern Ocean that encircles Antarctica **covers around 10% of global ocean** and is **home to nearly 10,000 unique polar species**.
 - **Climate change and anthropogenic activities**(Commercial fishing) in the region is **altering habitats** such as sea ice and sheltered seafloor under ice shelves.
 - **Increased harvesting of krill threatens animals that feed on them** including whales, seals, penguins etc.
- **Importance of Antarctica**
 - Antarctica and surrounding Southern Ocean are **key drivers of Earth's oceanic and atmospheric systems**.
 - Antarctic environment **provides a valuable benchmark for climate change**.
 - Antarctic ice deflects some of the **sun's rays away from Earth, keeping temperatures liveable**.
- **Global efforts to safeguard Antarctica**
 - **Antarctic Treaty**, signed in 1959, with the objectives to demilitarize Antarctica, promote international scientific cooperation etc. (**India is a member**).
 - **Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals**, 1972
 - **Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources**, 1982 (**ratified by India**)
 - **Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty** (Madrid Protocol), 1991 (**signed by India**)
 - **Indian Antarctic program**, which began in 1981, **built three research base stations in Antarctica**, named Dakshin Gangotri (1983), Maitri (1988) and Bharati (2012).
 - As of today, **Maitri and Bharati are fully operational**.



ALSO IN NEWS



Doctrine of promissory estoppel

- **In a hearing related to Agnipath scheme**, plaintiff (party moving court in a civil action) cited doctrine of promissory estoppel.
- Promissory estoppel is a **concept developed in contractual laws**.
 - It essentially **prevents a "promisor" from backing out of an agreement** on the grounds that there is no "consideration."
 - It is invoked by a plaintiff **to ensure execution of a contract or seek compensation** for failure to perform the contract.
- **In Chhaganlal Keshavalal Mehta v. Patel Narandas Haribhai case** (1981), Supreme Court listed out a **checklist for when the doctrine can be applied**.



Ranganath Mishra Commission

- Supreme Court stated that **government may need to re-check its stance** on Ranganath Mishra report.
- **About Ranganath Mishra Commission**
 - It is officially known as **National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities**.
 - It was constituted to look into **various issues related to linguistic and religious minorities in the country**.
 - Report by Commission (2007) recommended that **Scheduled caste status be completely delinked from religion and be made religion-neutral** like STs.
 - It had recommended **permitting Dalits who converted to Islam and Christianity to avail Scheduled Caste status**.



UN Commission on Population and Development (UNCPD)

- Recently, **56th session of UNCPD** was held at New York.
- **Key highlights**
 - Most of the countries are facing **"a triple crisis in education – one of equity and inclusion, quality and relevance**.
 - **130 million girls** around the world are **not in school today**.
- A Population Commission was **established by the Economic and Social Council in 1946**. It was renamed by General assembly as Commission on Population and Development **in 1994**.
- Commission is **composed of 47 Member States elected** by Economic and Social Council **for a period of four year**.
 - **India is a member till 2025**.



 <p>International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India has been kept in Category 1 of IASA, prepared by Federal Aviation Administration of USA. ● IASA is compiled on the basis of the safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) (Chicago Convention). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It focuses on a country's ability to adhere to international aviation Safety Standards. ● ICAO includes several critical element for safety measures such as Primary aviation legislation, Specific operating regulations, State civil aviation system and safety oversight functions etc
 <p>Miniratna Category-I status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) gets 'Miniratna Category-I' status. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ SECI is a central government PSUs under administrative control of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. ● Miniratna-I status: CPSEs which have made profit in the last three years continuously, pre-tax profit is Rs.30 crores or more in at least one of the three years and have a positive net worth are eligible. ● Benefits: Greater autonomy in operations, increased financial powers for investments, improved corporate governance, competitive advantage etc.
 <p>Namami Gange Programme (NGP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NGP signed agreement With 49 universities to inspire youth towards water conservation & river rejuvenation. ● NGP, under Ministry of Jal shakti, is an integrated conservation mission to accomplish objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of Ganga. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It was launched in 2014 and now extended till 2026. ➢ There is no State-wise allocation under NGP. ● Interventions under NGP include: wastewater treatment, solid waste management, river front management, e-flow, afforestation, biodiversity conservation etc. ● Under NGP, Central Pollution Control Board is carrying out studies for water quality assessment of River Ganga.
 <p>Intergovernmental negotiating body (INB)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussions on the draft pandemic accord took place during the fifth meeting of the INB. ● INB was established by World Health Assembly (highest decision-making body of WHO) in 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It includes WHO's 194 countries. ● It was established to draft and negotiate a convention, agreement or other international instrument to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.
 <p>H3N8 bird flu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● China recorded the first human death caused by H3N8. ● H3N8 is a subtype of the influenza A virus. ● It primarily affects birds, particularly wild waterfowl and shorebirds. ● It is not commonly found in humans, but rare cases of human infections have been reported. ● There is no evidence of easy human-to-human transmission of H3N8 bird flu.
 <p>Intergovernmental negotiating body (INB)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A previously unknown isotope of uranium, with atomic number 92 and mass number 241, i.e., uranium-241 discovered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive element. ➢ Naturally, 99.27% of Uranium exists in form of U-238 while rest in other isotopes as: U-235 (0.72%), and U-234 (0.006%) etc. ● Theoretical calculations suggest it could have a half-life of 40 minutes. ● New isotope was found during a process called multinucleon transfer in which two isotopes exchanged protons and neutrons. ● Benefits: refines our understanding of nuclear physics, designing nuclear power plants and models of exploding stars.
 <p>Places in News</p>	<p>Uganda (Capital: Kampala)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minister of External Affairs visited Uganda. ● Political boundaries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Landlocked country, in east-central Africa (it is part of African Great Lakes region). ➢ It is bordered by South Sudan (north), Kenya (east), Tanzania and Rwanda (south), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (west). ● Geographical Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It is situated on a plateau. ➢ Major lake: Lake Victoria (second largest inland freshwater lake) ➢ Major River: Nile ➢ Highest Point: Margherita Peak 