

NEWS TODAY

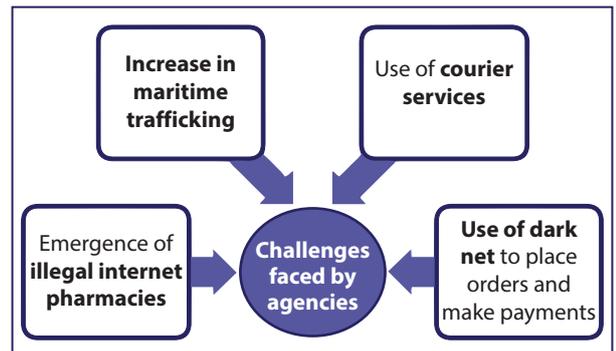
SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO) MEMBERS ADOPT INDIA'S PROPOSAL FOR DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE (DPI)

- Development highlights **India's growing leadership in digital realm** and its efforts to **bridge digital divide and promote more digitally connected region**.
 - Proposal includes platforms such as Aadhaar, United Payments Interface (UPI), and DigiLocker.
 - Earlier, **Union Budget 2023-24 announced** plans for **DPI in agriculture, education and finance**.
- DPI refers to a **set of shared digital building blocks**, such as applications, systems, and platforms, powered by **interoperable open standards or specifications**.
 - **India Stack** is the collective name of a set of **commonly used DPIs in India**. It consists of **three different layers**:
 - **Unique identity** (Aadhaar); **complimentary payments systems** (UPI, Aadhaar Payments Bridge, Aadhaar Enabled Payment Service); and **data exchange** (DigiLocker and Account Aggregator).
- **Benefits of DPI**
 - During pandemic **Aadhaar facilitated transfer of social safety net payments** directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts, helping to **reduce leakages, curb corruption, increase coverage** etc.
 - Use of **digital payments has expanded customer base** of smaller merchants, **easier access to financial services** for individuals and companies.
 - **Digitalization has also supported formalization of economy**, with around **8.8 million new taxpayers registered for GST** between July 2017 and March 2022.
 - **CoWIN platform** allowed India to scale its **vaccine delivery quickly**.

In a related news, India, at G7 health ministers meeting, **proposed convergence of all digital initiatives** through a **"global initiative on digital health"** housed at WHO.

2,500 KG DRUGS WORTH RS 12,000 CR SEIZED BY NARCOTIC CONTROL BUREAU (NCB) AND INDIAN NAVY

- Seizure was **part of Operation Samudragupt**, which targets maritime trafficking of **drugs originating from Afghanistan**.
 - It is one of the **biggest drug seizures of drug methamphetamine** (a potent central nervous system stimulant drug).
 - Methamphetamine was **sourced from Death Crescent** (or Golden crescent), comprising Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.
- **Drug Trafficking and its characteristic in India**
 - India has become a **transit hub as well as a destination** for drugs produced in **Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent**.
 - In recent years, **Drug trafficking through sea routes** estimated to account for **around 70% of total illegal drugs smuggled** into India.
 - **Major trafficking of heroin** takes place through **Indo-Pakistan border** – Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Steps taken by India**
 - **Signatory to various UN conventions**: Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971 etc.
 - **Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism** for effective drug law enforcement and better coordination among Central and State agencies.
 - **Enacting legislations and programs** such as Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, Nasha Mukta Bharat Annual Action Plan.
 - **'SIMS'** (Seizure Information Management System) portal for **digitisation of pan-India drug seizure data**.



MINISTRY OF POWER ASKED INDUSTRY LEADERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GREEN ENERGY OPEN ACCESS RULES (GOAR) 2022

- Government had notified **Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) Rules, 2022** for promoting generation, purchase and consumption of green energy.
 - Open Access (OA) means **non-discriminatory access to electricity transmission and distribution system** provided to eligible consumers, generators and state distribution companies (DISCOMs).
- **Key features of GOAR 2022**
 - Promoting **generation, purchase and consumption of green energy** including from **Waste-to-Energy plants**.
 - Green Open Access is **allowed to any consumer and limit of OA Transaction reduced from 1 MW to 100 kW** for green energy.
 - Consumers may **demand supply of Green Power from DISCOMs**.
 - **Commercial and Industrial consumers** are allowed to **purchase green power on a voluntary basis**.
 - There shall be a **uniform Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)**, on all **obligated entities** in area of a distribution licensees. **Green Hydrogen/Green Ammonia** included for fulfillment of its RPO.
- **Significance of rules:** To help **cut emissions by 45%** in line with India's updated NDC target for 2030, Help **bring down power cost** significantly, Ensuring **access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and green energy** etc.

ELECTION FREEBIES MAY HURT LONG-TERM GROWTH

- Election Freebies are **offerings/distribution of irrational freebies** from political parties as part of **electoral promises**.
 - For E.g., **Free electricity, Free Water, Free Rides, Loan Waivers, Allowances, laptops** etc.
- Some of these 'freebies' **help to meet basic needs of people and uplift their living standard**, helping to **temporarily address other issues** as well such as unemployment, rising cost of living, economic inequalities etc.
- **But it also goes against free and fair election in a democracy and gives rise to several issues such as:**
 - **Economic Issues:** Freebies are a **huge drain** on the state exchequer affecting the fiscal balance and macroeconomic stability.
 - **Political Issues:** Distorting the level playing field among political parties, favoring party in power over others.
 - **Socio- psychological issues** such as reduced efforts or laziness, threats to social cohesion by creating artificial divides between haves and have-nots of the associated freebies.
 - **Misuse of resources:** For ex: Free electricity, water etc. might reduce incentives for efficient use of such resources.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CURBING POLL FREEBIES

Strict enforcement of fiscal deficit limits, especially of states

Strengthening of financial regulatory institutions to check irrational expenditure

Growth and employment through long term capacity building

Election Commission could frame rules for poll promises by building a consensus among political parties

In a related development, **Group for Development of Electricity Market in India**, by Ministry of Power, **presented a report with suggestions including:**

- **Better grid integration** of renewable energy.
- Setting up a **mechanism to monitor whether adequacy** of supply.
- **Enhancing efficacy of Day-ahead Market**.
- **Regional level balancing framework** for deviation management.

GOVERNMENT NOTIFIES ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR HEALTH CARE TO DIFFERENTLY-ABLED

- **Aims of these standards are to:**
 - **Provide access** to persons with disabilities to **preventive, curative and rehabilitative medical services**.
 - **Enable health care providers meet statutory requirements** for accessible health care.
- **Factors that limit accessibility** to healthcare include **inaccessible physical structure, inaccessible physical and electronic information** and communication materials, **denial of treatment**, untrained and **inadequate staff** etc.
 - As per Census 2011, **about 2.21 percent** of population in India are **Persons with Disabilities**.
- **Initiative taken for Persons with Disabilities**
 - **India ratified UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability**, signatory of **Biwalk Millennium Framework** (2002), signatory to Declaration on Full Participation and Equality of People with Disability in Asia Pacific Region (2000).
 - **Legislations:** Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016
 - **Two new National Institutes:** Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre and National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation.
 - **Schemes/campaigns:** Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/ Fitting of Aids/ Appliances (ADIP), scholarship schemes, Accessible India Campaign etc.
 - **Published BIS standard IS 17802** on "Accessibility for ICT products and services-Requirements".

FARMERS FLAG CROP LOSS RISK IF 27 PESTICIDES BANNED

- Concerns were raised in **responses received by T.P. Rajendran Committee**, constituted by the Centre to **study all aspects** related to safety, toxicity, efficacy etc. **of the 27 pesticides**.
 - Government in 2020 proposed to ban these 27 pesticides** (includes insecticides, fungicides and herbicides) as they were perceived to be **hazardous to humans and animals**.
 - List of these 27 pesticides** was carved out of a **more extensive list of 66 pesticides** reviewed by Anupam Varma committee.
- However, **government has recently proposed to ban only three of the earlier listed 27 pesticides**.
- Concerns raised against ban of these 27 pesticides**
 - Quantity of crops saved** from pest damage because of the use of the pesticides **was overwhelming**.
 - Pesticides industry** including various MSMEs had made **substantive investments to manufacture these pesticides** and a **ban could lead to their closure**.
 - Adverse impact of ban on exports** as these 27 pesticides have **around 30-37% share in overall pesticide exports**.
 - Farmers are apprehensive** of the availability of **alternative pesticides**, which were found to be costlier than the banned ones.

ALSO IN NEWS

| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">CBI director appointed recently.<ul style="list-style-type: none">CBI director is selected by a high-level committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India, and Leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha.CBI director is elected for a fixed tenure of two years, which can be extended up to five years.About CBI<ul style="list-style-type: none">It is the main investigation agency of central government.Established in 1963 as a non-statutory body and governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946.Ministry: Under Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances.It is the nodal agency in India to coordinate investigations on behalf of INTERPOL. |
|  <p>Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit (C-PACE)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">C-PACE, by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), is established for providing hassle-free filing, timely and process-bound striking off companies from MCA Register.C-PACE will help to reduce the stress on the Registry along with keeping the registry clean besides availability of more meaningful data to the stakeholders.Centre is situated at the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) in Manesar, Haryana |
|  <p>Positive Indigenisation List</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Defence Ministry approved 4th Positive Indigenisation List for Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU).About Positive Indigenisation List<ul style="list-style-type: none">It lists items that armed forces will procure only from domestic manufacturers.These manufacturers could be from private sector or DPSUs.'Make and Innovation' procedure has been introduced in Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 to facilitate indigenous design and development of defense equipment through private participation. |
|  <p>Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">DGQI survey aims to measure the maturity level of administrative data systems and their use in decision-making of various Ministries and Departments on implementation of Central Sector Schemes (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conducted by Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), NITI Aayog.DGQI assessment encompasses six pivotal themes, including Data Generation, Data Quality, Use of Technology, Data Analysis etc. |

| | |
|--|---|
|  <p>Samudra Shakti-23</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is an India-Indonesia Bilateral exercise. |
|  <p>Palghat Gap</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often called as a significant discontinuity in Western Ghats, It is a geological shear zone (weak regions in earth's crust) that runs from east to west.<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ It is a corridor that connects Coimbatore with Palakkad.➤ Bharathappuzha river flows through it.• Origin of Palghat Gap stems from drift of continental shelves after Australia and Africa broke off from Gondwana landmass.• Western Ghats in north of Palghat Gap receive more rain annually, but south gets rain more evenly throughout the year.<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Vegetation in Palghat Gap is classified as dry evergreen forest. It also marks a divide in flora and fauna of region.➤ Species richness and phylogenetic diversity are abundant in Western Ghats south of Palghat Gap. |
|  <p>Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government is set to launch CEIR system across the country.• CEIR is the citizen centric portal of Department of Telecommunications for tracing the lost/stolen mobile devices.• This also facilitates for blocking of lost/stolen mobile devices in network of all telecom operators so that lost/stolen devices cannot be used in India.• To report a lost or stolen smartphone, one needs details like mobile number of SIM cards installed, IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) number, and a mobile purchase invoice. |
|  <p>Maha Upanishad</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design of India Pavilion at Cannes film festival is inspired by Saraswati Yantra, abstract representation of goddess Saraswati, drawn from the ancient text of Maha Upanishad.<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Goddess Saraswati is believed to be the keeper of knowledge, music, art, speech, wisdom and learning.• Maha Upanishad is a Sanskrit text and is one of the minor Upanishads.• Text exists in two versions, one attached to the Atharvaveda in some anthologies, and another attached to the Samaveda. |
|  <p>Places in news</p> | <p>Myanmar (Capital: Naypyidaw)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cyclone Mocha, classified as a 'Super Cyclone', made landfall along Myanmar coast.<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Super cyclone refers to tropical storm, where wind speeds ≥ 222 kmph.• Political Boundaries<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Bordered by Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, Thailand, and Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal (south and southwest).• Geographical Features<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Highest Peak: Mount Hkakabo➤ Major Rivers: Irrawaddy, Salween, Sittang➤ Major Mountains: Rakhine, Bago➤ Major Lakes: Indawgyi, Inle  |
|  <p>Personality in News</p> | <p>Akkamma Cherian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• She was born in 1909 in Travancore in Kerala.• In 1938, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, she gave up her teaching job to join the Travancore State Congress and fight for India's independence.• She led a protest march in 1938, against then King and Dewan of erstwhile Travancore to pressure rulers to release jailed leaders and establish a responsible government in Travancore.• Mahatma Gandhi dubbed her "Jhansi Ki Rani (Queen) of Travancore".• She was given a task to organize the 'Desa Sevika Sangha' (women's volunteer corps).• After independence, she was elected to the Travancore Legislative Assembly in 1947.• She wrote her own biography named Jeevitham: Oru Samaram (Life: A Struggle).• Ethical Values: Courage, Dedication, Selflessness etc. |