

# NEWS TODAY

## NASA'S PERSEVERANCE ROVER FINDS DIVERSE ORGANIC MATTER ON MARS

- **Scanning Habitable Environments with Raman and Luminescence for Organics and Chemicals (SHERLOC) instrument** on rover was **used to detect organic molecules** in **Jezero Crater**.
  - SHERLOC, operates day or night, uses **ultraviolet laser light to search for organics and minerals**.
    - **SHERLOC uses Raman spectroscopy**. It works by **shining light on molecules** and measuring the scattered light at different frequencies. It helps in determining which compounds exist in a sample.
  - Earlier, organic chemicals were discovered in **meteorites sent from Mars and Gale Crater**.
  - **Jezero crater** is an ancient lake basin site which has potential for discovering evidence of past life in Mars.
- **Significance of Discovery:** Understanding **carbon cycle on Mars** and potential signs of life on Mars.
  - Organic molecules are key blocks of life on Earth (made primarily of carbon, hydrogen and other elements like oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulphur).
- So far, **only Mars Phoenix lander and Curiosity rover** have been able to **detect organic carbon** using methods like evolved gas analysis and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry.
- **Other Mars Missions:** Mangalyaan (India); Hope (UAE); Tianwen-1 (China); Mars Express (ESA); Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, Mars Odyssey (NASA).

## UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) RELEASES REPORT TITLED 'A WORLD OF DEBT'

- **Public debt** is total amount, including total liabilities, borrowed by government to meet its development budget.
- **Key findings**
  - **Global public debt (USD 92 trillion in 2022)** increased by more than **5 fold** since 2000.
  - **Debt increased faster in developing countries** compared to developed countries over last decade.
    - Almost 30% of global public debt is owed by developing countries (India's public debt-2815 USD billion).
  - **Half of developing countries** devote more than 1.5% of its GDP and 6.9% of its government revenues for interest payments than on education or health.
  - Developing countries rely **more on private creditors** now, making credit **more expensive** and debt restructuring **more complex**.
- **Factors behind rise in public debt**
  - **Financing cascading crises on development** due to COVID-19 pandemic, cost-of-living crisis, and climate change etc.
  - **Unequal international financial architecture** makes developing countries' access to financing inadequate and expensive, leading to slow economic growth.
- **Roadmap to address global debt burden**
  - Tackling **high cost of debt** and rising risks of debt distress.
  - Provide **greater liquidity** in times of crisis expanding contingency finance.
  - Make the system more **inclusive**.



**United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**



**Genesis:** UNCTAD is a **permanent intergovernmental body established by the UN General Assembly** in 1964.

**Members:** It has **195 member states** (including India) and it is part of UN Sustainable Development Group.

**Other reports released:** Trade and Development Report, Digital Economy Report, Technology, and Innovation Report etc.



## 25 YEARS OF INDIA-FRANCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

### • Key highlights of India- France Relations

- **Defence & security cooperation:** Acquisition of **26 Rafale-Marine fighter jets** and **3 Scorpene submarines under Project-75** approved by Ministry of Defence.
  - **Both sides conducted regular defence exercises** viz. Exercise Shakti (Army); Varuna (Navy) and Garuda (Air Force).
- **International cooperation:** France **supports India's claim for permanent membership of United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** and UN reforms.
  - Helped India's accession to the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and Australia Group (AG)**.
- **Diaspora:** Overseas Citizen of India cards are now being **issued in Reunion Island (located in Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar)**.
- **Energy: International Solar Alliance (ISA)** is joint initiative of both countries, launched during COP21 to promote solar energy.
- **Space:** Both sides issued **Joint Vision for Space Cooperation** in 2018.
- **Civil Nuclear cooperation:** Both signed a **civil nuclear agreement** in 2008. Also, France is cooperating in training project for India's Gaganyaan (human space flight programme).
- **Geo-Strategic:** Both are committed to ensuring a **free and rule-based Indo-Pacific Region**.

## ATAL VAYO ABHYUDAY YOJANA (AVYAY): EMPOWERING THE ELDERLY FOR A DIGNIFIED LIFE

- **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** had launched **umbrella scheme AVYAY (formerly known as National Action Plan for Senior Citizens)** in 2021.
  - Vision: **Create a society where senior citizens live a healthy, dignified, and self-reliant life** along with strong social and inter-generational bonding.
- **AVYAY components**
  - **Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSc)** provides **financial assistance to eligible organizations** for running and maintenance of Senior Citizen Homes/ Continuous Care Homes to **improve the quality of life of senior citizens**.
    - Nearly 1.5 lakh beneficiaries are staying in Senior Citizen homes.
  - **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana provides aids and assistive living devices to senior citizens** belonging to BPL category or those senior citizens who earn less than Rs. 15000 per month.
- **Other components**
  - **Livelihood and Skilling Initiatives for Senior Citizens** by providing them opportunities to enhance their earning and sense of self-respect. It has two programmes
    - SACRED portal and Action Groups Aimed at Social Reconstruction (AGRASR Groups).
  - **Channelize CSR funds** in an appropriate manner for elderly care projects.
  - **National Helpline for Senior Citizen** to address grievance of elders.

## INDIA'S UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE (UPI) TO BE USED IN FRANCE SOON

- India and France agreed to use UPI mechanism, marking **expansion of UPI's international reach**.
  - This will allow Indian tourists to make **rupee payments using UPI while in France**.
- UPI is a **real-time payment system**, launched in 2016 by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). It **links multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application**.
  - NPCI is an **initiative of RBI and Indian Banks Association under Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**. It is umbrella organization for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.
- **Significance of international use of UPI**
  - Enables **faster and cheaper** remittance services.
  - Uses virtual ID for a transaction, making it **more secure as bank account details are not shared**.
  - Directly transfer funds to beneficiary, bypassing intermediaries.
- **Steps taken for promoting international use of UPI**
  - NPCI has allowed **NRIs in 10 countries** including **Singapore, Australia, Canada, Oman, Qatar etc.** to use **UPI platform from their international mobile numbers**.
  - **RBI announced extension of UPI to allow visitors from G20 countries** to use it to **make merchant payments when they are in India**.

# OVER HALF OF WORLD'S CHILD TRAFFICKING VICTIMS TRAFFICKED WITHIN OWN COUNTRY: REPORT

- Report, titled “From Evidence to Action: Twenty Years of IOM Child Trafficking Data to Inform Policy and Programming”, was prepared by **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**.



**International Organization for Migration (IOM)**



**About:** IOM, established in 1951, is **leading intergovernmental organization** in field of migration.

- Guided by **principles enshrined in United Nations Charter** including upholding human rights for all.



**Members:** It has **175 member states including India**.

- It aims to provide a **comprehensive understanding of child trafficking on a global scale**.

## • Key highlights

- **No age range is immune** to child trafficking. Child victims ranged from 0 to 17 years old.
- Children **aged 13-17 formed the largest group** (46.6%) of child victims.
- 43.4% and 20.8% of child victims were trafficked for **forced labour and sexual exploitation** respectively.
- Some Children are more vulnerable than others based on different risk factors such as
  - **Individual factors** (gender, race etc.); **Household and family factors** (dysfunctional family environment etc.); **Community factors** (low socioeconomic status etc.); **Structural factors** (corruption etc.).
- Child trafficking manifests in form of domestic labour, forced child labour across industries, and illegal activities such as begging, organ trade and commercial sex purposes.
- **Recommendations**
  - **Integrating counter-trafficking** into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.
  - **Empowering communities** to develop community-based mitigation strategies aimed at reducing human trafficking.

## ALSO IN NEWS



### Right to Silence

- Supreme Court said that all accused have a right to silence and investigators cannot force them to speak up or admit guilt.
- **Right to silence emanates from Article 20(3)**, which states that no one can be compelled to be a witness against himself.
  - Protection limited only to **criminal proceedings**.
  - Right is not available to a person who is being interrogated under **Customs Act, 1962, or Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999**, since person is not “accused of an offence” and isn’t entitled to a lawyer.
  - In **Nandini Satpathy v. P.L. Dani case**, SC stated that compelling a person to answer a question within **limits of the police station** may result in violation of Article 20(3).



### National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL)

- Government has renewed its federal guarantee to NARCL, making it easier for entity to acquire bad loans from lenders.
- NARCL has been **incorporated under Companies Act** and registered with RBI as an Asset Reconstruction Company under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.
  - NARCL has been **set up by banks to aggregate and consolidate stressed assets** for their subsequent resolution.
  - **Public Sector Banks maintains 51% ownership in NARCL**.



### Kaas Plateau

- New study of sediments from a seasonal lake in Kaas Plateau has indicated a major shift in Indian Summer Monsoons.
- Kaas plateau or pathar, also known as **valley of flower**, is located in **Satara District, Maharashtra**. It falls in biosphere of **Western Ghats**.
  - Its name is derived from Kaasa tree, botanically known as *Elaeocarpus glandulosus* (rudraksha family).
  - It is made of **igneous rocks**.
- This plateau is **inscribed in UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site lists under the name of Western Ghats**.

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|  <p><b>Operation Southern Readiness - 2023</b></p>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is an annual <b>multinational exercise</b> (India, USA, Italy, UK, Seychelles) conducted by Combined Maritime Forces.</li> </ul>   |
|  <p><b>Siachen glacier</b></p>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First Geological Survey of India expedition to the Siachen glacier was done in 1958.</li> <li>Siachen glacier is located in the <b>eastern Karakoram Range in Himalayas</b>.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is <b>2<sup>nd</sup> longest nonpolar glacier</b> in world, after <b>Fedchenko Glacier</b> in Tajikistan.</li> <li><b>Nubra Valley</b> acts as the gateway to strategically important <b>Siachen Glacier and Karakoram Pass</b>.</li> <li>Siachen glacier is the <b>world's highest battlefield</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
|  <p><b>Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS)</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tropical waters have turned green in colour due to climate change, observation is based on analysis of data generated from the MODIS aboard Aqua satellite.</li> <li>MODIS is an instrument that <b>collects remotely sensed data used by scientists for monitoring, modelling, and assessing the effects of natural processes</b> and human actions on the Earth's surface.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carried on two NASA Earth Observing System (EOS) satellites, MODIS acquires <b>morning (EOS-Terra) and afternoon (EOS-Aqua)</b> views almost daily.</li> <li>MODIS takes measurements in <b>seven visible wavelengths</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
|  <p><b>Ambergris (Floating gold)</b></p>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambergris is a waxy material secreted by sperm whales when they <b>swallow indigestible material such as squid beaks</b>.</li> <li><b>Uses:</b> Perfumes, records of being used to <b>flavour food, alcoholic beverages and tobacco</b> in the past.</li> <li><b>Protection:</b> Ban on the <b>possession and trade</b> of ambergris in countries like the <b>USA, Australia and India</b>.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sperm whales are a <b>protected species</b> under <b>Schedule 2 of Wildlife Protection Act (WPA)</b>.</li> <li>Possession or trade of any of its by-products, including Ambergris and its byproducts, is <b>illegal under provisions of WPA, 1972</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                      |
|  <p><b>Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy (DMD)</b></p>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researchers from India and Japan have developed a disease-modifying treatment for DMD.</li> <li>DMS is a <b>rare genetic disease</b> characterized by <b>progressive muscle degeneration and weakness</b> due to alterations of a protein called <b>dystrophin</b>.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Muscle weakness</b> is the <b>principal symptom</b> of DMD.</li> <li>It can begin as early as age 2 or 3, primarily affects boys, but in rare cases it can affect girls.</li> <li>Women are usually carriers of the genetic trait.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
|  <p><b>Stop TB Partnership</b></p>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Johnson &amp; Johnson has granted Stop TB Partnership's Global Drug Facility's licenses</b> to procure and supply generic versions of <b>TB drug bedaquiline</b> for low-and middle-income countries.</li> <li><b>Stop TB Partnership</b>, founded in 2001, is a <b>UN hosted organization</b> to serve the needs and amplify the voices of people, communities, and countries <b>affected by TB</b>.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It brings together expertise from a broad spectrum of <b>country, regional, and global partners</b> in shared mission to end TB by 2030.</li> <li>Hosted and administered by <b>United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Geneva, Switzerland</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

**Errata:** In News Today dated 15th June, 2023, it was incorrectly mentioned that "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022 report" was released by United Nations Human Rights Council. **Report was released by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).**