

NEWS TODAY

U.S.-INDIA STRATEGIC CLEAN ENERGY PARTNERSHIP (SCEP) MINISTERIAL MEETING HELD IN NEW DELHI

- SCEP was established as **one of the two track engagements launched under the US-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership.**

- 2030 agenda was announced in 2021 to **accelerate progress toward shared climate and clean energy goals.**

- Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue is its 2nd track of engagement.

- SCEP was earlier established as Strategic Energy Partnership in 2018.

- **Key highlights of joint statement released by US and India**

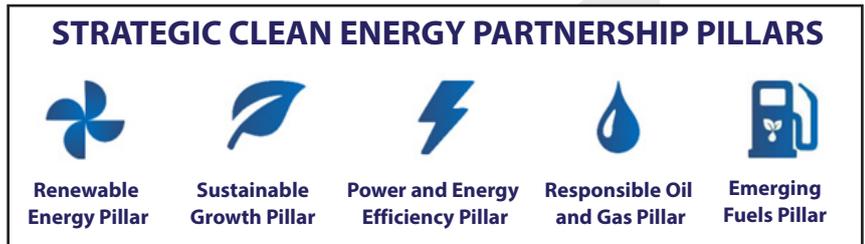
- **U.S.-India New and Emerging Renewable Energy Technologies Action Platform (RETAP)** launched to accelerate development of key technologies to advance common ambitious clean energy goals.

- Establishment of **public-private Energy Storage Task Force** and related efforts to **support large-scale** integration of **renewable energy needed** to support clean energy transition.

- Launched **South Asia Group for Energy (SAGE)** to deepen the engagement between Indian agencies and U.S. national laboratories.

- Both sides agreed to work toward **developing net zero villages in India** to support clean energy transition.

- **Addition of Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage** as a work stream under Emerging Fuels and Technology Pillar.



“THE PATHS TO EQUAL: TWIN INDICES ON WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY” REPORT RELEASED

- It is **first-of-its-kind** report that presents a **comprehensive analysis of progress made in human development of women and girls** was jointly published by **UN Women and UN Development Programme (UNDP).**

- Both UN bodies analysed data from 114 countries based on **twin indices of**

- **Women’s Empowerment Index (WEI)** measures women’s power and freedoms to make choices.

- **Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)** assesses gender disparities in key dimensions of human development.

- Both indices have **four common dimensions** i.e., Life and Good Health; Education, Skill building and Knowledge; Labour and Financial inclusion; Participation in decision making.

- However, **WEI also includes Freedom from violence** against women and girls **as a standalone dimension.**

- **Key findings**

- **Less than 1% of women** across the world **live in countries** that have **managed to achieve both high women empowerment and gender parity.**

- **No country has achieved high women’s empowerment** while maintaining a large gender gap.

- **In India, women empowerment and gender parity were determined to be ‘low’** despite being assessed in ‘medium’ category in terms of human development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Focus on universal access** to sexual and reproductive health.
- **Address gaps** in skills and quality of education.
- **Implement comprehensive measures** focused on eliminating discriminatory laws and policies.

CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION BEGINS RECOVERY POST COVID-19: WHO

- As per data published by World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
 - Coverage rate for DPT3 (third dose of Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus vaccines) in India rose to an all-time high of 93% in 2022.
 - DTP3 vaccine coverage in 57 lower-income countries supported by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance increased to 81% in 2022 from 78% in 2021.
 - 4 million more children received global immunisation services in 2022 than in 2021.
- Vaccine against DTP is used as the global marker for immunization coverage.
 - Diphtheria: Caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* bacteria, leads to difficulty breathing, heart rhythm problems etc.
 - Pertussis (Whooping cough): Caused by *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria, leads to respiratory illness. It is only found in humans.
 - Tetanus (Lockjaw): Caused by *Clostridium tetani* bacteria (enter the body through cuts or wounds), leads muscle contractions.
- Child Immunization Initiatives
 - Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030) envisions a world where everyone, everywhere, at every age, fully benefits from vaccines.
 - The Big Catch-up by WHO to restore vaccination levels among children to at least pre-pandemic levels.
 - Mission Indradhanush to cover low immunization coverage, high-risk and hard-to-reach areas.

BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BIMSTEC) FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEET CONCLUDED IN THAILAND

- India has participated in first-ever Foreign Ministers' meeting of BIMSTEC in Bangkok, Thailand.
- BIMSTEC (Secretariat: Dhaka, Bangladesh) is a regional organisation that was established in 1997, with the signing of Bangkok Declaration.
 - Initially, it was established as BIST-EC with four countries: Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
 - It was named BIMSTEC in 2004 after Myanmar (1997), Nepal (2004) and Bhutan (2004) joined it.
 - Founding principles of BIMSTEC are based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, no-interference in internal affairs, peaceful co-existence, and mutual benefit.
- Significance of BIMSTEC for India
 - It acts as a connecting link for achieving India's foreign policies namely, Neighbourhood first policy and Act East policy.
 - Landlocked north east region can be developed better with cooperation from member countries of forum like Bangladesh and Myanmar.
 - Bay of Bengal region can be made a secure piracy free zone, with active participation from members of forum.
 - Allow India to push a constructive agenda to counter Chinese investments in region.
- Challenges associated with BIMSTEC: Lack of internal economic integration, Poor infrastructure hampers trade.

Importance of BIMSTEC

Accounts for 22% of the world's population

Combined GDP of \$2.7 trillion

One-fourth of the world's traded goods cross the Bay every year

Key focus areas-trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PRESENTS BHOOMI SAMMAN AWARD 2023

- Nine state secretaries have received Bhoomi Samman awards for their achievements in implementation of Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP).
- DILRMP (erstwhile National Land Record Modernization Programme) is a Central Sector Scheme since 2016.
 - Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development.
 - Objective: To develop a modern, comprehensive and transparent land record management system.
 - DILRMP has been extended for a period of five years i.e., 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- Significance of modernization of land records
 - Reduce interface between citizen and Government functionaries and will increase transparency.
 - Clear land titles facilitate the supply of capital and credit for agriculture.
 - Reduce the huge pendency of court cases involving land dispute.
 - Useful to central and state government in bringing out land reforms.
- Other initiative taken for improving land governance
 - Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) or Bhu-Aadhaar provides a 14-digit alpha-numeric unique ID generated using longitude and latitude coordinates to a land parcel.
 - SVAMITVA scheme provides a 'Record of Rights' to village household owners with issuance of legal ownership cards.

FUSION OF ROCK ART AT RUDRAGIRI HILLOCK FOUND ANDHRA PRADESH

- Rudragiri hillock, located in **Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh**, have a combination of **prehistoric rock paintings from Mesolithic period** (Middle Stone Age) and **artwork from Kakatiya dynasty**.
 - Period between Paleolithic Age (Old Stone Age) and Neolithic Age (New Stone Age) is known as Mesolithic Period (**12,000 years ago till about 10,000 years ago**).
- **Key findings**
 - Paintings **depict captivating scenes from epic Ramayana**.
 - **Ramayana fresco from Kakatiya-era drawn in a natural rock shelter** on Rudragiri hillock **depicts Vanara brothers Vali and Sugriva** engaged in battle; Hanuman lifting the Sanjeevani hill and **Hanuman** in unique 'Anjali' posture (folding hands in a divine offering).
- **Mesolithic Paintings**
 - Largest number of paintings belongs to Mesolithic paintings.
 - Mesolithic paintings normally depict **scenes from daily walks of life like hunting, gathering, fishing** etc.
 - **Human figures are often depicted** with distinct body proportions, and animals are rendered with recognizable features than palaeolithic art.
 - They **use different colours** like Red, yellow, black, and white obtained from natural sources. **Example, Bhimbetka cave paintings etc.**

ALSO IN NEWS



Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

- PAC of State legislature has accused the government for irregularities in handling COVID-19 pandemic.
- PAC is the **oldest Parliamentary Committee and was first constituted in 1921** in wake of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.
 - It is **one of the three Financial Parliamentary committees**, the other two are Estimates Committee and Committee on Public Undertakings.
 - It consists of **22 Members, 15 Members from Lok Sabha and 7 Members from Rajya Sabha**.
 - It is **constituted by Parliament each year for scrutinizing Appropriation Accounts of Government and reports of CAG of India thereon**.



Section 27 A of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act

- **Section 27A of NDPS Act 1985** prescribes the punishment for financing illicit traffic and harboring offenders.
- **NDPS Act was passed to prohibit** manufacture, cultivation, possession, sale, purchase, transport, storage, or consumption of drugs without permission from appropriate authorities.
- All the offenses under NDPS Act **are cognizable and non-bailable**.



Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs)

- Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) will allow pension funds to invest in SGrBs.
- SGrBs were announced in the **Union Budget 2022-23 and framework for SGrBs was issued by Ministry of Finance in 2022**.
 - Green bonds are **bonds issued by any sovereign entity, inter-governmental groups or alliances and corporates** with the aim that the **proceeds of the bonds are utilised for projects classified as environmentally sustainable**.
 - **Investors** in these bonds **do not bear project related risks**.



Universal Postal Union (UPU)

- UPU has agreed to evaluate **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** for cross border remittances using global postal network.
- UPU (**HQ: Bern, Switzerland**) was established in **1874**. UPU is a **specialized agency** of UN with **192 member countries including India**.
 - **Any non-member country of United Nations may become a UPU member** provided that its request is approved by at least two-thirds of the member countries of the UPU.
 - UPU aim is **to establish international regulations for postal services and to promote cooperation in postal matters**.



Henley Passport Index

- Index lists the world's passports according to the **number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa**.
 - It is **released by Henley & Partners**, a global leader in residence and citizenship planning.
- **Key findings**
 - **Singapore has replaced Japan for having the world's most powerful passport**, allowing visa-free entry to 192 global destinations.
 - **India ranked at 80th**, allowing visa-free travel to 57 destinations.
 - **Indian passport holders need a visa to enter 177 destinations across the world.**



Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary** is geographically located on **south bank of Brahmaputra in Sonitpur district of Assam**.
 - It is a **part of Laokhowa wildlife sanctuary** (centrally located Protected Area of Assam) and is a notified **buffer of the Kazairanga Tiger reserve**.
 - It comprises of a **mosaic of wet alluvial grassland, riparian and semi-evergreen forests** dotted by wetland and river systems.
 - **Fauna:** Great Indian one-horned rhinoceros, Tiger, Leopard, Bengal Florican, Black-necked Stork, Whistling Duck etc.



Personality in news

Mangal Pandey (1827- 1857)

- Often known as **First freedom fighter of India**, he was born in a town near Faizabad in what is now eastern Uttar Pradesh state in northern India.
- He was made a soldier (sepoy) in **6th Company** of the **34th Bengal Native Infantry in 1849**.
- He revolted against **East India Company** in 1857 by **attacking British officers at military garrison** in Barrackpore.
- The revolt was considered as **First War of Independence in India** against Britishers.
- **Values:** Leadership, Nationalist, Courage.

Democratic Republic of Congo (Capital: Kinshasa)

- DR Congo has signed \$1.9 billion mining deal with UAE.
- **Political Boundaries**
 - Located in **central Africa**.
 - Bounded by **Central African Republic and South Sudan** (north); **Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania** (east); **Zambia** (southeast); and **Angola** (southwest).
- **Geographical features**
 - **Major River:** Congo River (formerly Zaire River).
 - **Highest mountain:** Mount Stanley.
 - **Resources:** Diamonds, cobalt, and copper.



Places in news

East Sea (Sea of Japan)

- China and Russia will start joint **air and sea drill (Northern/Interaction-2023)** in Sea of Japan i.e., **East Sea**.
- **Political Boundaries**
 - Marginal **sea of western Pacific Ocean**.
 - **Bounded by Japan and Sakhalin Island** (east) and Russia and Korea on Asian mainland (west).
- **Geographical features**
 - **Major deep-water basins:** Japan Basin, Yamato Basin, and Tsushima Basin.
 - **Islands:** Ulleungdo, Rebun, Rishiri, Okushiri, Sado, Moneron, Ōshima.

