

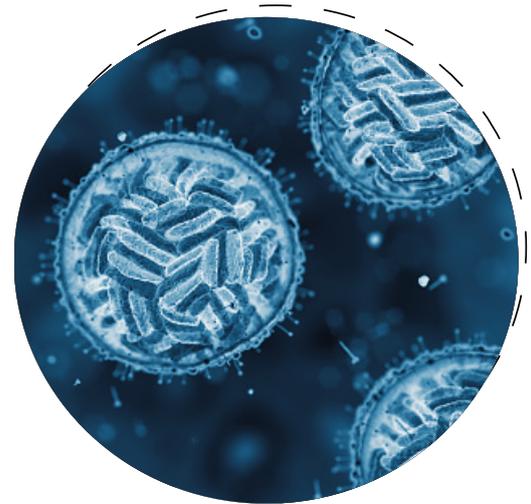
## Lok Sabha passes Central Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) (CGST) Bill, 2023

- It amends **CGST Act, 2017** to change **qualification for members of GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)** and raise **age limit of President and Members of GSTAT**.
- CGST Act 2017 provides for **levy and collection of CGST on intra-state supply of goods and services**.
  - ⊕ Act also **allows central government to set up GSTAT** on recommendation of GST Council.
- GSTAT is the **second appellate authority within GST framework** for hearing appeals against orders passed by Appellate Authority under CGST Act, 2017 and State GST Acts.
  - ⊕ **GSTAT composition: President, a judicial member, and two technical members.**
    - ◆ Persons eligible to be appointed as judicial member are a **judge of High Court, or a district judge or additional district judge having served for at least 10 years.**
- **Key changes introduced by Bill**
  - ⊕ **Change in qualification for members of GSTAT:** Allows **advocates with at least 10 years of experience** to be appointed as **judicial member**. They must have **substantial experience in matters relating to indirect taxation.**
    - ◆ **Minimum age** to be appointed as a **member or president of GSTAT** will be **50 years.**
  - ⊕ **Increases age limit for president of GSTAT from 67 to 70 years, and for members from 65 to 67 years.**



## World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognizes Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)

- Following a recommendation of Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for NTD, WHO recognise Noma as an NTD.
  - ⊕ This recognition aims to **amplify global awareness, catalyse research, stimulate funding, and boost efforts to control Noma** through multi-sectoral and multi-pronged approaches.
- Noma (cancrum oris) is a severe **gangrenous disease of mouth and face**.
  - ⊕ It mainly **affects children aged 2-6 years old suffering from malnutrition, living in extreme poverty with poor oral health.**
  - ⊕ **Africa is most affected continent.**
- NTDs are a **diverse group of 20 conditions** that are mainly **prevalent in tropical areas**, where they affect more than **1 billion people who live in impoverished communities**.
  - ⊕ **Caused by a variety of pathogens** including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins.
  - ⊕ **NTDs include:** Dengue and chikungunya; Rabies, leishmaniasis; leprosy; lymphatic filariasis etc.
  - ⊕ **India has successfully eliminated certain NTDs** like guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws.
- **Initiatives taken by India to tackle NTD's**
  - ⊕ **Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic filariasis, 2018.**
  - ⊕ **National Kala-Azar (Visceral leishmaniasis) Elimination Programme.**
  - ⊕ **National Vector Borne Disease (like Dengue) Control Programme.**



### Global Initiatives to tackle NTDs

- **London Declaration** on NTDs.
- **Kigali declaration** on NTDs adopts targets to **eradicate or control NTDs by 2030.**

## Kunming - Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) Completes one year

- KMGBF was adopted at the **Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) 15th Conference of Parties (CoP15)**.
  - ⊖ It replaced **Aichi Biodiversity Targets** (time period 2011-2020).
  - ⊖ It is **legally non-binding** in nature.
- **Key highlights of KMGBF**
  - ⊖ **Four overarching goals for 2050:**
    - ◆ **Halt human-induced species extinction**
    - ◆ **Sustainable use of biodiversity**
    - ◆ **Equitable sharing of benefits**
    - ◆ **Closing the biodiversity finance gap** of \$700 billion per year.
  - ⊖ **It has set 23 Global Targets for 2030**, it includes-
    - ◆ **30 % conservation of land, sea, and inland waters,**
    - ◆ **30 % restoration of degraded ecosystems,**
    - ◆ **Integration of biodiversity into policies,**
    - ◆ **Halving the introduction of invasive species,** etc.
  - ⊖ **Funding: Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Fund, a Special Trust Fund by Global Environment Facility (GEF).**
    - ◆ **GEF** was established at Rio Earth Summit (1992) and World Bank serves as the GEF Trustee.
  - ⊖ **Monitoring and Reporting:** Countries to monitor and report progress every 5 years or less on a set of indicators.
- **Progress made by KMGBF:** It led to adoption of the **Treaty on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)**.

### About CBD

- ⊖ It is an **international legal instrument (ratified by 196 nations, including India)**.
- ⊖ Adopted in 1992 at **Rio Earth Summit** (enforced in 1993).
- ⊖ **Key objective-** Conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity etc.
- ⊖ **Main Protocols:**
  - ◆ **Nagoya Protocol** on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and **Equitable** Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.
  - ◆ **Cartagena Protocol** on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

## A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the global economy report released by NITI Aayog

- Report emphasized on '**Reshaping Global Finance Architecture for Sustainable Growth**'.
- **Need of Reshaping Global Finance Architecture:**
  - ⊖ **Fragmented global financial architecture:** Current global system is contributing to **disparities in economic recovery** between developed and developing regions.
    - ◆ Global debt architecture is informal and inefficient, with many low-income countries in or nearing a debt crisis.
  - ⊖ **Finance Requirement:** There is need of USD 3 trillion over the next decade to **finance green growth**.
    - ◆ Poor mobilisation of private resources.
- **Recommendations:**
  - ⊖ **Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs):** Reforming their structure to improve **capital mobilisation, better project implementation** and making **sustainable infrastructure** an asset class.
  - ⊖ **Establishing multilateral creditor club:** For managing **debt sustainably** in a transparent manner.
  - ⊖ **Flexibility Missions:** Countries in Global South need them as they will provide them with the means to adapt and innovate in response to impacts of climate change.
  - ⊖ **Expand bilateral swap lines** and IMF contingency lines to make capital flows safer.
    - ◆ Also, making Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation rule-based and less discretionary.
  - ⊖ **Other long-term solutions:** Creating resilience funds, promoting circular economies, joint technological development, enhancing green energy security and transition partnerships.



## West Bengal tops acid attack cases for third year in a row: Crime in India Report 2022

- Report was released by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**.
- Most of the victims are girls, many below the age of 18, who have rejected marriage proposals (226th report of **Law Commission of India**).
- **Initiatives Taken to Prevent Acid Attacks:**
  - ⊖ **Laws:** Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 inserted **section 326A** (Voluntarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid, etc.) and **326B (Attempt to acid attack)** in **Indian Penal Code**.
  - ⊖ **Regulation of Acid sale: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** issued **directions** to all states on how to regulate acid sales.
    - ◆ For instance, maintaining logbook (without it, over-the-counter sale is not allowed).
    - ◆ These direction are issued under **Model Poisons Possession and Sale Rules, 2013** under the **Poisons Act, 1919**.
  - ⊖ **Compensation and Rehabilitation:** Payable by the State Government under section 357A and free treatment in hospitals.
- **Challenges in Controlling Attacks despite Stringent Laws:**
  - ⊖ **Easy Availability:** Sale is poorly regulated by the states.
  - ⊖ **Low Conviction rate:** 35.9% including other incidents of hurts.
  - ⊖ **Non-uniformity of laws:** It varies from one States/UT's to other.

## Government of India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$250 million loan for Industrial Corridor Development in India

- \$250 million policy-based loan will **support industrial corridor development (Subprogramme 2)** to-
  - ⊖ **Develop alternative financing solutions**, such as green finance for industrial cluster development;
  - ⊖ **Improve industrial workplace safety** and integrate environment and climate change practices.
- This loan builds on **Subprogramme 1 loan of \$250 million approved by ADB in October 2021** to strengthen policy frameworks for **National Industrial Corridor Programme (NICP)**.
  - ⊖ ADB (HQ: Manila, Philippines) is a **multilateral financial institution** that is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and Pacific.
- **Industrial corridors** offer effective **integration between industry and infrastructure**, leading to overall economic and social development.
- **Significance of Industrial Corridors**
  - ⊖ Position India as a **strong player in Global Value Chain** and **enhance India's competitiveness in manufacturing** by creation of quality infrastructure.
  - ⊖ Create **better jobs** and contribute to **alleviation of poverty in corridor states**.
- NICP is aimed to **development of futuristic industrial cities in India** which can **compete with best manufacturing and investment destinations in world**.
  - ⊖ Government has approved **development of 11 Industrial Corridors with 32 Projects** in four phases as part of NICP.
  - ⊖ These Corridors will be **implemented through National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust**.

## Also in News



### Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)

- RBI tightens norms to prevent evergreening of loans via investments in AIFs.
- AIFs means any **fund established or incorporated in India** which is a **privately pooled investment vehicle** which **collects funds from sophisticated investors**, whether Indian or foreign, for investing.
- **Three Categories of AIFs**
  - ⊖ **Category I: Investment in start-up, social ventures, small & medium enterprises (SME) etc.** E.g. Venture capital funds, SME Funds etc.
  - ⊖ **Category II: Investment in equity and debt securities.** E.g. Real estate funds, Private equity funds etc.
  - ⊖ **Category III: Investment aimed at short-term returns** achieved by employing complex trading strategies. E.g. Hedge funds, Private Investment in Public Equity (PIPE) Fund etc.



### Tropospheric Emissions Monitoring of Pollution (TEMPO) Satellite

- NASA's TEMPO satellite monitors air pollution hourly over North America.
- TEMPO is **NASA's first Earth-observation satellite in geostationary orbit**.
  - ⊖ It allows scientists to **monitor air pollutants and their emission sources from space** more comprehensively than ever before.
  - ⊖ Among the pollutants tracked by TEMPO will be **nitrogen dioxide, formaldehyde, sulfur dioxide and ozone**.
  - ⊖ TEMPO's **monitoring range extends from Canada's oil sands to Yucatán Peninsula** and across **Atlantic to Pacific Ocean**.
  - ⊖ Data gathered by TEMPO will be **shared with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Environmental Protection Agency** to enhance air quality forecasting.



### Monkeypox (Mpox)

- WHO warned an epidemic of Mpox in Democratic Republic of Congo could spread internationally.
- Mpox is a **viral zoonotic illness caused by monkeypox virus**, a species of **genus Orthopoxvirus**.
  - ⊖ It was **first discovered in 1958** when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research.
  - ⊖ Primarily occurs in **tropical rainforest areas of Central and West Africa**.
  - ⊖ **Transmitted to humans through physical contact with someone who is infectious**, with **contaminated materials**, or with **infected animals**.
  - ⊖ **Common symptoms:** Skin rash or mucosal lesions, fever, headache, muscle aches, and swollen lymph nodes.



### Gelephu Smartcity Project

- **Bhutan** is planning to build an **international city**- Gelephu Special Administrative Region- that will connect its **border with Assam**.
  - ⊖ It is being projected as an **"economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India's north-eastern States"**.
- **Government of India** also agreed to build **first India-Bhutan railway line to Gelephu**, which would also **connect with roadways and border trading and crossing points** into Assam and West Bengal.
  - ⊖ Over time, it would **provide Bhutan access to Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Singapore**.



### Terms of Trade (ToT)

- ToT for Indian agriculture have recorded significant improvement in the last decade and a half.
- **About ToT:**
  - ⊖ ToT for farmers is the **ratio between Indices of Prices Received (IPR) and Indices of Prices Paid (IPP)**.
  - ⊖ A **ratio above one (or 100%)** implies **favorable** pricing power, in terms of what farmers sell versus what they buy.
  - ⊖ A ToT **ratio below one** indicates **unfavorable conditions** of exchange.



### JN.1 Variant

- First case of a person infected with **JN.1 variant of Sars-CoV-2** was reported in India.
  - ⊖ Sars-CoV-2 virus was responsible for Covid-19 pandemic.
- **About JN.1 Variant:**
  - ⊖ It is a sub-variant of **Sublineage BA.2.86** (also known as Pirola), is an off-shoot of the widely circulating **Omicron variant**.
    - ◆ Variant is a **genome** (genetic code) that may contain one or more mutations.
  - ⊖ **World Health Organization (WHO)** has classified it as a variant of interest.
    - ◆ These are strains that are worrying enough to trigger stepped up investigations of the variant by countries, like laboratory studies.



### Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)

- Recently, MPEDA organized training on value-added fish products.
- **About MPEDA:**
  - ⊖ Works under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
  - ⊖ It is a **statutory body** under the **MPEDA Act, 1972**.
  - ⊖ **Purpose:** Promotion of export of marine products.
  - ⊖ **Important Functions:**
    - ◆ **Developing and regulating off-shore** and deep-sea fishing,
    - ◆ Registering fishing vessels,
    - ◆ Fixing of **standards and specifications** for marine products, etc.



### Operation Prosperity Guardian

- United States has launched Operation Prosperity Guardian.
- **About Operation:**
  - ⊖ It is **multinational security initiative** under structure of existing **Combined Task Force 153 (CTF 153)**.
    - ◆ CTF-153 was set up in 2022 to improve maritime security in Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden.
  - ⊖ It brings together countries including United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Seychelles, Spain, etc.
  - ⊖ It was launched in the backdrop of escalation in attack on **commercial ships** such as recent **hijack of ship by Houthi's** (key party in Yemen Civil war).

## Places in News



### Iceland (Capital: Reykjavik)

- After weeks of intense earthquake activity, a volcano has erupted on Reykjanes peninsula in Iceland.
- **Political features**
  - ⊖ **Island country** located in **North Atlantic Ocean**.
  - ⊖ A **member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** since its foundation in 1949.
  - ⊖ Its coastline meets **Greenland Sea (north), Norwegian Sea (east), Atlantic Ocean (south and west)**, and **Denmark Strait (northwest)** which separates it from Greenland.
- **Geographical features**
  - ⊖ **Highest point:** Hvannadals Peak.
  - ⊖ **Longest River:** The Þjórsá River.
  - ⊖ **Located on Mid-Atlantic Ridge** which results in volcanoes reaching deep into unstable interior of Earth.

