

## Reforming Sovereign Credit Rating Process Need of Hour Says office of Chief Economic Advisor (CEA)

- Office of CEA in its recent publication has addressed critical issue of **opaque methodologies** employed by **credit rating agencies (CRAs)** to determine sovereign ratings.
- Currently, India is rated investment grade by **3 major CRAs - Standard & Poor's (S&P), Moody's and Fitch.**
  - ⊖ **Rating agencies use various parameters** to rate a sovereign.
    - ◆ **Parameters include** growth rate, political risks, debt burden, exchange rate regime etc.
- **Key Concerns Raised**
  - ⊖ **Rating method** put developing countries at **disadvantage.**
    - ◆ **Fitch's methodology,** gives greater weight to **foreign ownership of banks,** which ignored development role played by **state-run entities.**
  - ⊖ **Experts consulted by agencies** were selected in a **non-transparent manner.**
  - ⊖ **Lack of clarity on the weights assigned** for each parameter.
    - ◆ **Rating of India remained static at BBB-** during the last 15 years.
      - » **Despite India** climbing the ladders from **12<sup>th</sup> largest economy in 2008 to 5<sup>th</sup> largest in 2023 in the world.**
  - ⊖ **Subjective assessments tilt** in favour of the advanced economies.
  - ⊖ **Heavy reliance of CRAs on World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators** for inferring governance and institutional quality of countries.

➤ In India, **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has implemented a regulatory framework for credit rating firms under **SEBI (Credit Rating Agencies) Regulations, 1999.**

➤ **Prominent credit rating agencies in India,**

- ⊖ CRISIL; CARE; ICRA; Acuité Ratings; Brickwork Rating; India Rating and Research Pvt. Ltd and Infomerics Valuation and Rating Pvt. Ltd.

## National Level Programme on Anganwadi-Cum-Crèche Under Palna held

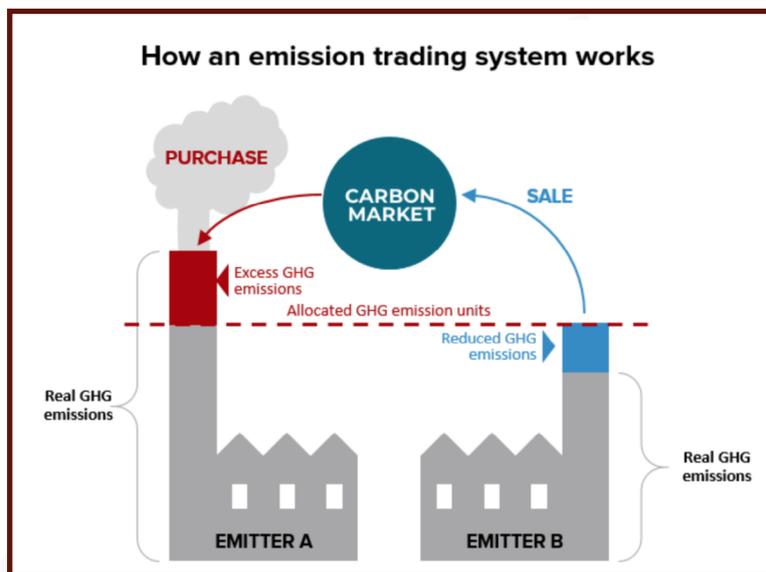
- **Aim of Anganwadi-cum- Crèches initiative** is to meet the demand for **quality childcare facilities and enable women to actively participate in the workforce.**
  - ⊖ It is under the **Palna Scheme** and is a part of the Samarthya sub-component of **Mission Shakti.**
- The government aims to **establish 17000 Crèches out of which 5222** have been approved.
- **Palna scheme**
  - ⊖ **Ministry:** Centrally sponsored scheme under the **Ministry of Women & Child Development.**
  - ⊖ **Objectives**
    - ◆ To **provide day-care facilities** for children (6 months to 6 years) of working mothers.
    - ◆ **Monitoring compliance of the Maternity Benefit Act, 2017**(requires every establishment having fifty or more employees to have the facility of crèche within a prescribed distance) for setting up creche facilities.
    - ◆ To promote **Nutritional, health, and cognitive development** of children.
  - ⊖ **Key services**
    - ◆ **Early stimulation** for children below 3 years of age and **Sleeping facility.**
    - ◆ **Pre-school education** for children between the ages of 3 to 6 years
    - ◆ **Health checkups and immunizations** in line with **POSHAN 2.0.**
  - ⊖ **Benefits:-**
    - ◆ Lead to the **Institutionalisation of day-care centers.**
    - ◆ **Formalization of India's Care Economy.**
    - ◆ Tackle **pervasive gender biases and discrimination.**
    - ◆ Provide **safety, health, and nutrition benefits** for children.

### Mission Shakti

- It is a scheme aimed at **women's safety, security, and empowerment.**
- Mission Shakti has two sub-schemes - **Sambal and Samarthya.**
  - ⊖ **Sambal** is for the safety and security of women and includes schemes such as **One Stop Centre, Women Helpline, BetiBachaoBetiPadhao.**
  - ⊖ **Samarthya** is for the empowerment of women and includes **Ujjwala, SwadharGreh, etc.**

## Ministry Of Power(MoP) announces reforms in Carbon Credits Trading Scheme(CCTS)

- The MoP had notified the CCTS in June 2023, to develop the Indian Carbon Market framework, under the Energy Conservation Act, of 2001.
- CCTS provides to set up a carbon credit trading market as the country aims at decarbonizing the economy.
  - ⊖ Carbon markets are a tool for putting a price on carbon emissions— they establish trading systems where carbon credits or allowances can be bought and sold.
  - ⊖ A carbon credit is a kind of tradable permit that equals one tonne of carbon dioxide removed, reduced, or sequestered from the atmosphere.
- Major reforms announced by MoP
  - ⊖ The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to develop the standards and register the project under an offset mechanism.
  - ⊖ BEE would “validate” carbon credits, as opposed to only “verification” in the original framework.
  - ⊖ Allowed ‘non-obligated entities’ (Non-OEs) (purchase the carbon credit certificates voluntarily) to also register decarbonization projects and generate carbon credits.
- Significance of reforms:
  - ⊖ The inclusion of Non-OEs further deepens the Indian carbon credit market.
  - ⊖ Indian entities won't have to go to overseas standards agencies to validate their carbon credits.
  - ⊖ Foreign decarbonization projects might choose India for certification.



## Jaish-e-Mohammed's (JeM) Arm, People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF) Claimed Responsibility for Poonch Terror Ambush Along Line of Control (LoC)

- PAFF emerged in 2019 as a proxy outfit of JeM, a proscribed terrorist organisation listed under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and also under United Nations list of “global terrorists”.
  - ⊖ PAFF was banned by Ministry of Home Affair (MHA) under the UAPA; previously, MHA banned the Resistance Front, an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba.
- About LoC
  - ⊖ LoC is a military control line between Indian- and Pakistani-controlled parts of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir;
  - ⊖ LoC is not legally recognized international boundary, but serves as the de facto border.
  - ⊖ It was established as part of Simla Agreement at the end of Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.
- Security threats along LoC
  - ⊖ Exfiltration and Infiltration by Insurgents: Through the LoC it has been a recurring challenge; they are also aided by Overground workers (OGWs).
    - ◆ OGWs are reportedly sympathetic to militants and provide them logistical support in terms of food, shelter etc.
  - ⊖ Trafficking of Narcotics and Drugs: The Golden Crescent (Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan) is the primary source of trafficked drugs.
  - ⊖ Others: Ceasefire Violations, Trafficking of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) and smuggling of arms, ammunition and contraband.

### Steps to Combat Terrorism Along LoC

- Madhukar Gupta committee report to strengthen border protection:
  - ⊖ Border Out Posts (BOPs), Floodlighting, Fencing, etc
- Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System along Indo-Pakistan Border:
  - ⊖ Integration of manpower, sensors, networks, intelligence and command control to facilitate quick response to emerging situations.
- Indian Army along with the Border Security Force (BSF) stand guards the LoC.

## Bihar Police Busted Illegal Sand Mining: 20 Arrested, 40 Boats Seized in Major Crackdown

- Sand is the **second most exploited natural resource** in the world after water.
- In India the main sources of sand are
  - ⊖ **River** (riverbed and flood plain), **Lakes** and reservoirs, **Agricultural fields**, Coastal / **marine sand**, **Palaeo-channels** etc.
- **Impacts of Sand Mining**
  - ⊖ **Biodiversity destruction** of aquatic and riparian habitat.
  - ⊖ **Coastal erosion**, changes in deltaic structures, quarries.
  - ⊖ **Change in water flows**, flood regulation and marine currents.
  - ⊖ **Lowering of the water table**, pollution of groundwater.
  - ⊖ **Decline of protection** against extreme events (floods, droughts).
- **Measures taken to Ensure Best Practices in Sand Mining**
  - ⊖ Sand is classified as a minor mineral under **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulations) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act)**.
    - ◆ **Administrative control over minor minerals** vests with State Governments, and accordingly, regulated through **State specific rules**.
  - ⊖ **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change** issued **Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines (2016)**.
  - ⊖ **Ministry of Mines** has prepared **Sand Mining Framework (2018)**.
    - ◆ **Framework envisages** alternative sources of sand in form of **Manufactured Sand (M-Sand)** from crushed rock fines, sand from **Overburden (OB)** of coal mines.

## China bans the export of rare earth element (REE) processing technologies

- China accounts for **63 percent** of the world's rare earth mining.
- It also banned the export of **production technology for rare earth metals and alloy materials** as well as **technology** to prepare some rare earth magnets.
- **About REE**
  - ⊖ They are a set of **seventeen metallic elements**.
    - ◆ These include **fifteen lanthanides plus scandium and yttrium**.
  - ⊖ They are **relatively plentiful in the earth's crust but not often found in concentrated enough clusters** making them unviable to mine.
- **Significance of REE:** essential in the manufacture of smartphone chips, batteries, LCD screens, military equipment, etc.
- **Challenges associated with REE:** extraction is expensive and difficult and leads to **environmental issues** such as water pollution, radioactive waste, etc.
- **Indian steps for REE**
  - ⊖ The Ministry of Mines released a **list of 33 minerals critical to the economy** including several rare earth elements.
  - ⊖ **Indian Rare Earths Limited**, a unit of the Department of Atomic Energy, has been tasked with **producing rare earth minerals**.
  - ⊖ India became a member of the **US-led Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)**.
    - ◆ It aims to **catalyze public and private investment in critical supply chains of minerals**, including rare earth elements.

## Also in News

### Asian Development Bank (ADB) Loan to Tripura

- The Government of India signed an agreement with the ADB to avail **USD 100 million loan** to improve **urban services and tourism facilities in Tripura**.

### Asian Development Bank (ADB)



- Genesis:** Established in 1966.
- Members:** **68 members** (49 are from within Asia and Pacific). India is a member.
- Shareholders:** Developing and developing countries from Asia as well as from outside Asia.
  - ◆ USA and Japan are the largest shareholders followed by China and India.
- Function:** It assists its members and partners by **providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments** to promote social and economic development.

### Namdapha flying squirrel (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*)

- Missing for 42 years, **flying squirrel resurfaces in Arunachal Pradesh**.
- **About Namdapha flying squirrel:**
  - ⊖ It's a **nocturnal, endemic to northeastern India** mammal.
  - ⊖ **Status:** Critically endangered.
  - ⊖ **Range:** Only known with certainty from a single specimen collected in Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh.
  - ⊖ **Habitat:** Occurs in dry deciduous montane forests occupying moist forest tracts along streams.
  - ⊖ **Threats:** poaching, habitat loss.
  - ⊖ Protected under **schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- Namdapha Tiger Reserve has **evergreen Forests, Moist deciduous forests, sub-tropical forests, Temperate Forests and Alpine biomes**.



### Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) – 2023

- 8<sup>th</sup> edition of IONS Conclave of Chiefs was conducted by Royal Thai Navy at Bangkok, Thailand.
- ⊕ Republic of Korea Navy was welcomed as latest 'Observer', raising the collective strength of IONS to 34 (25 Members & 09 Observers).
- About IONS:
  - ⊕ Was conceived by Indian Navy in 2008.
  - ⊕ It is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region.
  - ⊕ Last year, IONS conducted its maiden edition of maritime exercise, IMEX-22.



### Environmental Inhibitors

- Recently Food and Agriculture Organization released a report "Food Safety Implications from Use of Environmental Inhibitors in Agrifood Systems".
- Environmental Inhibitors :
  - ⊕ These are one of the approaches used to minimize the harmful effects of agrifood systems on environment.
  - ⊕ Methanogenesis Inhibitors: Reduce methane emissions resulting from enteric fermentation of ruminants and from other agricultural sources (such as rice paddies or manure).
  - ⊕ Nitrogen Inhibitors: Limit the loss of nitrogen from farmlands by slowing down natural processes which lead to its leakage and volatilization.



### Indo-Bangladesh Shipping Arrangements

- Shipping Secretary Level Talks between India and Bangladesh concluded in Dhaka.
- Key decision and development
  - ⊕ Easing of visa issuance, shore-leave facility, and repatriation for seafarers.
  - ⊕ Land route at Radhikapur and Hodibari to extend trade and connectivity.
  - ⊕ Bangladesh to extend Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route and declare Safardighi in West Bengal as the new port of call under Protocol on Inland Water Transit & Trade.
  - ⊕ Common Automatic Identification System on the IBP route for better vessel navigation and tracking.



### Salwa Judum

- NHRC has directed Ministry of Home Affairs and 6 States to furnish information on victims of Salwa Judum.
- Salwa Judum
  - ⊕ The term Salwa Judum translates to "Purification Hunt" in local Gondi language.
  - ⊕ It was a militia that had been deployed as part of anti-Maoist operations in Chhattisgarh.
  - ⊕ It was operational between 2005 and 2011, before it was banned by Supreme Court in Nandini Sundar vs State of Chhattisgarh case.
  - ⊕ Critics accused Salwa Judum of human rights abuses, including forced displacement, arbitrary arrests etc.



### Technologies to count Tigers

- Camera trap for Odisha tiger census spot 35 tigers in Similipal reserve.
- Technologies used to count tigers
  - ⊕ Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status (M-STRIPE): It uses Global Positioning System (GPS), General Packet Radio Services (GPRS), and remote sensing.
  - ⊕ Software CaTRAT – Camera Trap Data Repository and Analysis Tool: It compares stripe patterns of tigers to count.
  - ⊕ In areas where camera trapping is not possible molecular tools are used to extract DNA from tiger excrete waste.



### Polar Stratospheric Clouds(PSCs)

- Extremely rare PSCs were captured over Scotland, northern England.
- Polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs)
  - ⊕ PSCs are also known as nacreous clouds or mother of pearl (due to their iridescence).
  - ⊕ They are formed only below -78 degree Celsius
  - ⊕ They trap outgoing longwave radiation and emit back hindering atmospheric cooling.
  - ⊕ They destroy ozone in two ways:
    - ◆ They provide a surface that converts benign forms of chlorine into reactive, ozone-destroying forms.
    - ◆ They remove nitrogen compounds that moderate the destructive impact of chlorine.

## Personality in News



### Taraknath Das (1884-1958)

- He was an Indian revolutionary with a global outlook.
- Contributions:
  - ⊕ Was a member of Anushilan Samiti.
  - ⊕ Launched organizations of Indian students and labourers on West Coast of USA.
  - ⊕ In his quest to mobilize resources for Indian independence he journeyed through four continents.
  - ⊕ Associated with Lala Har Dayal of Gadar Party.
  - ⊕ Founded "The Free Hindustan" newspaper (1908).
  - ⊕ His Book: India in World Politics.
- Values: Courage, Resilience, Nationalism etc.



Taraknath Das  
(1884-1958)

