

Department of Consumer Affairs in collaboration with IIT (BHU) launched Dark Patterns Buster Hackathon 2023

- It aims to design & prototype innovative apps or software that can **detect dark patterns on e-Commerce platforms**.
 - ⊕ It may include **browser extensions, add-ons, mobile applications** etc.
- A Dark pattern **refers to practices adopted** by online platforms which mislead people into paying for items or services they **did not intend** to do originally.
 - ⊕ It is considered an **unfair trade practice**.
- Earlier, under Consumer Protection Act 2019, **Government issued draft Guidelines on Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns 2023**.
 - ⊕ **Applicable:** All **platforms**, systematically offering goods & services in India; Advertisers; Sellers.
- **Certain examples of dark patterns** (see table).

Dark Patterns	Description
Saas Billing	Recurring payments in software as a service (SaaS) , exploiting positive acquisition loops to collect funds from users.
False Urgency	Describing a sale as an 'exclusive' sale for a limited time.
Basket Sneaking	Automatically adding travel insurance while a user purchases a flight ticket.
Confirm Shaming	Nudging user for purchases or maintaining service subscriptions through creating a sense of fear, guilt, e.g., 'I Will stay unsecured' while purchasing a flight ticket.
Forced Action	Forcing a user to subscribe to a newsletter in order to purchase a product.
Subscription Trap	Making cancellation of a paid subscription a complex process .
Drip Pricing	Gradual or hidden disclosure of prices , offering something as free without revealing in-app purchase requirements etc.
Nagging	Dark pattern causing user overload , disrupting intended transactions.

Supreme Court (SC) protected woman's right of parenthood and struck down 2023 amendment to Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022

- A woman suffering from **MRKH syndrome** had challenged the **2023 amendment that mandates** that both male and female gamete (sperm and egg respectively) must come from intending couple.
 - ⊕ The provision was challenged as petitioner woman has **absent ovaries and uterus**; hence she **cannot donate her own eggs for surrogacy**.
- Centre said that use of donor egg was exempted as **process of surrogacy cannot be availed** under the law **unless the child was "genetically related"** to the **intending couple**.
 - ⊕ SC held that expression '**genetically**' related to the intending couple has to be **read as being related to the husband when Rule 14(a) applies**.
 - ⊕ **Rule 14(a)** specifically **recognises the absence of a uterus or any allied condition** as a medical indication **necessitating gestational surrogacy**.
 - ⊕ Also, the court noted that **law permitting gestational surrogacy was "woman-centric"** and decision to have a surrogate child was entirely based on the **woman's inability to become a mother**.
- **Surrogacy** regulated by **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021** is a practice whereby one woman bears and gives birth to a child for an intending couple.

Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021

- **Only altruistic surrogacy is allowed** and penalises **commercial surrogacy**
- **Intending couple** must be **legally married** (age limit of **23-50** for female and **26-55** for male) and must **not have a surviving child**.
- **Surrogate Mother** must be **married woman having a child of her own** and between the **age of 25 to 35 years**.
- **National Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Board (NARTSB)** to **Review and monitor** implementation of Act, **supervise** functioning of **State ARTSB (SARTSB)**, etc.

Interconnected Disaster Risks Report 2023

- Released by **United Nations University** – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS).
- As per report, world is fast approaching **Risk tipping points** on multiple fronts.
- **Risk tipping point** is a **moment** when a **socioecological system loses** its ability to buffer risks, leading to increased potential for catastrophic impacts.
 - ⊕ This is different from so-called “**Climate Tipping Points**” which means specific thresholds after which unstoppable changes occur, influencing global climate.
- **Six interconnected risk tipping points are:**
 - ⊕ **Accelerating extinctions** that trigger chain reaction to ecosystem collapse.
 - ⊕ **Groundwater depletion** that drains water risking food supply.
 - ⊕ **Mountain glaciers melting.**
 - ⊕ **Space debris** causing loss of multiple satellites.
 - ⊕ **Unbearable heat** making it hard to live in some areas.
 - ⊕ **Uninsurable future** when rising risks make homes unaffordable.
- **Drivers of Risk tipping point**
 - ⊕ Human-induced **greenhouse gas** emissions
 - ⊕ **Insufficient risk management** and insufficient cooperation
 - ⊕ Global demand pressures.
 - ⊕ Inequality of **development** and **livelihood opportunities**.
- **Solutions: In the form of Avoid** (preventing risk), **Adapt** (dealing with risk), **Delay** (slowing risk progression), and **Transform** (system overhaul).

About UNU-EHS

- It is an academic arm of the United Nations and acts as a global think tank.
- **Established** in 2003
- **Mission:** carry out research on risks and adaptation related to environmental hazards and global change.
 - promotes policies and programmes to reduce these risks, while taking into account the interplay between environmental and societal factors.

Symposium on Production of Improved and Traditional Seed through Cooperative Sector organized by Bharatiya Beej Sahkari Samiti Limited (BBSSL)

- BBSSL is a **cooperative society** established in **2023** under **Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002**.
 - ⊕ It aims to ensure that **traditional** and **certified and scientifically prepared seeds** reach every farmer.
 - ⊕ **Focus** on production, testing, certification, procurement, processing of seeds in country.
- **Traditional seeds** are naturally grown in indigenous regions, **ideally suited for quality and nutritional excellence** in local environments.
- **Seed Production System in India**
 - ⊕ It adheres to **limited generations’ system** for **seed multiplication** in a **phased manner**.
 - ⊕ Recognizes 3 generations namely: **Breeder, Foundation and Certified seeds**.
 - ◆ **Breeder seed** is the progeny of **nucleus seed of a variety** and is produced by the originating breeder or by a sponsored breeder.
 - ◆ **Foundation seed** is progeny of **breeder seed** and is required to be produced from breeder seed which can be clearly traced to breeder seed.
 - ◆ **Certified seed: progeny of foundation seed** produced by registered seed growers under **supervision of seed certification agencies**.
- **Benefits of seed certification**
 - ⊕ Enhancement in **Seed Replacement Rate (SRR)**. SRR is a measure of cropped area covered with quality seed.
 - ⊕ **Preserves genetic identity** and **ensures genetic purity of seeds**.
 - ⊕ **Improving seed exports promoting Indian varieties** (India’s share in the world seed export is only 0.6 per cent).

Other initiatives/provisions for Seeds sector in India

- **Seeds Act, 1966** (Act to provide for regulating the **quality of certain seeds for sale**).
- **National Seed Policy, 2002** to support seed industry, protecting farmers interests and conservation of agro biodiversity.
- **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Act, 2001 (PPVFR Act)** protects the intellectual property rights of plant breeders.
- **Seed Village Programme** (trained group of farmers are involved in production of seeds of various crops and cater to their own needs)
- **Sub-Mission for Seed and Planting Material (SMSP) under National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology (NMAET)**.

Direct Taxes Data shows robust growth in gross total income of individuals and a widening tax base

- According to data from Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) from Assessment Year (AY) 2013-14 to AY 2021-22:
 - ⊕ **Returns filed by individual taxpayers increased to 6.37 crore (90% increase).**
 - ⊕ **Average gross total income for individual taxpayers increased to about Rs 7 lakh (56% increase).**
 - ⊕ **Increase in average gross total income for top 1% individual taxpayers is 42% while that for bottom 25% individual taxpayers is 58%.**
 - ⊕ Proportionate **contribution of the gross total income of:**
 - ◆ **top 1% of individual taxpayers has decreased from 15.9% to 14.6%**
 - ◆ **bottom 25% of individual taxpayers has increased from 8.3% to 8.4% and from 75.8% to 77% for middle 74%.**
- Tax base is the **total amount of income, property, assets, consumption, transactions, or other economic activity** subject to taxation by a tax authority.
- **Significance of widening tax base**
 - ⊕ Improves government's **ability to fund social and physical infrastructure.**
 - ⊕ Increases **possibility of lowering tax rates and cesses** imposed.
 - ⊕ Helps in **better planning and budgeting** of a fiscal year.
- **Measures to increase tax base:** Promoting voluntary compliances. easier filings, following up with potential non-filers, etc.

Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) hosted 22nd Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG)

- CHG meets once every year to discuss a strategy for **multilateral cooperation, adopt Organisation's annual budget**, etc.
- During meeting India's External Affairs Minister called members to **strictly adhere to principles of international law, and respect each other's sovereignty.**
- **About SCO**
 - ⊕ **Genesis:** Established in **2001 in Shanghai by the Shanghai Five** countries (Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan) and Uzbekistan.
 - ⊕ **About:** A **permanent intergovernmental organisation** guided by '**Shanghai spirit**' that encapsulates mutual trust and benefit, equality, respect for diversity of civilizations, etc.
 - ⊕ **Members (9):** India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
 - ⊕ **Observer states:** **Afghanistan, Belarus and Mongolia.** Process of raising the status of Belarus to the level of a member state has begun.
 - ⊕ **Key Goal:** Ensure and maintain **peace, security and stability in the region.**
 - ⊕ **Highest decision-making body:** **Heads of State Council (HSC)** that meets yearly.
 - ⊕ **Permanent Bodies:** **Secretariat** in Beijing (China) and **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** in Tashkent (Uzbekistan).
 - ⊕ **Official languages:** Russian and Chinese
 - ⊕ **Significance of SCO:**
 - ◆ **Contribute 30% of global GDP and 40% of the world's population.**
 - ◆ **Helps in tackling separatism, extremism and terrorism.**
 - ◆ **Strengthening India's outreach to Central Asia and multipolarity in Eurasia.**

Also in News



Credit Information Companies (CICs)

- RBI has directed CICs to **introduce a compensation framework** for delay in updating or rectification of credit information of borrower.
 - ⊕ A CIC shall pay **compensation** to the complainant if the complaint could **not be resolved within 30 days.**
- CICs **maintain credit information of borrowers** which can be accessed by banks and other lenders.
 - ⊕ They **collect information from** banks, credit card companies and non-bank financial institutions.
 - ⊕ Lending institutions refer to CICs credit report to **decide borrowers' creditworthiness.**
 - ⊕ CICs are **licensed by RBI.**



Reference Fuels

- Indian Oil Corporation Limited launched **India's first gasoline and diesel Reference Fuel (RF).**
 - ⊕ Currently, reference fuels are being **imported by India.**
- RFs are premium high-value products, used for **calibration and testing of vehicles by Auto Original Equipment Manufacturers** and organizations involved in **testing and certification in automotive field.**
 - ⊕ Specification **requirements of RF are more stringent** than commercial gasoline and diesel.
 - ⊕ Indigenous RF **meets Automotive Industry Standard** specifications and is **available at better price with reduced lead time.**



National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB)

- Under 'Ayurveda for One Health' campaign, farmers are being sensitized about special techniques used in cultivation of medicinal plants through NMPB.
 - ⊕ 'One Health' is an integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimize the health of people, animals and the environment.
- NMPB, setup in 2000 to promote medicinal plants sector, is working as a section of Ministry of AYUSH.
 - ⊕ It is mandated to develop an appropriate mechanism for coordination between various ministries and implement policies for the overall growth of the medicinal plants sector.



Gir indigenous cow breed

- Gir is being promoted under Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM).
 - ⊕ RGM is being implemented by Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying for the development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds since 2014.
- Gir is originated in Gir forests in Gujarat and also found in Maharashtra and adjacent Rajasthan.
 - ⊕ It is a hardy, adaptable breed with high milk yield and calm disposition.
 - ⊕ It has the ability to adapt to the entire central belt and northern and southern stretches.
- Other indigenous cattle breeds: Red Sindhi, Sahiwal, Hallikar etc.



PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)

- 124 schools under PM-SHRI scheme inaugurated in Haryana.
- It is a Centrally sponsored scheme (60% by Centre and 40% borne by state or UT) under the Ministry of Education launched in 2022.
- It aims at developing more than 14,500 schools across India by strengthening select existing schools being managed by all forms of government.
- Objective: providing high-quality education and making children active participants as per the vision of NEP 2020.
- It is proposed to be operational from 2022-23 to 2026-27.



Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR)

- It is carved out of Tamil Nadu portion of the Anamalais and lies on South of the Palakkad gap in the Western Ghats.
- It is surrounded by Parambikulam Tiger Reserve on the East, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary and Eravikulam National Park on the South Western side.
- The Kariyan shola, Grass hills and Manjampatti of ATR are part of UNESCO world heritage site Western Ghats.
- It supports 6 indigenous people viz. Malasar, Malai Malasars, Kadars, Eravallars, Pulayars and Muduvars.
- Flora: Balsam, Orchids and Kurinchi.
- Fauna: Bengal Tiger, Indian Elephant, Nilgiri Tahr, Gaur etc.



Osteoporosis

- Osteoporosis is a bone disease that causes a loss of bone density, which increases the risk of fractures.
- It develops when bone mineral density and bone mass decreases, or when the structure and strength of bone changes.
- It is called a "silent disease".
- Women are more likely to get affected after menopause.
- Symptoms: Spine, wrist and hip fractures, Height loss, Spinal deformities.



Vajra Mushti Kalaga

- "Vajra Mushti Kalaga" is a form of wrestling different from conventional grappling and entails two jettys (fighters).
- Wrestlers use 'Vajramushti', knuckle-dusters adorned with diamonds as a mark of weaponry to engage in immaculate battle.
 - ⊕ Whosoever draws the blood from the opponent's head first is declared the winner.
- It is held on the ninth day of Navaratri at the Mysuru Palace (Mysore, Karnataka).
- It was first mentioned in Manasollasa, a manual of warfare of King Someshwara III of the Chalukya dynasty (1124-1138).
- Fernao Nuniz, a Portuguese traveller noticed this form of wrestling in Vijayanagar empire.

Places in News



Qatar (Capital: Doha)

- A court in Qatar sentenced eight former personnels of the Indian Navy to death.
- Political Boundaries: It is a country in West Asia.
 - ⊕ It shares its sole land border with Saudi Arabia with rest of territory being surrounded by Persian Gulf.
- Geographical Features:
 - ⊕ Situated on the west coast of the Persian Gulf and on Qatar peninsula.
 - ⊕ It has one of the world's largest reserves of petroleum and natural gas.
 - ⊕ Sand dunes and salt flats, or sabkhas, are the chief topographical features.
 - ⊕ No permanent bodies of fresh water.
- Highest point: Abū al-Bawl Hill.

