

# NEWS TODAY

## Second India-US Strategic Dialogue on Africa held in Washington DC

Dialogue aims to share ideas and explore ways to develop institutional, technical and bilateral synergies to work together in Africa.

- This is the **first such dialogue on Africa** between India and the US **after the inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20** during India's presidency of the G20.

### Significance of Africa for India

- **Strategic:** Africa is vital for India's maritime security, protection of trade in the Indian Ocean Region from piracy, etc.
- **Economic:** Africa's vast natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, etc., and growing market provide both demand-side and supply-side opportunities for the Indian businesses.
- **Energy Security:** Collaboration in the renewable energy sector, such as under International Solar Alliance, aligns with shared goals of sustainable development.
- **Multilateral:** Cooperation with African countries in multilateral forums like UN, Commonwealth, and Non-Aligned Movement enhances India's global influence and prospects of South-South cooperation.

### Challenges in India-Africa Relations

- **China factor:** China's growing influence in Africa through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and investments poses a challenge to India's interests.
- **Security:** Persistent conflicts and political instability in parts of Africa pose risks to Indian investments, expatriates, and development projects.
- **Racial tensions:** African students complain of harassment and discrimination.

### Initiatives by India to engage Africa

- **Kampala Principles (2018):** 10 guiding principles outlined by Indian PM for India-Africa partnership, including developing together as equals, local partnerships, etc.
- **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor:** Initiative, launched by India, to enhance cooperation with African countries in partnership with Japan.
- **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation:** Offers capacity-building opportunities to professionals and students from African countries.
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief:** **Op Sahayata** to assist cyclone-hit **Mozambique** in 2019 and **Op Vanilla** to provide relief to flood victims in **Madagascar** in 2020.

## Secretary General of SAARC paid an official visit to India

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretary-General discusses status of regional cooperation in South Asia.

- **SAARC has been largely dysfunctional since 2016** when the 19th Summit, scheduled to be held in Pakistan, was cancelled due to concerns about cross-border terrorism.
- Since then, India has focused on bolstering cooperation with countries in South Asia through other groupings such as **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** and **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) initiative**.

### About SAARC

- **Established in 1985**, through SAARC Charter in Dhaka.
- **Member states:** India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- **Secretariat:** Kathmandu
- **Decisions** at all levels in SAARC are **taken on the basis of unanimity**.
- **Bilateral and contentious issues are excluded** from its deliberations.

### Significance of SAARC for India

- Central **pillar for India's Neighbourhood first policy**
- Forum to deal with **common issues** of the region.
- Critical forum for **economic integration of South Asian Region**

### Reasons for SAARC's failure

- **Asymmetry** between India and other member countries.
- **Differences between India and Pakistan** hamper effective functioning of the forum.
- SAARC does not have **any arrangement for resolving disputes or mediating conflicts**.

### Achievements of SAARC

- **Signing of South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA)** to reduce customs duties.
- **Establishment of institutions** like South Asian University (New Delhi), SAARC international college (Bangladesh).
- Establishment of **SAARC development fund**, for the welfare of member countries.

## State cannot acquire property without proper procedure: Supreme Court (SC)

SC in **Kolkata Municipal Corporation & Anr Vs Bimal Kumar Shah & Ors** has stated that **Article 300A** has been characterised both as a constitutional and also a human right.

- **Article 300A** states that “no person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law”

### Key highlights of the judgment

- Deprivation of any person’s immovable property **must follow a fair procedure of law.**
- **Minimum content** of constitutional right to property comprises of **seven sub-rights or procedures** (non-exhaustive). (refer to the Infographic)
- **Compulsory acquisition will be unconstitutional** if proper **procedure is not established or followed** before depriving a person of their right to property.

### Status of Right to Property in India

- **Right to property** was explicitly held as a **fundamental right under Articles 19(1)(f) and 31** at the inception of the Constitution in 1950.
- **1<sup>st</sup> Constitutional Amendment (1951): Added Article 31A** to provide for acquisition of any estate as against the provisions enshrined under Articles 14 and 19.
- **44<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment (1978): Removed right to property as a fundamental right** by repealing Articles 19(1)(f) and Article 31 and made it a **constitutional right under Article 300A.**



## India recorded longest Internet Shutdowns globally in 2023: Report

Report released by a Virtual Private Network tracker ‘Top 10VPN’ highlighted that internet was completely affected for 7,956 hours in India, impacting around 59.1 million users.

### Legal framework for Internet Shutdown in India

- Internet shutdown is primarily imposed under **Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017** and **Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973.**
- Any order for suspension of Telecom Services shall be issued only by **Union Home Secretary** or **State Home Secretary.**
  - ⊕ **In unavoidable circumstances** such order may be issued by an officer, not below the rank of a **Joint Secretary to the Union Government**, who has been duly authorised by abovementioned officials.
- **Ground of such orders** includes public emergency, public safety, sovereignty and integrity of India, etc.
- Further, 2017 rules also provide for **constitution of review committee** headed by **Cabinet Secretary and State Chief Secretary** for Union and State governments, as the case may be.
- Despite the enactment of these Suspension Rules in 2017, Internet shutdowns have **continued to be imposed under Section 144 of CrPC at the District Magistrate level rather than Home Secretary level.**

### Important Judicial pronouncement

- **Anuradha Bhasin vs. UoI (2020):** Supreme Court held that freedom to practice any profession or carry on any trade, business or occupation over the medium of internet enjoys Constitutional protection under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g).

### Key recommendations [Parliamentary Standing Committee (2021)]

- **Selective banning of services:** Selectively restrict the use of certain services instead of banning the internet as a whole.
- **Effectiveness of internet shutdowns:** Conduct study on the impacts of internet shutdowns and its effectiveness in dealing with public safety and public emergency.

## India celebrates its 'Telecom Diplomacy' on World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

Telecom Diplomacy has helped attract new business ventures, forge partnerships, and demonstrate India's commitment to secure its leadership position in the global telecommunications landscape.

### Steps taken for Telecom Diplomacy

- **Strategic Partnerships with partner countries and Telecom chip companies:** 'US-India OpenRadio Access (ORAN) Network Acceleration Roadmap'.
- **Exchange of Best Practices:** India-USA collaboration facilitated dialogue on international best practices in spectrum allocation, quality of service assurance, etc.
  - ⊕ The DoT explored potential collaborations to elevate R&D, foster innovation, and fortify the startup ecosystem in Quantum Communications within India.
- **Transforming India Mobile Congress (IMC):** Significant efforts were undertaken to make IMC a global event like Mobile World Congress by 2025.

### Achievements of Telecom Diplomacy

- **Indian companies have exported Rs 25200 crores worth of telecom equipment and accessories last year.**
- **Securing Indian Interests and leadership positions in international forums**
  - ⊕ India's active participation at the **World Radio Conference (WRC)** resulted in **safeguarding spectrum for Indian operations** in airspace and sea and **enabling future 5G deployments.**
- **The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA)** will be held for the **first time in India** to decide the **future direction of standards** for the **next generation of telecommunication systems.**

## NCBC recommends increase in reservation quota for OBCs in West Bengal, Punjab

Presently, the reservations in public employment made available to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) cumulatively are **37% and 45 % in Punjab and West Bengal respectively.**

- An increase in the reservation quota for OBCs will **adhere to the Supreme Court's ceiling of up to 50% reservation in the Indra Sawhney case** for socially and educationally backward classes.

### About National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)

- The NCBC was set up as a statutory body under the NCBC Act, 1993.
- It has been accorded **Constitutional Status through 102nd Constitution Amendment Act, 2018 with insertion of Article 338B.**
- The commission consists of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three other Members in the rank & pay of Secretary to the Government of India.
- **NCBC investigates and monitors all matters related to the safeguards provided for the socially and educationally backward classes.**
- **The Commission will advise the Central Government on OBC inclusion/exclusion requests** from state or central governments.
- NCBC present report to the President, annually and at such other times as the commission may deem fit.
  - ⊕ **If the Government does not agree with its recommendation, it must record its reasons.**

## Also in News

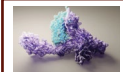


### National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)

NPPA has cut down prices of various medicines related to diabetes, blood pressure, asthma etc.

#### About NPPA

- It was constituted by a government of India resolution in 1997, **as an independent Regulator for pricing of drugs.**
- **Ministry:** Attached office of Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.
- **Function:**
  - ⊕ Implement and **enforce the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order.**
  - ⊕ To monitor the **availability of drugs, identify shortages**, if any, and to take remedial steps.
  - ⊕ **Advise the central government** on changes/ revisions in the drug policy.



### RoseTTAFold

RoseTTAFold, an AI software prediction tool, has the potential to revolutionize target discovery and understand drug-target interaction better.

#### About RoseTTAFold

- Developed at the **Institute for Protein Design at the University of Washington.**
- Uses **generative diffusion-based architectures (an AI model)** to predict structural complexes.
- It is a **'three-track' neural network** which integrates three types of information namely:
  - ⊕ Sequential patterns in proteins,
  - ⊕ Interplay between amino acids, and
  - ⊕ Their probable 3D- configurations.
- The model has the **ability to predict structures and interactions** between any combination of protein, DNA, and RNA.



### Co-lending

The Finance Ministry has asked the State Bank of India to form a committee to tackle co-lending issues.

#### About Co-lending/Co-origination

- It is an arrangement where **multiple lenders partner to provide loans to borrowers.**
  - ⊕ This helps increase lending capacity and reduces risk for individual lenders.
- As per RBI, **banks and NBFCs can co-lend loans to priority sectors**, with a minimum 20% credit risk on NBFCs, and the rest on banks.
- **Banks are not allowed** to enter into co-lending arrangement with an NBFC belonging to the promoter Group.



### Mitogenome

A latest study on South African Leopards mitogenome has revealed details about their possible origin.

#### About Mitogenome

- It is a **small circular chromosome** found inside the **mitochondria.**
  - ⊕ **Mitochondria are considered as the powerhouse of the cell** and generate the energy necessary to power cells.
- **Built of double-stranded DNA** similar to nuclear genome and are entirely maternal in nature.
  - ⊕ **Nuclear genomes are inherited equally from both parents.**



### Plunging region

A study at Oxford University Physics provided the **first observational proof of 'plunging regions'** as per Einstein's theory.

#### About Plunging region

- It is an **area around Black Hole** where **matter stops circling the black hole** and instead **falls straight in.**
  - ⊕ It was predicted by **Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity** which states that it is impossible for particles to safely follow circular orbits sufficiently close to a black hole.
- Plunging regions **exert some of the strongest gravitational forces** in the galaxy.



### Nor'westers

India is working to develop its first research testbed to study Nor'westers.

#### About Nor'westers

- These are **extremely severe evening thunderstorms** accompanied by **squally winds.**
- Triggered by **daytime landmass heating** in **March and April** in eastern India (Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, etc.).
- It's also called '**Kalbaisakhi**', a calamity of the month of Baisakh.
  - ⊕ In Assam, these storms are known as "**Bardoli Chheerha**".
- These showers are useful for **tea, jute and rice cultivation.**



### Insurance Surety Bonds (ISB)

NHA Organises Workshop on Implementation of Insurance Surety Bonds in National Highway Contracts.

#### About ISB

- ISB are **legally enforceable three-party** contracts comprising:
  - ⊕ **1<sup>st</sup> party: Principal** (the beneficiary).
  - ⊕ **2<sup>nd</sup> party: Contractor**
  - ⊕ **3<sup>rd</sup> party: Surety Provider** (The Insurance Company).
- ISBs provide the **Principal** with the **financial guarantee** that the **Contract will be completed** as per mutually agreed terms between the Principal and the Contractor.
- Government has made **ISB at par with Bank Guarantees.**
- Wider adoption of such instruments will help to strengthen infrastructure development in the country.



### LUPEX

India-Japan joint moon mission Lunar Polar Exploration Mission (LUPEX) is likely to take flight in few years.

#### About LUPEX

- Aimed at **exploring the Moon for water and other resources** and gaining expertise in exploring the surface of the Moon.
- It is an international cooperative project, with the **Japanese Space Agency (JAXA)** responsible for the **lunar rover**, the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** handling the **lander.**
  - ⊕ **Observation instruments from NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA)** will also be mounted on the rover.

## Personality in news



### Sukhdev Thapar (1907-1931)

Freedom fighter Sukhdev Thapar was remembered on his birth anniversary (15 May).

#### About Sukhdev Thapar

- Born in Ludhiana (Punjab)
- He educated the youth at the National College in Lahore.

#### Key Contributions

- He was a member of the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association.**
- He along with other revolutionaries started the '**Naujawan Bharat Sabha**' at Lahore in 1926.
- **He along with Bhagat Singh and Rajguru were arrested** for their involvement in **Lahore Conspiracy Case**
  - ⊕ The day the three were hanged to death is observed as **Shaheed Diwas (23<sup>rd</sup> March).**

**Values:** Courage, Patriotism, Leadership, etc.

