

NEWS TODAY

WTO's member questioned India's farm input subsidies

Members including the US and the UK, raised concerns over India's 50 percent increase in farm subsidies in 2022-23 in the meeting of the Committee on Agriculture.

- India responded that its input subsidies were for "low-income or resource-poor" farmers exempted under Agreement on Agriculture.

About Agreement on Agriculture

- It was negotiated at the Uruguay round and ratified in Marrakesh (Morocco) in 1994.
- It contains provisions in three broad areas of agriculture and trade policy
 - ⊕ **Market Access:** includes tariffication, tariff reduction and access opportunities.
 - ◆ **Tariffication** means that all non-tariff barriers such as quotas, variable levies etc need to be abolished and converted into an equivalent tariff.
 - ⊕ **Domestic Access:** deals with subsidies and other support programmes that directly stimulate production and distort trade. It has various kinds of boxes based on the type of subsidies provided (Refer to box).
 - ⊕ **Export Subsidies:** deals with methods which makes exports artificially competitive.
 - ◆ Developed Members and developing countries eliminated export subsidies as per the **Nairobi Ministerial Decision 2015**.
- **Public stockholding programmes** of developing countries are covered under the peace clause as an interim solution.
 - ⊕ **Members would not challenge these programmes** legally under the Agriculture Agreement.

Different Type of Boxes

- **Amber Box:** These supports are subject to limits. It allows for "De minimis"/minimal level of support as a share of the value of agricultural production.
- **Blue Box:** Support that would normally be in the amber box, is placed in the blue box if it also **requires farmers to limit production**.
- **Green Box:** includes government funded subsidies which do **not distort trade** or cause minimal distortion.

Analysis report of candidates of 2024 Lok Sabha (LS) election

It was conducted by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch.

Key finding of the analysis

- **104% rise of political parties** contesting LS polls from 2009 to 2024.
- **14% candidates** have declared serious criminal cases including charges related to rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, etc.
- 20% candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves.

Key Issues

- **Not following Supreme court order in full spirit:** It had instructed political parties in 2020, to give reasons for selection of candidates with criminal background.
- **Criminalisation of politics:** Higher chances of lawbreakers to become lawmakers.
- **Unchecked Growth of Registered, Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs):** From 2010 to 2021, over 100% increase in RUPPs raises concerns about potential tax evasion and money laundering.
 - ⊕ RUPPs are either newly-registered parties or those which have not secured enough percentage of votes in the Assembly or general election.
 - ⊕ **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act)** lays down requirements for registration of a political party with Election Commission of India (ECI).
 - ⊕ The RP Act does not confer explicit powers to ECI to **de-register any political party** for not contesting elections, holding inner-party elections, or submitting required returns.

Recommendation of report

- **Permanent disqualification of candidates** convicted for heinous crimes like murder, rape, smuggling, dacoity, kidnapping etc.
- Bringing political parties under the **Right to Information Act**.
- **Ensure trial of cases** in which the politicians are accused to be concluded in a time bound manner.
- SC being the ultimate custodian of "Justice and Rule of Law" should reprimand political parties and politicians for not following its order.

Manama Declaration calls for UN Peacekeepers (UNPK) in occupied Palestinian territory

Declaration, adopted by the **Arab League**, called for deploying **UNPK** until a **two-state solution** to the **Israel-Palestine** conflict is implemented.

- **Arab League** was founded in 1945 to promote **regional cooperation** and resolve disputes. It consists of countries from Middle East and North Africa.

About UN Peacekeeping

- **Genesis:** Began in 1948 when the UN deployed military observers to West Asia to observe the **Armistice Agreement**.
- **Aim:** Helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.
- **Guiding Principles:** Consent of the parties, Impartiality, Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
- **Deployment:** The **Security Council** determines UNPK deployment by adopting a resolution.
 - ⊕ The budget and resources are subject to **General Assembly** approval.
 - ◆ Every Member State of UN is **legally obligated** to pay their respective share towards peacekeeping.
 - ⊕ **Department of Peace Operations (DPO)** of UN provides political and executive direction to peacekeeping operations.
- **Success:** Since 1948, more than 70 peacekeeping operations have been deployed.
 - ⊕ Also, it received Nobel Peace Prize (1988).

India and UNPK

- It has contributed more than 2 Lakh **troops to UNPK** (amongst the highest contributors)
- **In 2007**, India became the **first country to deploy an all-women contingent** to a UN Peacekeeping Mission.
- Established a Centre for **UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK)** in **New Delhi** to impart niche training in peacekeeping operations.

Issues with UNPK: Troop contributing countries not fully involved at all stages of mission planning; lack of financial and human resources etc.

CDRI announces \$8 Million funding to Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) made this announcement at the **United Nations 4th International Conference on SIDS** held in **Antigua and Barbuda**.

- **Funding** is a component of CDRI's **Infrastructure for Resilient Island States Programme (IRIS)**.

About IRIS

- Aims to provide technical support and promote disaster and climate resilience of infrastructure assets in SIDS.
- Launched at **COP26** of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, held in **Glasgow, UK**.
- Contributes to the UN's **SAMOA Pathway (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action)** initiative.
 - ⊕ **SAMOA** aims to improve resilience of SIDS infrastructure to climate change and disasters, etc.
- Supported by countries like UK, Australia etc.

About SIDS

- Group of 39 States and 18 Associate Members of **United Nations regional commissions**.
- Dependent over funding due to **social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities**.
 - ⊕ E.g. Slow onset events such as **sea level rise** pose an **existential threat** to small island communities, requiring drastic measures such as relocation of populations.
- Recognized as a **special case** for their environment and development at the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992)**, also known as **Earth Summit**, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

About Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

- Partnership of national governments, UN agencies, multilateral development banks etc. to promote **the resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems**.
- Launched at the **UN Climate Action Summit in 2019 by India**.
- India is the permanent co-chair of the CDRI Governing Council and Executive Committee.
- **Members:** 39 countries and 7 organizations
- **Report:** Global Infrastructure Resilience Report etc.
- **Secretariat:** New Delhi

Earth Cloud Aerosol and Radiation Explorer (EarthCARE) Mission Launched

EarthCARE Mission is a joint venture between the **European Space Agency (ESA)** and the **Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)**.

- **Objective:** Provide a holistic view of complex interplay between **clouds, aerosols and radiation**, yielding new insight into **Earth's radiation balance** against the backdrop of the **climate crisis**.
- **Orbit Type:** Sun-synchronous
- **On-board Instruments:** Atmospheric Lidar, cloud profiling radar, multispectral imager (MSI), and broad-band radiometer.

Relationship between Clouds, Aerosol and Earth's Radiation Balance

- **Clouds:** Along with aerosols, clouds play key role in Earth's Heat Budget.
 - ⊕ They can either **cool** or **warm** the Earth's surface by reflecting **incoming sunlight** or **trapping outgoing infrared** radiation.
 - ⊕ The extent of clouds' warming or cooling effect on Earth depends on their shape, location, altitude, water content, and particle size.
- **Aerosols:** These are tiny particles such as **dust and pollutants** suspended in atmosphere.
 - ⊕ Directly they **reflect and absorb solar radiation** and **trap** outgoing radiation.
 - ⊕ And, indirectly they act as **nuclei for cloud formation**, which has a more substantial impact on the climate.
 - ⊕ Human activities like industrialization, agriculture, etc. significantly **alter atmospheric aerosol concentrations**, impacting regional climate patterns.

To know more about Heat Budget refer to the article 'NASA Launches Small Climate Satellite to measure heat lost from Earth's poles' of News Today 28th May, 2024.

IIT Bombay leading the Daksha project

It is leading in close collaboration with the **Physical Research Laboratory (PRL)**, **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR)**, **Raman Research Institute (RRI)**, etc.

About the Daksha project

- It is an ambitious proposal to build **two high-energy space telescopes for the study of explosive astrophysical sources**.
 - ⊕ **Each telescope** will be equipped with three types of sensors to cover **Low energy to high-range energy bands**
- **Objectives**
 - ⊕ Detect, localize and characterize **high-energy counterparts to gravitational wave sources**.
 - ⊕ High sensitivity detection and **studies of Gamma Ray Bursts (GRB)**
 - ◆ GRB are short-lived bursts of gamma-ray light, the **most energetic form of light**.
- **Significance of the project**
 - ⊕ The two satellites will orbit on opposite sides of earth to **give better coverage than existing missions**.
 - ⊕ Will localize the source of emission of intense gravitational waves **due to neutron star mergers** or other reasons.
 - ◆ Neutron stars are formed when a **massive star runs out of fuel and collapses**.
 - ⊕ **Primordial Black Holes (PBH) mass window** could be probed for the first time.
 - ◆ PBH are a type of black hole formed in the **first second after the birth of the universe**.

Other gamma ray detection mission

- **Astrosat:** India's multi-wavelength space observatory aimed at studying celestial sources in X-ray, optical, and UV spectral bands simultaneously.
- **Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope:** NASA's telescope observes gamma rays across a wide energy range
- **NASA's Swift observatory:** Studies gamma-ray bursts.

Also in News



Lignosat

Japan researchers have built the world's first wooden satellite named **Lignosat**.

- NASA and JAXA are collaborating in this Initiative.

About Lignosat

- Tiny cuboid craft and it will be sent into space by SpaceX rocket.
- Initiative aims to **combat space clutter** and promote more **environmentally friendly space activity**.
- **Material:** Magnolia wood, due to its **strength and resilience**.
- **Benefits:** Unlike traditional satellites (built with aluminium) which release harmful particles during re-entry whereas Lignosat will burn harmlessly.
 - ⊕ **Electromagnetic waves** can easily pass through wood, allowing for the **containment of instruments** within the **satellite's structure**. Eliminates the risk of instruments detaching and becoming debris.



RudraM-II

RudraM-II missile was successfully flight-tested from Su-30 MK-I.

About RudraM-II

- Indigenously **developed solid-propelled** air-launched missile, designed for air-to-surface operations.
- Developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- In 2020, RudraM, a new-generation **anti-radiation missiles (NGARMs)** was successfully tested.
 - ⊕ It is first indigenous ARM of Indian Air Force.
 - ⊕ It is equipped with the **Inertial Navigation System (INS)-Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation system and Passive Homing Head (PHH)**.
 - ◆ **PHH** can detect, classify and engage targets over a wide band of frequencies as programmed.



Colombo Process

India assumed the Chair of Colombo Process for **2024-26**, for the first time since its inception in 2003.

About Colombo Process

- Regional Consultative Process that provides platform for consultations on the management of **overseas employment and contractual labour**.
- Comprises of 12 Member States of Asia such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka etc.
 - ⊖ India is one of the **founding members**.
- **Thematic priority areas are:** Skills and Qualification Recognition Processes; Fostering Ethical Recruitment Practices, etc.
- **UN's International Organization for Migration** provides technical and administrative support to the Colombo Process.



RBI launches various Initiatives

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched three initiatives to enhance public **access to the central bank and facilitate regulatory approvals**.

Initiatives

- **PRAVAAH portal (Platform for Regulatory Application, Validation, and Authorisation):** Secure and centralized web-based portal to seek authorisation, license or regulatory approval.
- **Mobile Application for RBI Retail Direct portal:** Retail investors can transact in government securities using the mobile app.
- **Fintech Repository:** Comprehensive database containing information on the Indian fintech sector aims to provide a better understanding of the sector from a regulatory perspective.



Alaska's rivers turning orange

The rivers in Alaska are turning orange **due to the thawing of permafrost caused by climate change**.

- This thawing **releases toxic metals** that have been locked in the permafrost for thousands of years, making **rivers highly acidic**.
- Chemical analysis of the river water revealed **high levels of zinc, nickel, copper, cadmium, and iron**.

About Alaska

- State of the USA and **lies at the extreme northwest** of the North American continent.
- Bounded by the **Beaufort Sea and Arctic Ocean (North), Gulf of Alaska and the Pacific Ocean (South), Bering Sea and Chukchi Sea (west)**.
- It shares land boundary with **Canada** and **maritime boundary** with Russia.



World Employment and Social Outlook: May 2024 Update

The report is published by the **International Labour Organisation**.

Key highlights

- World unemployment to **fall slightly in 2024**.
- **183 million people** are unemployed (actively looking for work).
- **45.6 % of women** (aged 15 and above) are employed, compared to **69.2 % of men**, a gap of **23.6%**
 - ⊖ Reason for such gap: **family responsibilities (marriage and parenthood)**.
 - ⊖ Also, women receive **lower labour income than men**—especially in the **developing world**.
- Informal workers have grown from **1.7 billion in 2005 to 2.0 billion in 2024**.



Sharavathi River

The National Green Tribunal tells Karnataka govt to curb illegal sand mining in Sharavathi river.

About Sharavathi River

- West flowing river which drains into the Arabian Sea.
- **Origin:** Ambutirthha (Western Ghats) in Shimoga district of Karnataka.
- **Tributaries:** Haridravathi, Yennehole, Nagodi, etc.
- **Water Falls:** Jog falls (one of the highest plunge waterfall)
- **Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary** is located in the Sharavathi River Valley.
- The **Mahatma Gandhi Hydroelectric Power Station** is built on it.



Microcephaly

As per recently studies, **SASS6 (SAS-6 Centriolar Assembly Protein) gene's** may be responsible for causing microcephaly.

- SASS6 is a **Protein Coding gene**. It is a central component of **centrioles** (paired barrel-shaped organelles located in the cytoplasm of animal cell).

About Microcephaly

- Condition in which a **baby's head is much smaller than normal**.
- Occurs when there is a problem with **brain development** in the womb or when the brain stops growing after birth.
- **Causes:** Variety of genetic factors, viral infection such as Zika etc.

Personality in news



Raghoji Bhangre

The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** observes Raghoji Bhangre's martyrdom.

About Raghoji Bhangre (1805-1848)

- He was a **tribal leader** born in Devgaon village of the Ahmednagar district, in present-day Maharashtra.
- He was from the **Koli community**.
- He was the son of **Ramji Rao Bhangre** who also resisted **British rule** and was subsequently hanged in Cellular Jail.

Key contributions:

- Bhangre led a **campaign against exploitative moneylenders and colonial rule**.
- Led Koli community against the **exploitative British government**.
- He was eventually captured in **1847 and later hanged**.

Values: Courage, patriotism, etc.

