

# NEWS TODAY

## Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) released a booklet titled 'Decisive Battle with Left Extremism'

- ▶ Booklet assesses current status of **Left-wing Extremism (LWE)** in India and **multi-pronged strategy** adopted by Union Government for peace, stability, and development in LWE-affected areas.
- ▶ LWE or Naxal insurgency in India originated in a **1967 uprising in Naxalbari** (West Bengal) by **Communist Party of India (Marxist)**.
- ▶ **Current status of LWE**
  - ⊕ Number of **LWE-affected districts** reduced to **45 (in 2022)** compared to **96 (in 2010)**.
  - ⊕ **Incidents of violence reduced by 76%** between 2010 and 2022.
  - ⊕ **Most LWE Affected Districts** (districts contributing approximately 90% of LWE violence) came down to 25 in 2021.
- ▶ **Initiatives to counter LWE**
  - ⊕ **National Policy and Action Plan** to address LWE approved in **2015**.
    - ◆ This led to development of **operational strategy 'SAMADHAN'** which included Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, etc.
  - ⊕ **Security related measures:** Security Related Expenditure scheme, Scheme for construction of Fortified Police Stations, redeployment of CRPF Battalions, etc.
    - ◆ It also included offensive strategies such as joint operations to entangle naxals, financial choking, establishment of separate vertical within NIA for investigation, etc.
  - ⊕ **Developmental interventions:** Civic Action Programme, Road Connectivity Project, Eklavya Model Residential schools, Aspirational District Programme, etc.

### Reasons for Persistence of LWE

- ▶ **Socio-economic:** Land alienation, social exclusion based on castes, sub-optimal access to basic amenities like education, healthcare, etc.
- ▶ **LWE strategies:** Exploitation of local grievances, deep roots in local communities, etc.
- ▶ **Governance issues:** Ineffective implementation of Forest Rights Act and PESA Act, state-highhandedness as reflected in policies like Salwa Judum, etc.

## About 36% Rajya Sabha Candidates declared criminal cases against themselves: ADR

- ▶ **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** published a **report based on analysis of criminal background, financial, education, and other details of candidates contesting Rajya Sabha polls later this month.**
- ▶ **Criminalization of Politics (CoP):** Includes direct entry of criminals into political parties and legislature, through elections and use of criminal methods and tactics to influence political processes and procedures.
- ▶ **Current status of CoP in India [ADR Report (Sep, 2023)]**
  - ⊕ **40% sitting MPs have declared criminal cases** against themselves.
  - ⊕ **25% sitting MPs have declared serious criminal cases** such as murder, crimes against women, etc., against themselves.
- ▶ **Reasons for CoP:** Lack of inner-party democracy among political parties, nexus between criminals and political parties, narrow self-interest of people based on identities like caste, religion, etc.
- ▶ **Impact of CoP:** Undermining democracy and electoral processes, weakened governance and rule of law by making law-breakers into law-makers, negative role models for youth, etc.
- ▶ **Measures taken against CoP**
  - ⊕ **Legislative: Section 8(3) of Representation of People Act, 1951** disqualifies legislators convicted for a sentence of at least 2 years for a period of 6 years since his release.
  - ⊕ **Judicial pronouncements:** Supreme Court ordered **mandatory publication of criminal records** of candidates by political parties. (**Public Interest Foundation Case, 2018**)

### Important Recommendations regarding CoP

- ▶ **Disqualification on framing of charge** for certain offenses. [**Law Commission (244th Report)**]
- ▶ **State funding of elections** to reduce cost of elections and entry of black money in politics. [**Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990)** and **Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998)**]
- ▶ **Institutionalization and legislation for political parties** to ensure inner-party democracy. (**NCRWC, 2002**)

## Prime Minister launched Initiatives for Cooperative sector

### Key initiatives include

- ⊕ **Pilot project for 'World's Largest Grain Storage Plan'** in Cooperative Sector: It spans 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in 11 States.
  - ◆ Project aims to **integrate PACS godowns into food grain supply chain**, enhancing food security and economic development.
  - ◆ It is **supported by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** and led by National Cooperative Development Corporation.
  - ◆ It is implemented through **convergence of existing schemes** like Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, Agriculture Marketing Infrastructure, etc. to **enable PACS participation in project to avail subsidies and interest subvention benefits** for infrastructure development.
- ⊕ **Expansion of PACS:** Additional 500 PACS across country will **facilitate construction of godowns** and other agricultural infrastructure.
- ⊕ **Computerization of 18,000 PACS** to modernize farming, and empower small and marginal farmers.
- **Co-operative society** is a voluntary association of individuals having common needs who join hands for achievement of common economic interests.
  - ⊕ Among **300 largest cooperative societies** of world, **three societies of India** namely **Amul**, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (**IFFCO**) and Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (**KRIBHCO**) are included.

#### About PACS

- **Village level cooperative credit societies** that serve as last link in three-tier cooperative credit **structure headed by State Cooperative Banks**.
- PACS provide **short term and medium term agriculture loans** to farmers.

#### Steps taken to promote Co-operatives Societies

- Separate Ministry of Cooperation.
- 'Sahkaar se Samridhhi' scheme.
- **97th (Amendment) Act, 2011** granted **constitutional status** to Cooperative Societies.
  - ⊕ It inserted **Part IX B** 'The Cooperative Societies', **Article 43B** in **Part IV** as **Directive Principle of State Policy** for promotion of cooperative societies.

## United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released a report titled "Role of Social Media in facilitating Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse"

- Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) involve the **use of information and communication technology as a means to sexually abuse and/or sexually exploit children**.
  - ⊕ As per National Human Rights Commission, **Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)** has increased by 250 to 300 percent on **social media in India**.
- **How Social Media facilitates OCSEA?**
  - ⊕ **Online predators:** Social media platform could be used by predators to entice and coerce children into posting graphic content.
  - ⊕ **Access to Inappropriate Content:** Children may purposefully or unintentionally gain access to sexually explicit material, easily accessible on social networking sites.
- **Impact of Child Sexual Abuse Material on Child**
  - ⊕ **Impair brain development, and cause psychological stress** like Anxiety, Post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.
  - ⊕ Potential to normalize or **desensitize children to inappropriate behavior**.
  - ⊕ **Leads to communicable and non-communicable diseases** like sexually transmitted infections including HIV, cardiovascular disease, and unintended pregnancies etc.
- **Recommendations from report**
  - ⊕ Make it **mandatory for online platforms to have clear, accessible, child-friendly mechanisms** for children to report concerns.
  - ⊕ Social media platforms and service providers should **publish periodic transparency reports**.

#### Steps taken to curb OCSEA

- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** Sections 66E, 67, 67A, and 67B of IT Act impose **stringent penalties and fines for online transmission** of obscene or pornographic content including CSAM.
- **IT Rules 2021** curb circulation of CSAM on social media platforms.
- **Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention/ Investigation Unit** set up by CBI.
- YouTube uses an **automatic tool called Child Sexual Abuse Imagery Match to weed out CSAM**.

## UAE dropped from FATF's financial crime Watch List

- ▶ At the recently held Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary meeting, UAE was confirmed to have been dropped from its 'Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring' (Grey list).
  - ⊕ Additionally, Gibraltar, Barbados, and Uganda have also been removed from FATF's Grey List.
  - ⊕ Kenya and Namibia have been added to the Grey List.
- ▶ **FATF's Black and Grey Lists**
  - ⊕ FATF publicly lists countries with weak measures to combat Money Laundering (ML) and Terrorist Financing (TF) regimes in two documents:
    - ◆ **High-Risk Jurisdictions subject to a Call for Action** (i.e. "Black List"): Jurisdictions with serious strategic deficiencies to counter ML, TF, and proliferation financing.
    - ◆ **Grey List:** Jurisdictions with strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter ML, TF, and proliferation financing.
  - ⊕ Currently, there are only 3 countries (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, and Myanmar) in FATF Black List.
- ▶ **Significance of UAE's removal from Grey List for India**
  - ⊕ Boost to investment in Indian Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).
    - ◆ A 2021 Circular from RBI stated that "investments in NBFCs from FATF non-compliant jurisdictions shall not be treated at par with that from the compliant jurisdictions."
  - ⊕ Reduced compliance cost and cost of funding for financial institutions and individuals operating in UAE.

### About FATF

- ▶ Established in 1989 by G7 countries to combat money laundering.
- ▶ In 2001, its mandate was expanded to also combat terrorist financing.
- ▶ Since 2019, FATF has had an open-ended mandate, after originally operating under fixed-terms.
- ▶ **Member Countries:** 39, including India.
  - ⊕ India was admitted in 2010 as 34th member.

## Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23

- ▶ HCES is designed to collect information on consumption of goods and services by households.
  - ⊕ It is conducted by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) every five years.
- ▶ **Utility of HCES**
  - ⊕ Collects information on demographic particulars of households which are useful for understanding consumption and expenditure pattern, standard of living and well-being of households.
  - ⊕ HCES data play a key role in reviewing critical economic indicators, including GDP, poverty levels, and Consumer Price Inflation.
- ▶ **Key findings of HCES**
  - ⊕ Rural and Urban average monthly consumption spending per person increased to Rs 3,773 and Rs 6,459 per month (more than doubled since 2011-12).
  - ⊕ MPCE is highest in Sikkim for both rural and urban areas and lowest in Chhattisgarh.
  - ⊕ Share of expenditure on food in rural India was 46% and in urban India was 39%.
- ▶ **About NSSO**
  - ⊕ Headed by Director General, it is responsible for conduct of large scale sample surveys in diverse fields on All India basis.
  - ⊕ Responsible for nationwide household surveys on socio-economic subjects including unemployment, Annual Survey of Industries, etc.
  - ⊕ **National Statistics Office (NSO)** consists of Central Statistics Office (CSO) and NSSO. CSO is an attached Office and NSSO is subordinate Office under MoSPI.

## Also in News



### Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs)

- ▶ Reserve Bank of India has allowed banks and non-banks to issue PPIs for public transit services.
  - ⊕ PPIs will contain "Automated Fare Collection" application related to toll collection, parking etc.
- ▶ **About PPIs**
  - ⊕ Payment instruments that facilitate purchase of goods and services against the value stored on such instruments.
  - ⊕ Issued as smart cards, internet wallets etc.
  - ⊕ While these instruments can be reloaded, withdrawing cash, refund, or fund transfer will not be permitted in PPIs.
  - ⊕ Cash loading to PPIs shall be limited to Rs.50,000 per month subject to overall limit of PPI.



### Hunger Moon

- ▶ Full moon on February 24 was called as Hunger moon or Snow Moon or Storm Moon.
- ▶ **About Hunger Moon**
  - ⊕ February's full moon will miss Earth's shadow, because moon's orbit is tilted by five degrees to the plane of the Earth's orbit, and therefore Earth won't be directly between the sun and the moon.
  - ⊕ Called as Hunger Moon by Native Americans due to challenges faced in hunting due to adverse weather during this period.
  - ⊕ Called as Snow Moon due to heavy Snowfall in North America in February.



### Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFDA)

- India has opposed China-led IFDA proposal at the WTO.
- **About IFDA**
  - ⊕ First mooted in 2017, it aims to improve investment climate and promote international cooperation to facilitate flow of FDI between WTO members.
  - ⊕ **Potential Benefits:** Clear and consistent global benchmark for investment facilitation, anchoring domestic investment facilitation reforms, global forum to promote best investment facilitation practices, etc.
- **Reasons for India's opposition:** Investment, as a subject, falls outside the mandate of WTO, India is fundamentally against plurilateral pacts on multilateral platforms such as WTO, etc.



### Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)

- Armenia has withdrawn its participation from Russia-led security bloc CSTO.
- **About CSTO (HQ: Moscow)**
  - ⊕ Originates from treaty signed in 1992 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
  - ⊕ Subsequently, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus joined it. Treaty came into force in 1994.
  - ⊕ **Six Current Members:** Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Belarus.
  - ⊕ In 2023, Belarus presided in CSTO.
  - ⊕ It is an intergovernmental military alliance between Russia and other former Soviet republics.
  - ⊕ **Objectives** of CSTO include provision of national and collective security, intensive politico-military cooperation, foreign policy coordination on international and regional security issues, establishment of multilateral cooperation mechanisms etc.



### Dharma Guardian

- 5th edition of Joint Military Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' between the Indian Army and Japan Ground Self Defence Force commenced in Rajasthan.
- It is an annual exercise and conducted alternatively in India and Japan.



### G-33

- G-33 calls for progress on agricultural trade ahead of 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC-13).
- **About G-33**
  - ⊕ Comprises 47 countries and also called "Friends of Special Products" in agriculture.
  - ⊕ **Coalition of developing nations** advocating for flexibility to undertake limited market opening in agriculture, with India, China, and Indonesia among its members.
  - ⊕ **Key demands:** Recognize Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), importance of public stockholding for food security purposes, etc.



### Sudarshan Setu

- Prime Minister has inaugurated Sudarshan Setu in Gulf of Kutch.
- **About Sudarshan Setu (Signature Bridge)**
  - ⊕ India's longest cable-stayed bridge with solar panels installed on upper portions of the footpath, generating one megawatt of electricity.
  - ⊕ **Four-lane bridge** connects Okha mainland and Beyt Dwarka island in Gujarat.
  - ⊕ It will ease transportation and reduce time of devotees travelling between Dwarka and Beyt-Dwarka.
  - ⊕ It features a footpath adorned with verses from Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna on both sides.



### Non-pollen Palynomorphs (NPPs)

- New research has developed a modern analogue for pollen and non-pollen Palynomorphs of Kaziranga National Park that can help in interpretation of past vegetation and climate.
- Palynomorphs are microscopic structures abundant in most sediments and sedimentary rocks, and are resistant to routine pollen-extraction procedures including strong acids, bases, acetolysis, etc.
- NPPs are microfossils other than pollen and spores from vascular plants (such as cyanobacteria, fungi, invertebrates, testate amoebae, etc.) observed in samples prepared for pollen analyses.

## Places in News



### Ukraine (Capital: Kyiv)

- Russia claims capture of Avdiivka city after Ukraine withdraws from key city.
- **Political Boundaries**
  - ⊕ Situated in eastern part of European continent.
  - ⊕ Bordered by Belarus (north), Russia (east), Moldova and Romania (southwest) and Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland (west).
  - ⊕ **Water bodies:** Sea of Azov and Black Sea (south).
    - ◆ In far southeast, Ukraine is separated from Russia by Kerch Strait, which connects Sea of Azov to Black Sea.
- **Geographical features**
  - ⊕ **Major rivers:** Dnieper, Dniester, Danube, etc.
  - ⊕ **Highest Point:** Mount Hoverla.
  - ⊕ **Climate Type:** Mostly Temperate.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI