

NEWS TODAY

Justice Hema Committee Report on Sexual Harassment of Women in Malayalam Cinema

Report formulated on the directions of the Kerala Government highlighted issues like existence of 'power group', couch casting, lack of essential facilities such as toilets, changing rooms, safe transportation, etc.

➤ The issues highlighted by the Committee rekindled the **#MeToo Movement** and **sexual harassment of women at workplace**.

Reasons for Sexual Harassment at Workplace

- **Male Domination:** Sexual demands for rising into higher positions.
- **Online Harassment or Cyberattacks:** Trolling; threatened with vulgar pictures, videos, etc.
- **Legal non-compliance:** Absent or inefficient **Internal Complaint Committee (ICC)** mandated under the **POSH Act, 2013**.
 - ⊕ ICC is mandatory in all establishments employing 10 or more persons, with a **majority of women membership**.

Major Recommendations

- **Characterisation of Women in cinema:** Depicting as holders of powerful positions like Civil Servants, Ambassadors, leaders, etc.
- **Gender Awareness Training Program:** Challenging the **monopoly of power** enjoyed by men; projecting women equal to men.
- **Redefining Masculinity and Femininity:** Masculinity to be equated to **justice, equality, and compassion** instead of violence and aggression.
 - ⊕ **Femininity to be divorced from passiveness and silent suffering.**
- **Creation of a Welfare Fund:** For the support of women in job break due to child bearing, health or other responsibilities.

Other measures taken to address Sexual Harassment at Workplace

- **Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1987**
- **Vishakha and Others Vs State of Rajasthan (1997):** SC established duty of the employer to deter sexual harassment acts.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:** Chapter V deals with sexual offenses against Women and Children.
- **Government initiatives:** SHe-Box, Working Women Hostel, etc.

Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) endorse the Australia-funded Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI)

PPI is **designed to elevate the law enforcement capabilities of Pacific nations**, ensuring they are better equipped to handle law and order challenges and internal security threats.

- PPI aligns with the **Pacific Islands Forum's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent**
- Analysts see it as a **move to limit China's influence over Pacific security**.

About PIF

- It is the region's premier **political and economic policy organization** and works towards a **Pacific Vision of peace, harmony, and prosperity**.
- Founded in 1971, PIF has **18 members** across Pacific Ocean. (Refer Infographic)

Issues Faced by Pacific Countries

- **Climate Change:** PIF members are the worst affected, due to sea level rise, ocean warming, acidification, etc.
- **Geopolitical Power struggle:** Between China and the US for influence over the region.
- **International Drug Trafficking:** Pacific Islands are used as a stop on transnational narcotics smuggling routes from Asia and the Americas.

India's engagement with Pacific Region

- **Significance:** Pacific Islands are vital for India's **energy security and maritime interests**, in line with a broader strategy of ensuring a **free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region**.
- **Initiatives:** **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (2019)**, **Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (2014)**, etc.

Forum Members



Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) launched Voluntary Vehicle Modernization Program or Vehicle Scrapping Policy

The policy targets **voluntary scrapping of unfit commercial and passenger vehicles** strictly based on their fitness, irrespective of vehicle age.

- It phases out unfit polluting vehicles **through Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) and Automated Testing Stations (ATSs)**.
- Under this, Multiple Commercial and Passenger Vehicle Manufacturers would offer discounts for a period of two years and one year respectively against a **Scrappage Certificate**.

Significance of Vehicle Scrappage

- **Reduce pollution:** Scrapping current End-of-life vehicles (ELVs) cause **15-20% reduction in Vehicular emissions**.

⊖ 1 old car emits gases equivalent to 11 new cars while 1 old truck emits gases equivalent to 14 new trucks (MoRTH).

- **Improve fuel efficiency:** Leading to reduced maintenance cost.
- **Ensure Formalization:** Transforms the existing informal vehicle scrappage ecosystem.
- **Availability of low-cost raw materials:** For automotive, steel and electronics industry
- **Others:** Boost sales, generate employment etc.

Challenges with the Vehicle Scrappage in India

- **Inadequate numbers of registered scrapping facilities:** Presently, only sixty-plus (60+) RVSFs across 17 States / UTs and seventy-five (75+) ATSs across 12 States / UTs operational in the country.
- **Dismantling and Disposal of hazardous wastes:** Usually involving informal sector working without modern equipment posing environmental and health hazards.

Commercial Vehicles (CVs)



- Registration of vehicles is linked to **validity of the fitness certificate**
- CVs undergo fitness test **every 2 years** for first 8 years and annually thereafter

Private Vehicles (PVS)



- First registration is valid for **15 years**
- Valid fitness certificate is **necessary for renewal** of registration after 15 years. Renewal is valid for 5 years

Fitness would be mandated through Automated Testing Stations for vehicles

- From 1st April 2023, fitness testing for **Heavy Commercial Vehicles** proposed to be **mandated** through Automated Testing Stations only.
- For **all other classes of CVs as well as PVS**, fitness testing through Automated Testing Station proposed to be **mandated in phases from 1st June 2024**.

If a vehicle fails an automated fitness test, one re-test after the necessary repair/rectification, and re-inspection if ordered by the Appellate Authority, it will be declared an ELV

Union Cabinet approved expansion of 'Agriculture Infrastructure Fund'

Recently, Union Cabinet approved **progressive expansion in Central Sector Scheme** of financing facility under 'Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)' to make it more **attractive, impactful, and inclusive**.

Key highlights of the recent expansion of AIF

- **Viable Farming Assets:** To allow all eligible beneficiaries of scheme for creation of infrastructure covered under 'viable projects for building community farming assets'.
- **Integrated Processing projects:** To include integrated primary and secondary processing projects in list of eligible activities under AIF.
- **PMKUSUM Component-A:** To allow convergence of Component-A of PM-KUSUM with AIF for farmer/group of farmers/ Farmer Producer Organizations/ Cooperatives/ Panchayats.
- In addition to **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)**, now **NABSAnrakshan (wholly owned subsidiary of NABARD)** has also been proposed to **extend AIF credit guarantee coverage of FPOs**.

About Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)

- It is a **medium - long term debt financing facility** for investment in viable projects for **post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets** through **interest subvention and credit guarantee support**.
- **₹ 1 Lakh Crore** will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with **interest subvention of 3% per annum** and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE for loans up to **₹ 2 Crores**.

Issues with Agriculture Infrastructure in India

- **Upstream (Production and initial processing):** Inadequate irrigation infrastructure (~51% **rained agriculture in net sown area**), poor farm mechanization (47% in 2022), inadequate soil testing facilities, limited cold-storage infrastructure, etc.
- **Downstream (Post-harvest, processing, and distribution):** Limited food processing facilities, inefficient supply chain management, poor **market intelligence** leading to '**cobweb phenomenon**', etc.

Death of Namibian cheetah at Kuno National Park (KNP) in MP

This was the only free ranging cheetah to have survived in Kuno. With this death, KNP is left with 24 cheetahs, including 12 adults and as many cubs.

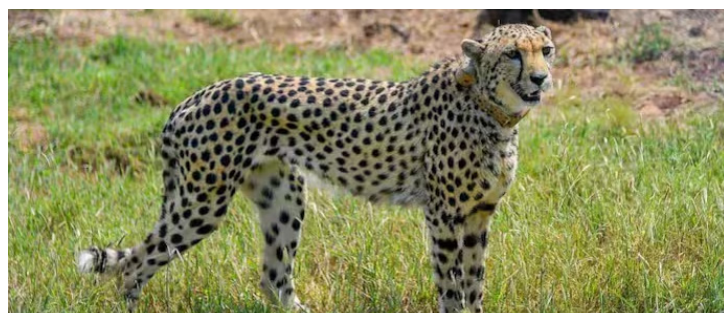
Background

- **Project Cheetah (2022)** was initiated to introduce the only extinct large carnivore species, the Cheetah.
 - ⊖ The Cheetahs were **sourced from South Africa and Namibia**.
 - ⊖ Conservation efforts will safeguard the prey base, including threatened species, and **protect other endangered species in grasslands and open forest ecosystems**.

Challenges faced by Cheetahs in Kuno National Park

- **Biorhythm challenges:** Due to the differences in circadian rhythms between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, some cheetahs developed thick winter coats during the Indian summer and monsoon, anticipating the African winter.
 - ⊖ As reported, to avoid biorhythm complications, **India considered sourcing new cheetahs from Somalia, Tanzania, Sudan** and other range countries closer to the equator or in the Northern Hemisphere.
- **Low prey density :** The overall prey density of Kuno is around 22 individuals per km. Density of 35 to 40 individuals per km is required.

To manage the cheetah population in KNP, currently Gandhi Sagar and Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuaries (MP) are being considered.



Union Cabinet approved 12 New Industrial Nodes/ Cities under NICDP

Recently, **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** approved 12 new project proposals under **National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP)** spanning across 10 states and planned along 6 major corridors.

Key highlights of the projects approved

- **Smart Cities and Modern Infrastructure:** New industrial cities will be developed as **Greenfield Smart Cities** of global standards, built "ahead of demand" on the 'plug-n-play' and 'walk-to-work' concepts.
- **Area Approach on PM GatiShakti:** Projects will feature multi-modal connectivity infrastructure, ensuring seamless movement of people, goods, and services, aligned with **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan**.

About NICDP

- NICDP aims to develop **futuristic industrial cities as "Smart Cities" in India** which can compete with the best manufacturing and investment destinations in the world.
- **Implementing agency:** National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT).
- Currently, **11 Industrial Corridors** approved for implementation by the Union Government.



Also in News



Finternet

Recently, former chairperson of UIDAI Nandan Nilekani talked about "Finternet" as the future of financial systems at the **Global Fintech Fest 2024**

About Finternet

- It is a **vision for the future financial system: multiple financial ecosystems interconnected with each other** – much like the internet.
- It is **user-centric concept** introduced in a paper by **Agustin Carstens** (former head of Bank of International Settlements) and **Nandan Nilekani (UIDAI)**.
- **Leverages innovative technologies** such as **tokenization and unified ledgers**, including all kinds of **asset classes** into a robust regulatory framework.
- **Comprises of 3 U's:** User; Unified; Universal.



FM Radio in 234 new cities and towns

Cabinet approves rolling out **Private FM Radio to 234 uncovered new cities / towns** under Private FM Radio Phase III Policy.

- In the private FM Policy, the **focus shifted from Medium Wave (MW) to Frequency Modulated (FM) wave**.

Significance

- **Boost local dialect and culture**, and create employment opportunities.
- Many approved cities/towns are in Aspirational districts and LWE areas, **further strengthening Government outreach in these regions**.

The Cabinet also **approved the proposal to charge Annual License Fee (ALF) of FM channel as 4% of Gross Revenue** excluding Goods and Services Tax (GST).



CFA to Hydro Electric Projects (HEP) in NER

Cabinet approved the **Ministry of Power's proposal on Central Financial Assistance (CFA) towards Equity Participation by the State Governments of the North Eastern Region (NER)** for HEP.

Key Provisions:

- **Duration:** FY 2024-25 to FY 2031-32
- **Funding:** **10% Gross Budgetary Support (GBS)** for NER from Power Ministry's outlay.
- **Objective:** Support **hydro capacity** of about **15000 MW**.
- The Scheme provides for **formation of a Joint Venture (JV) Company for all the projects of a Central PSU with the State Govt.**
 - ⊖ **Only for viable HEPs.**
- **Significance:** investment/entrepreneurship in NER; contribute to India's Nationally Determined Contributions.



Northern Bald Ibis

Once extinct from Europe, Northern Bald Ibis have now returned to the continent.

About Northern Bald Ibis (Geronticus eremita)

- **Geographical range:** Historically located in the **European Alps, Northern Africa, and the Middle East**.
- **Habitat:** Semi-arid desert, steppe regions. They feed on rocky areas or cliffs that are located near a stream or river.
- **Reproduction:** **Monogamous birds** that only have one mate during their lifetime. They find their mate by using their **croop call**.
- **Behaviour:** Colonial bird that migrates seasonally. They live in groups that also flock together to the migrating habitat.
 - ⊖ Don't instinctively know which direction to fly to migrate without guidance of wild-born elders.
- **IUCN Conservation Status:** Endangered.



Mimetus spinatus and Mimetus parvulus

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) discovers 2 new spider species, Mimetus spinatus & Mimetus parvulus, from Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka & Ernakulam (Kerala) respectively.

About Mimetus spinatus and Mimetus parvulus

- Both belong to **spider family Mimetidae**, commonly known as pirate/cannibal spiders due to their unique predatory behavior.
 - ⌚ Total Mimetus species are 3 (including these 2) in India.
- **Mimetus spinatus** is characterized by a **medium-sized, pale yellow head** and dull grey-white abdomen, with scattered light green mottling.
- **Mimetus parvulus** is distinguished by **pale creamy-rose head** with dense grey-black mottling and a triangular-shaped, dull grey-white abdomen.

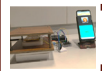


Quasar

Astronomers have discovered the **brightest quasar** ever observed, named **J0529-4351**, using European Southern Observatory's (ESO) Very Large Telescope (VLT).

About Quasar

- The word quasar is short for "**Quasi-stellar Radio Source**".
- Quasars are the active galactic nuclei (**bright cores of distant galaxies**) and they are **powered by supermassive black holes**.
- They are among the **most luminous objects** in the known Universe.
- Despite their brightness, due to their **great distance from Earth**, no quasars can be seen with an unaided eye.
- They emit **radio waves, visible light, UV rays, infrared waves, X-rays, and gamma-rays**.



Piezoelectric Polymer

Researchers from the **Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS)** have developed a security alert system based on **Piezoelectric Polymer nanocomposite**.

- CeNS is an **autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology**.

About Piezoelectric Polymer

- Piezoelectric polymers are class of material that can generate electric charges on the surface under pressure or strain, thus converting **mechanical energy into electrical energy, i.e. energy harvesting**.
- **Advantages:** They are widely used due to their **flexibility, lightweight, and processability**.
 - ⌚ They can be **easily shaped into large areas and curved surfaces**.
- **Applications:** Sensors, wearables, medical implants, consumer electronics, etc.



Chandipura virus

The WHO has warned that the current Chandipura virus infection in India is the largest in 20 years.

Chandipura virus (CHPV)

- CHPV is a member of the **Rhabdoviridae family, which includes rabies**.
- It is known to cause **outbreaks of acute encephalitis syndrome (AES) in western, central and southern parts of India**, especially during the monsoon season.
- It is **transmitted by vectors such as sandflies, mosquitoes and ticks**.
- As of now, there is **no antiretroviral treatment or vaccine accessible** for treatment.
- It was **first identified in 1965** in Chandipura (Maharashtra).

Places in News



Republic of Chile (Capital: Santiago)

The External Affairs Minister discussed bilateral issues in his latest visit to Chile.

Political Features

- **Location:** A long narrow country in South America, with a maximum width of 110 miles (~178 Km).
- **Neighbouring Countries:** **Peru and Bolivia** (North), and **Argentina** (East).
 - ⌚ Bordered by the **Pacific Ocean** on the West.

Geographical Features

- **Landforms:** Arranged as three parallel north-south units: the **Andes Mountains** (**longest mountain chain in the world**) to the east; the **intermediate depression or longitudinal valley**, in the center; and the **coastal ranges** to the west.
- **Desert:** Atacama (Driest Non Polar Desert)
- **Longest River:** Loa (rising from Andes)
- **Major Volcanoes:** Calbuco, Chaiten, Villarrica, etc.
- **Major Minerals:** Copper, Lithium, etc.
 - ⌚ Part of the **Lithium triangle**, along with **Argentina** and **Bolivia**.
- **Highest Peak:** Ojos De Salado.

