

NEWS TODAY

Union Law Ministry accepted Recommendation to establish Regional Benches of the Supreme Court (SC)

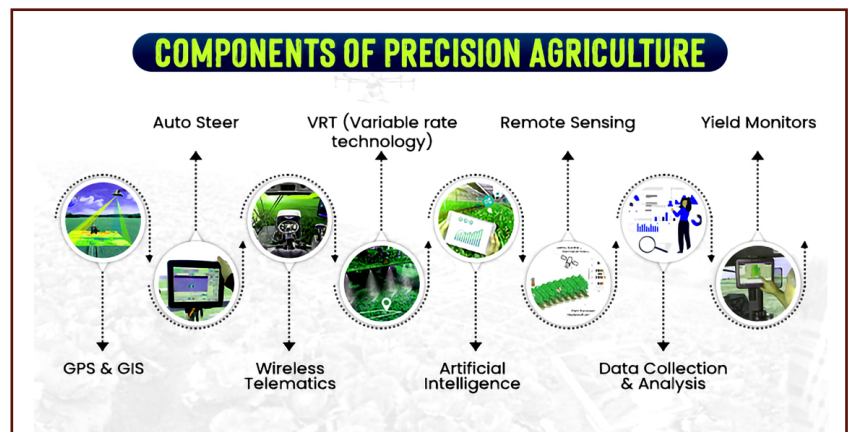
- **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice** informed Parliament about acceptance of recommendations made for judicial reforms in its **133rd Report**.
- **Constitutional Provision on Seat of SC:** Supreme Court shall sit in **Delhi**, or in such other place(s), as **Chief Justice of India** may, from time to time, appoint, with approval of the **President**. (**Article 130**)
- **Standing Committee Recommendations on Regional Benches (133rd Report)**
 - ⊕ SC may invoke **Article 130** to establish its **regional benches at 4 or 5 locations in the Country**.
 - ⊕ **Interpretation of Constitution and Constitutional matters** may be dealt with at **Delhi** and **regional benches** may decide **appellate matters**.
 - ⊕ **Decision of appellate benches** shall be treated as **final**.
- **Need of Regional Benches**
 - ⊕ Improved '**Access to Justice**' which is a fundamental right through -
 - ◆ taking **justice to doorsteps of common citizens**.
 - ◆ reduced **cost of litigation**
 - ◆ overcoming **language barrier, etc.**
 - ⊕ May provide solution to **overflowing caseload of judiciary** by separating constitutional matters from appellate matters.
- **Challenges with Regional Benches:** Regional benches may lead to conflicting interpretation of laws undermining uniformity of judicial system, concerns related to impartial selection and assignment of judges, etc.

Law Commission Recommendations on Regional Benches of SC (229th Report)

- **Constitution Bench at Delhi** to deal with constitutional and other allied issues.
- **Four Cassation Benches to be set up in Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western regions** to deal with all appellate work of particular region.

Precision farming is the future of crop production: Director General (DG) Indian Council of Agricultural Research

- DG made the observation in the inaugural session of the national seminar on "**Smart Technologies for Sustainable Agriculture and Environment**".
- **Precision farming:** it is a farm management approach utilizing information technology to optimize crop and soil conditions for maximum productivity.
 - ⊕ It aims to **manage and distribute inputs on a site-specific basis**.
- **Impact of precision farming**
 - ⊕ **Improves yields on farms** and thus the profitability of agriculture.
 - ⊕ **Enables making strategic decisions** on crop management aspects.
 - ⊕ **Reduce the application of crop inputs** such as fertilizer, herbicide, fuel, and water.
 - ⊕ **Environmental benefits** like reducing fertilizer runoff in waterways.
- **Challenges:** High cost and complexity of the technologies involved, absence of uniform standards, concerns regarding farm data sharing and ownership, etc.
- **Government initiatives for technology in farming**
 - ⊕ **The Digital Agriculture Mission 2021–2025:** to encourage and speed up projects based on cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence.
 - ⊕ **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGPA):** to infuse modern information technologies in the farm sector.
 - ⊕ **Agri Stack** is the digital foundation being set up by the government.



In a first, CERN Scientists carry out LASER cooling of Positronium

- An international team of physicists from **Anti-hydrogen Experiment: Gravity, Interferometry, Spectroscopy (AEGIS)** collaboration has achieved this breakthrough.
 - ⊕ **AEGIS** is one of several **experiments at CERN's Antimatter Factory** with goal of **direct measurement of Earth's gravitational acceleration (g) on antihydrogen**.
 - ⊕ AEGIS is a **collaboration of physicists** from a number of countries in **Europe and from India**.
- **Positronium (Ps)**, discovered in 1951, is the **lightest known atom**, consisting only of an **electron (e⁻)** and a **positron (e⁺)**.
 - ⊕ Ps has a **very short lifetime**, annihilating into gamma rays in **142 billionths of a second**.
 - ⊕ Because it comprises **just two point-like particles**, the electron and its antimatter, it's a **perfect system for experiments under AEGIS**, provided it can be **cooled enough to measure it with high precision**.
- **Matter – Antimatter**
 - ⊕ Matter comes in many forms—**solids, liquids, gases, and plasmas** - consisting of **subatomic particles** that give them mass and volume.
 - ◆ Sub-atomic particles include **protons and neutrons** (also known as **baryons**), **electrons and neutrinos** (also known as **leptons**), and other particles.
 - ⊕ All subatomic particles either have their own **anti-twins** (antiquarks, antiprotons, antineutrons, and antileptons such as antielectrons) or straddle between matter and antimatter.
 - ◆ **Anti-particles** can combine to form **anti-atoms** and, in principle, could even form **anti-matter regions**.

About CERN (European Council for Nuclear Research)

- **Founded in: 1954**
- **Location:** Franco-Swiss border near Geneva.
- Has **23 Member States**.
- **India** is an **Associate Member** at CERN.
- **Mission:** To uncover what the universe is made of and how it works.

Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) issued First 'Equal Opportunity Policy for Transgender Persons'

- Policy has been issued in pursuance of **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** and **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020**.
- **Key highlights of the Policy**
 - ⊕ **Scope:** Applicable to all employees of MoSJE and its operations.
 - ◆ It will act as **guiding document** for business partner workforce, interns, trainees, etc.
 - ⊕ **Objective:** To create an atmosphere ensuring fair treatment of transgender individuals, free from discrimination, harassment, and bias, while establishing robust grievance redress mechanism.
 - ⊕ **Policy Statements**
 - ◆ **Non-discrimination and enabling work environment:** Prohibits discrimination based on gender identity in **recruitment, appointment, promotion**, etc.
 - ◆ **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Non-disclosure of gender identity without explicit consent.
 - ◆ **Access to Facilities:** Ensure infrastructure facilities (such as Unisex toilets) and amenities (such as hygiene products) are provided to transgender persons.
 - ◆ **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** To redress instances of experienced discrimination or harassment based on gender identity.
- **Challenges faced by Transgender Persons:** Social stigma and discrimination, sub-optimal access to basic amenities like healthcare, education, etc., vulnerable to physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, etc.

Measures taken for Welfare and Empowerment of Transgender Persons

- **National Council for Transgender Persons:** Established under Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
- **Government Initiatives**
 - ⊕ **Garima Greh:** Shelter Homes for Transgender Persons
 - ⊕ **National Portal for Transgender Persons:** To obtain certificate of identity and identity card without any physical interface.
- **NALSA Judgment (2014):** Transgender persons were **legally recognised as the 'third gender'**.

National Green Tribunal (NGT) highlighted inadequate addressing of arsenic and fluoride groundwater contamination

- NGT had taken suo motu cognizance of the matter based on the **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) report**.
- As per CGWB report, Arsenic was reported in **230 districts (in 25 states)** and fluoride was reported in **469 districts (in 27 states)**.
- **Impacts of these Contaminations**
 - ⊕ **Fluoride:** dental fluorosis, skeletal fluorosis and non-skeletal fluorosis, induces ageing.
 - ⊕ **Arsenic:** skin de-pigmentation, bronchitis, and skin, lung, bladder, and liver cancer.
 - ◆ Other adverse health effects include dermatological, neurological, respiratory, cardiovascular, immunological, and endocrine impacts.
- **Permissible limits:** The Bureau of Indian Standards has mandated the maximum permissible limit:-
 - ⊕ **For Arsenic** 0.01 mg/L and for **fluoride** 1.0 mg/L.
- **Reasons for**
 - ⊕ **Arsenic contamination:** weathering of minerals followed by subsequent leaching and runoff, anthropogenic activities such as mining, over-exploitation of groundwater etc.
 - ⊕ **Fluoride Contamination:** breakdown of rocks and soils and deposition of atmospheric particles.
- **Initiatives for Quality Water in India**
 - ⊕ **Jal Jeevan Mission** (potable tap water supply to every rural household).
 - ⊕ CGWB generates data on **groundwater and monitors its quality**.
 - ⊕ **The Ministry of Jal Shakti** has issued guidelines for the control and regulation of groundwater extraction.

India's emphasis on cultural diplomacy

- **Sacred Relics of Lord Buddha** and his two disciples **Arahata Sariputra and Arahata Maudgalyayana** displayed in Thailand.
- Also, India handed over a **list of 70 select documents to Oman** pertaining to Oman that are available in the **National Archives of India**.
- The above developments are **exemplification of India's Cultural Diplomacy**.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** It is the **exchange of ideas, information, art, language, and other aspects of culture among nations and peoples** to foster mutual understanding.
- **Cultural Diplomacy's significances for India:**
 - ⊕ **Important dimension of India's soft power.**
 - ⊕ Way to **prevent conflict and promote peace**. E.g. Kartarpur Corridor to create goodwill with Pakistan.
 - ⊕ **Instrument in regional and international cooperation**. E.g. Joint commemoration of 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's by India and Bangladesh
 - ⊕ Promotion of India's **tangible and intangible cultural heritage**. E.g. Yoga, Classical dances, Religious tourism.
- **Challenges**
 - ⊕ **Inadequate financing and lack of coordination** among various institutions engaged in the conduct of cultural power projection.
 - ⊕ **Shortage of skilled manpower** in Indian Missions/ Posts abroad.
 - ⊕ **Lack of clarity on the mandate** of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).
 - ⊕ **Absence of a national policy** on the projection of cultural soft strengths.

Also in News



Grey - zone Warfare

- At Raisina Dialogue 2024, India's Chief of Defence Staff talked about **Grey-zone warfare**.
- **Grey - zone warfare**
 - ⊕ Involves military actions which are **below a particular threshold to invite a response**.
 - ⊕ Seeks to **exploit operational space between peace and war** to change the status quo.
- **About Raisina Dialogue**
 - ⊕ India's **flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics**.
 - ⊕ Hosted by **Observer Research Foundation** in partnership with **Union Ministry of External Affairs**.
 - ⊕ **Theme of 2024 edition:** Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create.



Indian Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*)

- Indian Gharial spotted in Greater Kaziranga (Assam) after a gap of 75 years.
- **About Indian Gharial**
 - ⊕ **Distribution:** Major population occurs in **three tributaries of Ganga River - Chambal and Girwa in India and Rapti-Naryani in Nepal**.
 - ⊕ **Gharial reserves of India** are located in three States – **UP, MP, and Rajasthan**.
 - ⊕ **Habitat:** Resides exclusively in river habitats with deep, clear, fast-flowing waters and steep, sandy banks.
 - ⊕ **Conservation status:** **IUCN** (Critically Endangered), **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** (Schedule I), and **CITES** (Appendix I).
 - ⊕ **Behavioral Characteristics:** Unlike other crocodiles, they **feed on warm-blooded species** and some are known to **scavenge dead animals**.



Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) Scheme

- State Government of Odisha extends KALIA scheme by 3 years.
- About KALIA Scheme**
 - Objective:** To provide financial assistance to small and marginal farmers (SMF) including sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and landless agricultural households (LAH) in the state.
 - Comprehensive welfare solution** conceived as a **Direct Income Transfer (DIT)**.
 - Excludes medium and large farmers.**
 - Other benefits:** Scholarship for Children of KALIA beneficiaries, Livelihood packages for landless households, etc.
 - Synchronized with PM-KISAN** to provide annual benefit of ₹10000 to SMF (₹6,000 from PM-KISAN and ₹4,000, from KALIA).



Exercise 'DOSTI-16'

- 16th **biennial trilateral coast guard exercise** between **India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka** started.
 - Bangladesh** is participating as an observer.



Portals for a 'Modernized Media Landscape'

- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting launched 4 new media-related portals to **streamline media-related services** under its umbrella.
- The four new portals are**
 - Press Sewa Portal:** for automation of the process for newspaper registration.
 - NaViGate Bharat Portal:** single platform with an interactive user interface for government videos
 - National Register for Local Cable Operators:** To streamline regulatory processes in the cable television sector in the future.
 - Transparent Empanelment Media Planning and eBilling System for Central Bureau of Communication:** to enhance transparency and efficiency in media planning processes



Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (SLCPs)

- Climate and Clean Air Conference 2024 called for **international collaboration to phase-out SLCPs**.
 - Conference is an annual meeting of **Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)** which is a partnership of over 160 governments and organisations **committed to reducing SLCPs**.
- About SLCPs**
 - They are pollutants that **remain in atmosphere for much shorter period** than carbon dioxide, with much higher warming potential.
 - e.g., **Black Carbon, Methane, Tropospheric Ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)**.
 - Major sources:** Inefficient combustion of fuel, agricultural sector, waste sector, refrigeration and cooling, etc.



Energy Charter Treaty

- The UK to leave 'Outdated' Fossil Fuel Friendly Treaty ie. The Energy Charter Treaty.
- About The Energy Charter Treaty**
 - It provides a **multilateral framework for energy cooperation** that is unique under international law.
 - It entered into legal force in April 1998.
 - It is designed to **promote energy security** through the operation of more **open and competitive energy markets** while respecting the principles of sustainable development and sovereignty over energy resources.
 - Currently, there are **53 Signatories** and Contracting Parties to the Treaty.



Kala Azar

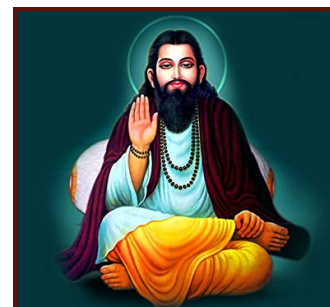
- India hit target towards eliminating **Kala Azar for the first time in 2023** by reporting less than one case per 10,000 population across all blocks
- About Kala Azar**
 - It is also known as **Visceral Leishmaniasis** and is a **protozoan parasitic disease**.
 - Causing agent:** infected female phlebotomine sandfly.
 - Symptoms:** irregular fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia.
 - The disease is endemic in **Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal**.
 - Areas infected:** Brazil, east Africa, and India

Personality in News



Sant Ravidas

- PM unveiled statue of Sant Ravidas on his **647th birth anniversary**.
- About Sant Ravidas**
 - Was a **poet, philosopher, and social reformer** during **15th century**.
 - Prominent bhakti saint of Nirguna Sampradaya in northern India.
 - Considered as **spiritual Guru of Meera Bai**.
- Key contributions**
 - Worked against system of untouchability.**
 - His padas, devotional songs, and other **writings are mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib** compiled by 5th Sikh's Guru, Arjan Dev.
 - Begumpura city** was pioneered by him as a city without any sorrow and full of peace and humanity.
- Values:** Compassion, Social justice, Egalitarianism, Humanism, etc.



Sant Ravidas



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI