

NEWS TODAY

Supreme Court issues directions for effective compliance of POSH Act

Directions were issued to all States and Union Territories for uniform implementation of **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act)**.

Directions issued by Court

- Appropriate Government should **notify District Officers** for every district to discharge functions under the POSH Act.
- **Duties of District Officers include:**
 - ⊕ Ensuring **constitution of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** within organizations in the district.
 - ◆ **Section 4** of POSH Act requires **every employer to constitute ICC**, which receives complaints, initiates enquiry, and recommend actions.
 - ⊕ **Constitute the 'Local Committee'** as stipulated under Section 6 of POSH Act.
 - ◆ **Local Committee** receives complaints of sexual harassment from establishments, **where Internal Complaints Committee has not been constituted** due to having less than 10 workers or if complaint is against the employer.
 - ⊕ Designate **one Nodal Officer in every Block/Taluka/Tehsil** in rural or tribal areas or municipality in urban areas.
- Jurisdiction of **Local Committee** extends to the area of concerned district.
- Every state could think of **instituting a SHeBox** for registering of complaints.
 - ⊕ **Sexual Harassment electronic Box (SHe-Box)** aims to provide a single window access to every woman to facilitate registration of sexual harassment complaints.

Key Provisions of POSH Act 2013

- **Definition of Sexual harassment:** It covers all forms of sexual harassment including physical contact, demands for sexual favors, sexually colored remarks, showing pornography, or any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal sexual conduct.
- **Applicability:** It applies to all workplaces, including government, private sector organizations, hospitals, non-governmental organizations, locations visited during employment (including employer-provided transport), and even residential spaces.
- **Complaint Committees:** Provides for establishment of **Internal Complaints Committee and Local Committee**.

Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary declared as the 8th Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh

The **other tiger reserves** in Madhya Pradesh are Kanha, Satpura, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Sanjay Dubri, Panna and Veerangana Durgavati.

About Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location:** Situated in Raisen and Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Major sites:** Encompasses a World Heritage Site "**Bhimbetka Rock Shelters**" and many other sites like Ginnourgarh Fort, POW camp, Keri Mahadeo, Jholiyapur dam etc.
- **Flora and Fauna:**
 - ⊕ The forest in Ratapani is **dry deciduous and moist deciduous type**, with **55 percent of area covered by teak**.
 - ⊕ **Major animals** are tigers, leopard, sloth bear, hyena, spotted deer, sambar deer etc.

Process of declaring Tiger Reserves in India

- **Tiger Reserves are notified by State Governments** as per provisions of **Section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** on the advice of the National Tiger Conservation Authority.
- **The following steps are involved in the notification:**
 - ⊕ The proposal is **obtained from the State**.
 - ⊕ In-principle approval is communicated from the **National Tiger Conservation Authority**, soliciting detailed proposals under section **38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
 - ⊕ **National Tiger Conservation Authority** recommends the proposal to the State after due diligence.
 - ⊕ The **State Government notifies** the area as a Tiger Reserve.

Indian Government efforts to protect Tigers

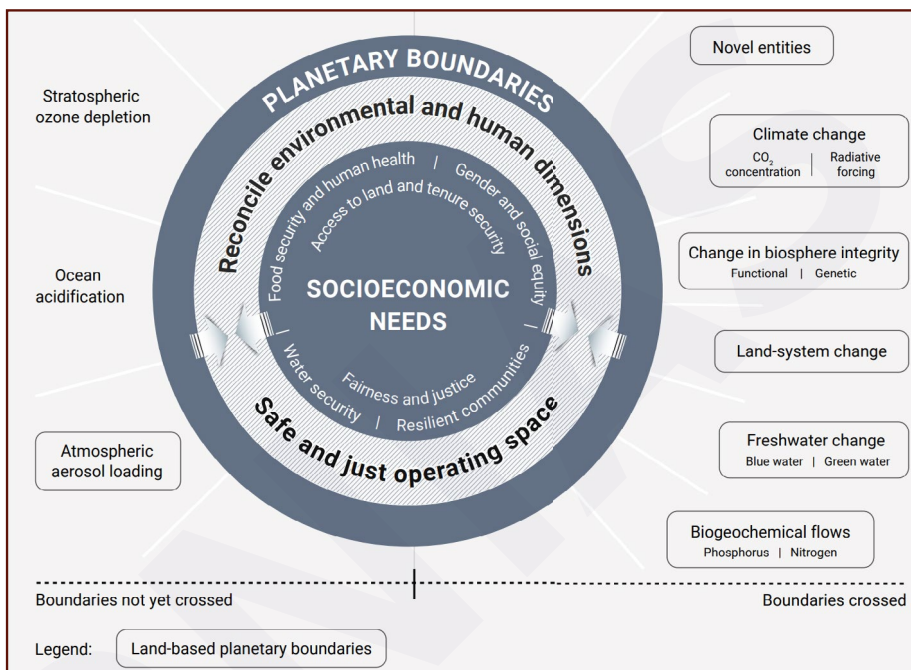
- **Project Tiger:** it is an ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change to provide assistance to the tiger States.
- **Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA/TS) accreditation of Tiger Reserves:** Till December 2023, a total of **23 tiger reserves of India have received CA/TS accreditation**.
- **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA):** India has launched IBCA to secure the future of **big cats and the landscapes they thrive in**.

Report titled 'Stepping back from the precipice: Transforming land management to stay within planetary boundaries' released

Report has been released by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in collaboration with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Key Highlights of Report

- **Centrality of Land:** Land is the **foundation of Earth's stability** as it regulates climate, preserves biodiversity, maintains freshwater systems and provides food, water and raw materials.
 - ⊕ Land is central to **seven of the nine planetary boundaries**, which are scientifically determined thresholds within which humanity can operate safely.
 - ◆ Crossing these thresholds can lead to **catastrophic environmental change and destabilize the Earth system.**
- **Land Degradation:** Driven by **human activities**, such as unsustainable agricultural practices, conversion of natural ecosystems, deforestation and urbanisation.
- **Impact:** Land degradation affects an area of **15 million sq km**, and 1.2 billion people globally.
 - ⊕ **Economic cost of land degradation** is estimated to range between 6.3 and 10.6 trillion US Dollar annually.



Recommendations of the Report

- **Enabling factors** such as supportive frameworks, economic incentives, clear property and resource-use rights, and effective coordination between actors.
- **Substantial public and private investments**, in particular better integration and prioritisation of sustainable land use in all national and international funding.
- **Scientific framework** like the planetary boundaries can serve as a practical guide for policymakers to make evidence based policy decisions.

Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024 passed in Rajya Sabha

It seeks to further amend the **Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948**.

- The Act regulates the **exploration and extraction of natural gas and petroleum**.

Salient features of the bill

- Delinking of **petroleum operations from mining operations**.
- **Expanded Definition of Mineral Oils:** Originally including only Petroleum and Natural gas has now expanded to include **any naturally occurring hydrocarbon, coal bed methane and shale gas/oil**.
 - ⊕ It also clarifies that mineral oils will not include **coal, lignite or helium**.
- Introduced concept of **"petroleum lease"**: It means a lease for the purpose of **prospecting, exploration, development, production, making merchantable, carrying away or disposing of mineral oils**.
- **Rule making power of Central Government:** It retains powers to regulate leases, conservation, and royalties, while adding provisions for **lease mergers, facility sharing, environmental protection, and dispute resolution**.
- **Decriminalising** the provisions of the Act by **introducing penalties**.
- **Adjudication of penalties:** Appeals against the decisions of the Adjudicating Authority will lie before the **Appellate Tribunal specified in the Petroleum and Natural Gas Board Regulatory Board Act, 2006**.

Significance of the amendment: Ensuring Energy access, security and affordability, Reduce import dependence, Attract investment in the sector and Robust enforcement mechanism.

About Petroleum and Natural Gas Board Regulatory Board (PNGRB)

- **Genesis:** It is a **statutory body** formed under the **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, of 2006**.
- **Functions:** Regulation of refining, transportation, distribution, storage, marketing, supply and sale of petroleum products and natural gas.
 - ⊕ One of the tasks of PNGRB is to **ensure competitive markets for gas**.
- Appeals against the decisions of PNGRB go before the **Appellate Tribunals for Electricity**.

FSSAI Issues Advisory for E-commerce Food Business Operators (FBOs)

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) advisory aims to ensure the safety, quality, and authenticity of food products being sold online.

Key Points of the Advisory

- **Regulatory Compliance:** E-commerce platforms must ensure food products sold comply with **Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations 2020**.
 - ⊕ Online claims must align with those on **physical labels to avoid misleading consumers**.
- **Food Safety and Hygiene:** Platforms must train **last-mile delivery personnel** to ensure that delivery staff are well-trained in food safety and hygiene practices.
- **Shelf-Life Requirements:** Food products delivered must have a minimum of **30% shelf life remaining, or at least 45 days** before expiry at the time of delivery.
- **Seller Accountability:** Platforms must prominently **display the FSSAI licence and registration numbers** of sellers and Hygiene ratings of the food business operators.

Significance of the advisory

- Essential for ensuring the **safety, quality, and authenticity of food products sold online**.
- Enhances **transparency and trust**, fostering consumer confidence and mitigating risks of **foodborne illnesses**.

About FSSAI

- **Established:** Under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Role:** Laying down **science-based standards** for articles of food and regulating their manufacture, store, distribution, and sale.
- **Organizational Structure:** It consists of a Chair person appointed by the Centre along with twenty-two members out of which one-third shall be women.

Plastic pollution treaty negotiations adjourn in Busan, South Korea

Countries **negotiating a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution** concluded their fifth session without finalization of a treaty.

- The Treaty being negotiated, has been mandated by a **2022 UN Environment Assembly resolution**.
 - ⊕ It seeks to **addresses the full life cycle of plastic**, including its production, design and disposal.

Factors leading to non-finalization of treaty

- **Production Capping:** Demand for **production cap goals** by European union, Latin American and African countries was opposed by countries including **India and China**.
- **Unclear definition:** **Lack of clear language** on elimination of certain plastic chemicals and products.
 - ⊕ Draft text clearly defined plastic and plastic products but **did not reflect definitions** of microplastics, nanoplastics, primary plastic polymers, and recycling.

India's stance

- **Impact on Development:** India stated its **inability to support any measures to regulate the production of primary plastic polymers** as it could impact development rights of nations.
- **Defining Scope:** Scope of instrument should be **limited to addressing plastic pollution only** without overlapping with the mandate of other multilateral environmental agreements.
- **Phase out period:** India did not support **inclusion of any list with phase out dates** at this stage.
- **Assistance:** Due consideration to national circumstances and capabilities should be given and **provision of financial and technical assistance**, including technology transfer to developing countries, should be included.

Plastic pollution

- **Status:** Globally, over **460 million metric tons of plastic** are produced every year, out of which **19-23 million tonnes of plastic waste leaks into aquatic ecosystems**.
- **Implications:** Plastic pollution can **alter habitats and natural processes**, reducing ecosystems' ability to adapt to climate change, directly affecting millions of people's livelihoods, food production capabilities and social well-being.
- **Link with Climate Change:** Around 98% of single-use plastic products are produced from fossil fuel, resulting in greenhouse gas emissions.

Also in News



MH-60R helicopters

Recently, U.S. approved \$1.17 billion deal to sell India support equipment for **MH-60R helicopters** under its Foreign Military Sales programme.

- Indian Navy commissioned **first squadron** of MH-60R Seahawk multi-role helicopters at **INS Garuda, Kochi**, in March 2024.
 - ⊕ These are part of a **\$2.6-billion Foreign Military Sales deal for 24 Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawk**.

About MH-60R helicopters

- These helicopters provide **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW)** capabilities.
- These can operate from **shore and ship**.
- It boasts **advanced digital sensors, including multi-mode radar, electronic support measures system, electro-optical/infrared camera, etc.**



Extrachromosomal DNA (ecDNA)

Studies reveal how **ecDNA drives cancer progression and drug resistance**.

About Extrachromosomal DNA (ecDNA)

- **ecDNA are small circular DNA fragments that float freely in the nucleus**, separate from chromosomes.
- **Genesis:** Formed due to **DNA damage (e.g., chromothripsis) or errors during DNA replication**.
- **Role of ecDNA in Cancer:**
 - ⊕ Found in **up to 90% of certain tumour types**, including brain tumours, liposarcomas, and breast cancers.
 - ⊕ ecDNA often contains multiple **oncogenes, promoting tumour growth and drug resistance**.
 - ◆ **Oncogenes** are mutated genes capable of causing cancer that are required to activate tumour growth.



South Korea's Martial Law

Recently the South Korean President declared Emergency Martial Law

- Since the establishment of the Republic of Korea, **martial law has been declared 16 times**. It was last declared in 1980.

About Martial Law

- **Martial Law:** It involves the **suspension of civilian governance, with military control over parliament, media, and political parties.**
- **Constitutional Basis:** According to **Article 77 of South Korea's constitution**, martial law can be proclaimed in times of national emergency to maintain public safety and order.



All-India House Price Index (HPI)

Reserve Bank of India released its quarterly House Price Index (HPI)

- **HPI: Increased by 4.3% year on year in quarter 2: 2024-25**, up from 3.3% in the previous quarter.
- **Bengaluru** saw the highest growth at 8.8%, while **Kanpur** experienced a decline of -2.0%.

About All-India Home Price Index (HPI)

- **Base:** 2010-11 = 100
- **Data Source:** Transaction-level data from registration authorities in 10 major cities.
- **Cities Covered:** Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Jaipur, Kanpur, Kochi, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai.



Restricted return InvITs

SEBI has proposed a **framework** for restricted return infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).

- An InvIT is like a **mutual fund**, which enables direct investment of money from investors in infrastructure projects to earn return.

About Restricted Return InvITs

- The sponsor of the InvIT can **offer an investor a certain fixed return or dividend expectation.**
 - ⊕ If the **return or dividend expectation is not generated** then the sponsor steps to make good that shortfall with its own funds. This protects the downside.
 - ⊖ But if the **dividend expectations are exceeded** then the **excess will go to the sponsor**. This caps the upside.



Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024

Lok Sabha passed **Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2024.**

Key Provisions

- It **amends key acts** including RBI Act 1934, Banking Regulation Act 1949, SBI Act 1955 etc.
- It **changes the definition of "fortnight"** for cash reserves (average daily balance with RBI) to **1st-15th or 16th-last day of each month**, for both scheduled and non-scheduled banks.
- It increases the **period (from 8 to 10 years)** prohibiting the director of a co-operative bank to hold office consecutively.
- Expands the scope of funds transferred to the **Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)** to include **unclaimed dividends, shares, interest, and bond redemption amounts for seven years.**



New Initiatives at UNCCD COP16

Three New Initiatives were launched at UNCCD COP16 under the chairmanship of Saudi Arabia. These initiatives include:

- **Riyadh Drought Resilience Partnership:** It will leverage public and private finance to support 80 of the most vulnerable and drought-hit countries.
- **World Drought Atlas:** Launched by UNCCD, in collaboration with European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) and other partners.
 - ⊕ It depicts the **systemic risks of drought across critical sectors** like energy, agriculture, river transport and trade etc.
- **International Drought Resilience Observatory (IDRO):** Launched by International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA).
 - ⊕ It is the first global, AI-powered data platform for building drought resilience.



Sugama Bharat Abhiyan

Prime minister marks 9 years of Sugama Bharat Abhiyan.

About Sugama Bharat Abhiyan

- Also known as **Accessible India Campaign**, it was launched in 2015.
- It aims to ensure **universal accessibility across three vital domains:** Built Infrastructure, Transport Systems, and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem.
- Although planned to conclude by March 2024, its objectives have been absorbed into the **Creation of Barrier-Free Environment Scheme** under the broader umbrella of the **Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA).**



Tropical Plant Subabul

Recently, researchers at the **Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati** have identified the therapeutic potential of Subabul in **managing insulin resistance related to type II diabetes.**

About Subabul (*Leucaena leucocephala*)

- It is a fast-growing traditional **medicinal leguminous tree native** to tropical and subtropical regions.
- It is **traditionally used by ethnic communities** for its nutritional value, with leaves and seeds consumed raw or cooked in soups and salads as a rich source of protein and fiber.



Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

Gharchola, a traditional wedding sari from Gujarat, has received the GI tag.

- Historically crafted in auspicious colors like **red, maroon, green, and yellow**, it is traditionally worn during **Hindu and Jain weddings.**

About GI Tag

- GI is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin** and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- In India, it is given under the **Geographical Indications (GI) of Goods Act, 1999.**
 - ⊕ The registration of a geographical indication is **valid for a period of 10 years, which can be renewed.**
- **Benefits:** It confers **legal protection** to Geographical Indications in India preventing unauthorised use by others in turn boosting exports.

