

NEWS TODAY

Growing calls for 'Right to Disconnect' in India amid concerns of Work-Life Balance

Of late, various sections in India have raised voices on the **need to bring a law on 'Right to Disconnect'** in the backdrop of death of a young female employee due to work stress.

- **'Right to Disconnect'** means that **employees are not obliged to reply to calls** made by employers after work hours and such an employee shall not be subject to any disciplinary action by employers.

Need for 'Right to Disconnect' in India

- **Psycho-Social:** **Weakens social bonds and leads to isolation** and may even elevate risk of mental health issues, cardiovascular diseases, etc.
- **Impact on women:** A recent report reveals that **Indian women in professional jobs**, such as auditing, IT, and media, **work more than 55 hours a week**.
- **Others:** Loss of productivity; insomnia, disrupted sleep cycles, etc., due to prolonged screen time, among others.

Status of 'Right to Disconnect' in India

Currently, India **lacks specific laws** recognizing right to disconnect from work.

- **Constitutional Provisions:** **Article 38** (directs state to promote welfare of people) and **Article 39(e)** (directs state to secure strength and health of its workers).
- **Judicial pronouncements:** **Vishakha v State of Rajasthan, 1997** (on safe working environment for women), **Ravindra Kumar Dhariwal and Ors v. UoI, 2021** (accommodate persons with disabilities).
- **Recent Initiative:** In 2018, a **Private Member's Bill** was introduced in Lok Sabha, which aimed to delineate the right to disconnect from work after working hours.

Global Position on 'Right to Disconnect'

- **France:** The **Labour Chamber of the French Supreme Court ruled in 2001** that an employee is under no obligation to work from home or take home files and working tools.
- **Portugal:** It has a 'Right to Disconnect' law, which makes it illegal for employers to contact employees outside working hours, except in emergencies.
- **Spain:** Public workers and employees have the right to switch off devices.
- **Australia:** Parliament gave employees the right to disconnect from work outside of working hours.

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) empowering women in rural areas: PM

Earlier a report by SBI also highlighted that **9 crore women no longer fetch water from outside** owing to 'JJM: Har Ghar Jal' initiative.

Significance of JJM for Women Empowerment

- **Skill Development:** Water availability at doorstep allows women to focus on **skill development** and **self-reliance**.
⊕ Also, time saved leads to a **7.4 percentage point increase** in women's participation in **agriculture** and **businesses**.
- **Leadership:** JJM mandates 50% of village water and sanitation committees members be women, prioritizing their needs in **water planning**, and enhancing **leadership roles**.
- **Employment Opportunities:** JJM is expected to generate 59.9 lakh direct employment boosting economic **opportunities for women**.

About JJM: Har Ghar Jal

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Jal Shakti
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Schemes
- **Objective:** Ensure every rural household has access to **safe and reliable tap water by 2024**.
- **Goal:** To develop '**WASH enlightened villages**' wherein the local communities are equipped to provide long-term assured water supply and sanitation services to all.
- **Focus on children:** Piped water supply in schools, anganwadi centres and ashramshalas
- **Key Components:** Ensuring **Water Quality, Bottom-Up Planning, Source Sustainability, Greywater Management, and Skill Development & Employment**.
- **Key achievement:** Rural coverage for tap water connection is raised to 79.31% from just 17% (3.23 crore households) in 2019.

ISRO successfully tests CE20 Cryogenic Engine

Recently, ISRO successfully carried out the **sea level hot test of its CE20 Cryogenic Engine** at ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.

About Cryogenic Engine

- Cryogenic technology involves using rocket propellants at **extremely low temperatures**, such as **liquid oxygen (LOX)** and Liquid Hydrogen (LH₂), which are combined as fuel and oxidizer in various proportions.
- Liquid oxygen stays in its liquid state at temperatures below -183°C, while liquid hydrogen remains liquid below -253°C.

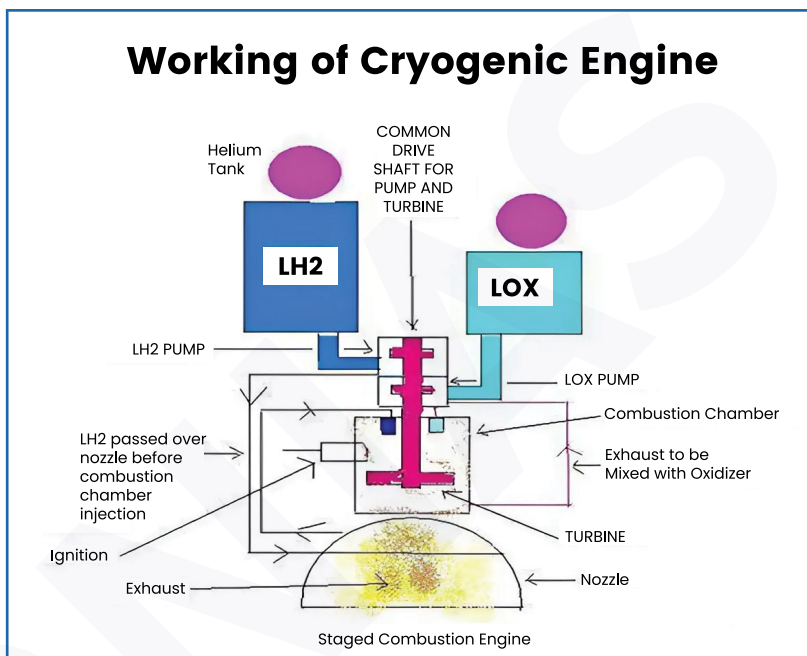
Features of CE20 Cryogenic Engine

- **Engine Restart Capability:** It features a multi-element igniter for restarting, crucial for missions like Gaganyaan, ensuring reliable performance in space.
- **Nozzle Protection System:** A new Nozzle Protection System was tested to prevent flow separation and vibrations, improving engine performance and testing efficiency.

Significance of Cryogenic engines for India's Space Programs

- **Boost to space program:** Cryogenic engines boost rocket efficiency and thrust, enabling India to launch powerful rockets with higher payloads for missions like Gaganyaan, satellite launches, and interplanetary exploration.
- **Indigenous development and self-Reliance:** India's mastery of cryogenic technology reduces reliance on foreign technology.
 - ⊕ India is **one of six countries**, along with the US, France, Russia, China, and Japan, to have developed its own cryogenic engines.

- **Enhanced payload capacity:** Cryogenic engines offer higher specific impulse, enabling rockets to carry heavier payloads.



Union Cabinet approves Bills on Simultaneous Polls

Recently, Union Cabinet approved **two Bills** related to the implementation of **simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies**.

- One of the Bills is to amend the Constitution to implement simultaneous polls while the other is to amend provisions in laws dealing with Union Territories with Legislative Assemblies.
- Previously, a **high-level committee, headed by former President Shri Ram Nath Kovind**, recommended a roadmap for holding simultaneous polls to Parliament, State Assemblies, and Local bodies.
- **Simultaneous Elections** means holding elections to the Lok Sabha, all the State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies i.e., Municipalities and Panchayats, together.

Need for Simultaneous Elections

- **Governance:** Frequent elections delay development programs and impact policy decision due to the imposition of Model Code of Conduct (MCC).
- **Financial burden:** Holding simultaneous elections can rationalize the massive expenditure incurred for conduct of separate elections every year.
- **Human resources:** It can also avoid diversion of security forces and other electoral officers (like Teachers) from their primary duties for prolonged periods.
- **Other:** Higher voter participation, reduced burden on courts, etc.
- **Concerns associated with Simultaneous Elections:** May adversely impact electoral prospects of regional parties, reduced political accountability due to public scrutiny once in 5 year, logistic issues such as requirement of large number of EVMs, etc.

High-level committee headed by Ram Nath Kovind recommendations

- **Constitutional Amendment:** Amendments to three Articles, insertion of 12 new sub-clauses in the existing articles and tweaking three laws related to Union Territories having legislative assemblies.
- **Single electoral roll:** To be prepared by Election Commission of India in consultation with the State Election Commission(s) by amending Article 325.
- **Simultaneous elections to municipalities and panchayats:** To be held within 100 days of the holding of the parliamentary and Assembly elections.
- **Appointed date:** Synchronising the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, the president shall notify the date of the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election as the appointed date.
- **Fresh elections:** To constitute a new Lok Sabha in the event of a hung House or a no-confidence motion, etc., only for the remaining term of the immediately preceding full term of the House.

India Launched the World's first Green Steel Taxonomy

Taxonomy (or classification) was launched by the **Union Ministry of Steel**.

Key features of Green Steel Taxonomy

- **Definition of Green Steel:** Steel with CO2 equivalent emission intensity of **less than 2.2 tonnes of CO2e per tonne of finished steel**.
- **Star Rating System** (based on greenness): The threshold limit for star ratings will be **reviewed every three years**. And the current threshold is
 - ⊕ **Five-star green-rated steel:** Emission intensity lower than 1.6 tonnes.
 - ⊕ **Four-star green-rated steel:** Emission intensity between 1.6 and 2.0 tonnes.
 - ⊕ **Three-star green-rated steel:** Emission intensity between 2.0 and 2.2 tonnes.
- **Nodal Agency:** **National Institute of Secondary Steel Technology (NISST)** will be nodal agency for measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) and issuance of **greenness certificates (issued annually)** and star ratings.

Importance of Green Steel Taxonomy

- **Advancing National Mission on Green Steel:** A proposed ₹15,000 crore mission under the **upcoming 'Green Steel Policy'** to support decarbonisation of steel industry.
- **Boosting Global Competitiveness** Helps Indian steel remain competitive amid global policies like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CABM). Positions India as a leader in green steel manufacturing.
- **Promoting Innovation and Growth:** Represent a transformative framework in steel production that will **foster innovation, and create a market for low-carbon products in India**.

Key Initiatives to decarbonise steel sector in India

- **National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency:** It is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC).
- **Perform Achieve & Trade (PAT) Scheme:** Market-based mechanism under NMEEE to enhance energy efficiency through **Energy Saving Certificates (ESCs)**.
- **Other initiatives:** Green Hydrogen Energy Mission, National Solar Mission, Steel Scrap Recycling Policy, 2019, etc.

Centre May Face Contempt Of Court, For Failing To Implement October 2023 Judgement On Manual Scavenging

In its October 2023 judgement (**Dr. Balram Singh v. Union of India**), the Supreme Court (SC) directed the Union and States to **eradicate manual scavenging and hazardous cleaning** in the country.

- However, it noted that such eradication has **not happened anywhere**, not even in one municipality, **despite the launch of the NAMASTE Scheme**.

About Manual scavenging

- **Definition:** When a person is engaged in **cleaning, carrying, or handling in human excreta** in an **insanitary latrine** or in an open drain or pit or on a railway track, etc.
- **Current Status:** As of 2021, India had 58,098 manual scavengers (**75% women**). Between 2018-22, 339 died cleaning sewers and septic tanks.
- **Violates Constitutional rights:** Particularly rights under Article 17 (abolition of untouchability) and **Article 21** (Right to life with dignity)
- **SC Directions (Dr. Balram Singh v. Union of India):**
 - ⊕ Increase sewer death compensation to **₹30 lakhs**.
 - ⊕ Compensation for **permanent disablement: ₹20 lakhs; other disablement to ₹10 lakhs**.
 - ⊕ Provide **scholarships and skill programs** for victim rehabilitation.
- **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013**
 - ⊕ **Prohibits Manual Scavenging**, however, cleaning excreta with **protective gear** is not **considered manual scavenging**.
 - ⊕ **Violation: of the act is punishable** with imprisonment up to **2 years or a fine up to Rs. 1 Lakh** or both.

National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)
- **Purpose:** To eliminate hazardous cleaning, stop deaths of sewer and septic tank workers and ensure their safety and dignity,
- **Type:** Central Sector Scheme
- **Nodal implementing agency:** National Safai Karamchari Financial Development Corporation (NSKFDC)
- **Tenure:** 2022-23 to 2025-26

Also in News



Schengen Zone

Bulgaria and Romania will become full members of **Schengen** from January 1, 2025.

About Schengen Zone

- It is the **largest borderless area** globally, allowing free movement for over 400 million people.
 - ⊕ Schengen is the name of a **village in Luxembourg** where the **Schengen Agreement (1985)** and the **Schengen Convention (1990)** were signed.
- **Members:** Comprises **29 members**
 - ⊕ **25 of the 27 EU member states** (except Cyprus and Ireland)
 - ⊕ **Other 4 members:** Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Common Schengen Visa:** Allows **non-EU nationals** to travel through the Schengen countries without going through border controls.



Latakia Port

Recently, Israel's military struck several **key Syrian military sites**, including naval vessels at the **Latakia Port**.

About Latakia Port

- **Location:** It is located on the **East Mediterranean coast** on a good harbour, with an extensive agricultural hinterland in west of Syria.
- It is the **principal port of Syria**, and
 - ⊕ Exports include **bitumen and asphalt, cereals, cotton, fruit, eggs, vegetable oil, pottery, and tobacco**.
 - ⊕ **Cotton ginning, vegetable oil processing, tanning, and sponge fishing** are local industries in the port city.
- **Other Mediterranean ports of Syria:** Tartous and Banias.





Supplementary Grant

Recently, the Centre sought Parliament's approval for net additional expenditure as part of **supplementary demand for grants**.

About Supplementary Grants

- Under Article 115, it is raised **when the money previously authorized** by Parliament for a particular service for that financial year is **found to be insufficient**.

Other Grants under Article 115

- Additional Grant:** It is requested if **additional expenditure is needed upon some new services not contemplated** in the budget for that year.
- Excess Grant:** It is given when the **money has already been spent in excess** of the amount allotted for a service in the budget for that year.



DHARANI

IIT Madras has become the first research organization in the world to release an open-source brain mapping dataset named 'DHARANI'.

About DHARANI

- DHARANI is the **largest open-access digital dataset** of the human fetal brain,
- Created with **custom-made Indian technology**.
- Developed with one-tenth of the funds used for the **US-based Allen Brain Atlas**,
- It **advances neuroscience research** and could aid in brain-related health treatments.
 - It could offer insights into **neurological disorders** like autism and other developmental disorders.



S-400 Missile Systems

India's Defence Minister urged Russia to expedite the supply of two remaining units of S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile systems.

S-400 missile system

- Designed by:** Russia.
- Type:** Large range and high altitude of air targets destruction, multi-channel, high mobility and survivability.
- Guidance System:** Command and active radar
- The system consists of:** Surveillance radar, Low altitude radar, Fire control Radar with the Flap Lid, etc.
- Range and capability:** Universal for destroying all types of aerodynamic targets and ballistic missiles with a **launch range of up to 3,000 - 3,500 km**.



ATACMS

Russia's Defence Ministry reported that Ukraine attacked a military airfield in **Taganrog**, southern Russia, using US-supplied **Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS)** missiles.

About ATACMS missiles

- It is a **surface-to-surface ballistic missile** with a **300 km range**, manufactured by **Lockheed Martin**.
 - Ballistic Missile** is a type of missile that utilizes **projectile motion** (utilizing gravity) to deliver warheads to a designated target.
- Launch Platforms:** Launched from the **High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS)** and the M270 Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS).



Abathasahayeswarar Temple

The 1,300-year-old Abathasahayeswarar Temple received 2024 **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation**

About the Temple

- Location:** Thukkatchi, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu.
- Historical Names:** Vikrama Chozheeswaram and Kulothunga Chola Nallur was the name of the Thukkatchi (Chola period).
- Built By:** Kings Vikrama Chola and Kulothunga Chola.
 - Kulothunga established an idol for **Sarabeshwarar**, which is why this deity is called Aadhi Sarabeshwarar.
- Unique Feature:** Knowhow of Hindu temple builders, **sthapathi**, were applied in structural conservation.



FIDE World Chess Championship

18-year-old Gukesh Dommaraju became the **world's youngest chess champion**, defeating China's Ding Liren.

- The Indian prodigy, a grandmaster at 12, is the **18th champion** since the first title in 1886.
- The **FIDE World Chess Championship** offers a **\$2.5M prize fund**.

About the International Chess Federation (FIDE)

- Headquarters:** Lausanne, Switzerland
- Genesis:** Founded in **1924 in Paris** with motto '**We are one Family**'
- Role:** Governs **international chess competitions** and is one of the first global sports federations, alongside football, cricket, swimming, and auto racing.
- Recognition:** Acknowledged as a Global Sporting Organization by International Olympic Committee in 1999.
- Membership:** Includes 201 countries, including the All India Chess Federation

Places in News



Nicaragua (Capital: Managua)

India and Nicaragua signed an **umbrella agreement to implement Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)**.

Political Features

- Location:** Situated in **Central America** and largest of the Central American republics.
- Borders:** Nicaragua is bounded by **Honduras to the north**, the **Caribbean Sea to the east**, **Costa Rica to the south**, and the **Pacific Ocean to the west**.
- Membership:** It is a member of The Central American Integration System (SICA), Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), WTO, etc.

Geographical features

- Climate:** Slightly cooler and much wetter in the east than in the west.
- Major Lakes:** Lago de Nicaragua and Lago de Managua.
- Major Rivers:** Negro, Tero Real, the Tamarindo, etc.

