

NEWS TODAY

Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) launched 'Smart Gram Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat' pilot project

- This project aims to **extend Prime Minister's WiFi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) service in all gram panchayats** across Begusarai district in Bihar.
 - ⊕ Project is **funded under revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan**, implemented by MoPR.
- **Need to Digitise Gram Panchayats**
 - ⊕ Enhance **connectivity, bridge rural-urban divide, foster accountability** and efficiency in local self-governance.
 - ⊕ Enhance **access to online services in crucial sectors** like health, education and skilling, thereby **elevating quality of life in rural areas**.
 - ⊕ Create **employment, enhance disposable incomes** of small and medium entrepreneurs and **boost GDP of country**.
- **PM- WANI Scheme** was launched by **Department of Telecommunication** in 2020.
 - ⊕ It aims to **enhance proliferation of public WiFi hotspots** to create **robust digital communications infrastructure** in country, especially in rural areas.
- **PM WANI consists four elements**
 - ⊕ **Public Data Office (PDO):** Establish, maintain, and operate **PM-WANI compliant Wi-Fi Hotspots** and deliver **Broadband services** to subscribers.
 - ⊕ **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** Provide aggregation services like **authorization and accounting to PDOs**.
 - ⊕ **App Provider:** Develop an App to **register users and discover WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots** for accessing internet service.
 - ⊕ **Central Registry:** Maintain details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. Currently, it is **maintained by Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT)**.

Concerns with PM-WANI

- ⊕ **Extensive network of public WiFi hotspots** is susceptible to **security threats**.
- ⊕ Encouraging private sector innovation may lead to an **increase in internet prices for users**.
- ⊕ **Slowdown in connection speed**.

Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution submits report on 'Transforming Fair Price Shops (FPSs)'

- As per the **National Food Security Act, 2013**, FPS refers to **shops licensed to distribute essential commodities** to ration card holders under the **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**.
 - ⊕ Such license is issued by an order under **section 3 of Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955**.
 - ◆ ECA provide for **regulating control of production, supply, distribution, and trade of certain commodities** in the general public interest.
 - ⊕ **Launched in 1997** TPDS provides for **lower subsidised food prices for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families** than those for Above Poverty Line (APL) beneficiaries
- **Key issues with FPS:** Leakages and diversion of food-grains, financial non-visibility of FPS, etc.
- **Recommendations for transforming FPS**
 - ⊕ **Increase sales of non-PDS commodities** such as Khadi & Ayush products from MSMEs
 - ⊕ **Form a monitoring cell** to track the progress of model FPS in all states.
 - ⊕ **Improve working of Vigilance Committees (VCs)** established under NFSA.
 - ◆ VCs are established by State Governments at the **State, District, Block and FPS levels** to ensure **transparency and accountability of the functionaries in TPDS**.
 - ⊕ Ensure all ePoS machines are **connected to and synchronized with weighing machines** for effective delivery of ration.

Common Services Centers (CSC)

~43,000 FPSs enabled as CSCS

Serving as access points for the delivery of various B2C & G2C services

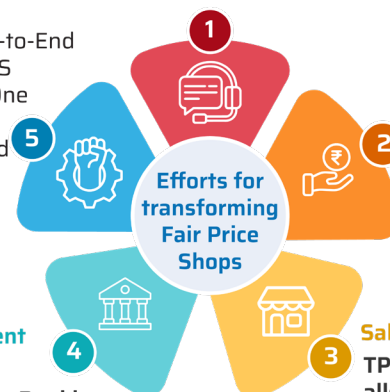
Other efforts

Automation of FPS, End-to-End Computerization of TPDS Operation, One Nation One Ration Card etc. are launched for smooth and transparent functioning of FPS.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)/ Department of Posts (DoP)

~3,200 FPSs enabled as Banking Correspondents (BCs)

To provide banking financial services and postal services



MUDRA loans through the Department of Financial Services

For capital augmentation and business diversification.

Sale of non-PDS commodities

TPDS Control Order 2015 allows the sale of non-PDS items at FPSs

General store items like oil, pulses, salt, spices, etc.

Odisha declares Gupteswar forest in Koraput district as its fourth Bio-Diversity Heritage Site (BHS)

➤ After **Mandasaru** (Kandhamala district), **Mahendragiri** (Gajapati district), and **Gandhamardan** (Bargarh & Bolangir districts), **Gupteswar** is also declared as BHS.






➤ About Gupteswar forest

- ⊕ **Location:** Adjacent to **Gupteswar Shiva temple** (a natural limestone cave shrine).
- ⊕ **Significance:** Holds **sacred groves** revered by the local community for generations and **rich biodiversity**.
 - ◆ **Key faunal species:** Muggar crocodile, kanger valley rock gecko, and avifauna such as common hill myna, white-bellied woodpecker, and banded bay cuckoo, etc.
 - ◆ **Key floral species:** Among others, forest has **threatened medicinal plants** such as the Indian trumpet tree, Indian snakeroot, Cumbi gum tree, Garlic pear tree, etc.

➤ About BHS

- ⊕ BHS are **unique ecosystems having rich biodiversity** comprising of some specific components (refer to the infographics).
- ⊕ Under Section 37 of **Biological Diversity Act, 2002 State Government in consultation with local bodies may notify** areas of biodiversity importance as BHS.
 - ◆ Also, **State Government in consultation with Central Government** may frame **rules for management and conservation** of BHS.
- ⊕ **Creation of BHS may not put any restriction** on prevailing practices and usages by local communities, other than those decided by them.

BHS comprise of any one or more of the following components:

-  **Richness of wild, domesticated species or intra-specific categories.**
-  **High endemism** (i.e., restricted in geographical distribution to an area or region).
-  **Presence of rare and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance.**
-  **Wild ancestors** of domestic/cultivated species or their varieties.
-  **Past pre-eminence of biological components** represented by fossil beds and having significant cultural, ethical or aesthetic values among others.

India, UAE sign Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) during Prime Minister of India's visit

- BITs between two countries aim to **promote and protect foreign private investments in each other's territories**.
 - ⊕ **UAE has become the country with which India has signed** both Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and BIT.
 - ⊕ Earlier, India has **signed CEPA with Japan and South Korea** also and BIT with Belarus.
 - ◆ CEPA covers **negotiation on trade in services and investment**, and other areas of economic partnership like Intellectual property rights etc.
- **Other Key Agreements**
 - ⊕ **Inter-governmental Framework Agreement** concerning Cooperation for Empowerment and Operation of India-Middle East-Europe (IMEC) Economic Corridor.
 - ◆ IMEC calls for a sea-land connectivity project **linking India with West Asia and Europe**.
 - ⊕ **MoU on Development of National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** to build Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal, Gujarat.
 - ⊕ Agreement on **interlinking of instant payment platforms** - UPI (India) and AANI (UAE) and **domestic debit/credit cards** - RuPay (India) with JAYWAN (UAE).
 - ◆ This will facilitate **seamless cross-border transactions** and **enhance universal acceptance of RuPay** across UAE.
 - ⊕ **Cooperation Protocol between National Library and Archives of UAE and National Archives of India** for restoration and preservation of archival material.

India- UAE Relations

- ⊕ **Economic:** UAE is **India's second-largest export destination**, and **third-largest trading partner** with total trade stands at **\$85 billion**.
- ⊕ **Energy:** Recently, both countries signed **long term contract for supply of LNG**.
- ⊕ **Defense:** Conduct joint military exercise **Desert Cyclone**.

Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) launched Land Records Management Initiatives in Assam

- These initiatives include
 - ⊕ Roll out of **National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS)** throughout Assam.
 - ◆ NGDRS is common, generic application developed for registration departments across country under **One Nation One Software initiative**.
 - ⊕ **Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN):** 14-digit alpha-numeric identification number assigned for a land parcel based on Geo-coordinates.
 - ⊕ **Blockchain in Land Records (LR)** was launched on pilot basis in Darrang district, Assam to bring transformation in LR management.
- **Issues in LR management in India**
 - ⊕ **Presumptive land titling** (E.g. registered sale deed) that provide evidence of transfer of title but are not a government guaranteed title to property.
 - ⊕ **Property Frauds** e.g. duplication and tampering of original land documents.
 - ⊕ **Other issues:** Large number of land related litigations, double selling of landed property, non-existence of unique record.
- **Use of blockchain in LR management**
 - ⊕ **Tamper-proof solution** for managing LRs as it allows transactions to be recorded and distributed but not edited.
 - ⊕ **Centralised database of LR** accessible to all departments enabling faster disposal of requests for subsidy, approval of loan by bank etc.
 - ⊕ **Publicly available blockchain data** of property registrations would **reduce dependency on non-reliable personnel/agencies** to verify authenticity of LRs.

Blockchain

- ⊕ It is a **distributed ledger technology** where data and transactions are stored in blocks.
- ⊕ Blockchain are **secured against tampering using cryptographic hash algorithms**.

Parliamentary committee submits Report on "Scheme for Creation/Expansion of Food Processing and Preservation Capacities (CEFPPC)"

➤ CEFPPC scheme launched in 2017-18 is one of the components of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY).

⊕ PMKSY is an **Umbrella Scheme** comprising eight Scheme-Components to give a **boost to the growth of Food Processing Sector of the country**

➤ **Key features of CEFPPC scheme**

⊕ **Ministry:** Ministry of Food Processing Industries

⊕ **Objective:** **Creation, expansion and modernization of Food Processing Units**, to increase level of processing, and value addition and reduce wastage.

⊕ **Assistance:** Grants-in-aid (subject to a maximum of Rs. 5 crore) is at,

◆ 35% of project cost in General Areas.

◆ 50% of project cost in Difficult Areas and for projects of SC/ST, FPOs and SHGs.

⊕ **Fund utilisation:** 60% for units **inside** Mega Food Parks (MFPs)/Agro-processing Clusters (APCs) & 40% to units **outside** MFPs/APCs.

⊕ **Implementation:** Through organizations like **Central & State PSUs, Farmer Producers Organization (FPOs), SHGs, Cooperatives etc.**

➤ **Issues with CEFPPC Scheme**

⊕ **Delay in obtaining clearances** from the State Governments.

⊕ Receipt of a **large number of ineligible proposals** due to lack of knowledge about the scheme.

⊕ **Pending eligible proposals** due to **non-availability of funds**.

⊕ **Under-utilization of funds** allocated for **Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP), Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and North Eastern Region**.

Recommendations of the committee

Engagement of Experts/Resource Persons for providing **assistance to probable applicants** under the scheme.

Improve the planning process and execution mechanism along with **Additional Budgetary Allocation** to address financial constraints.

Balanced implementation of the scheme in States/UTs which do not have MFPs/APCs. E.g. Jharkhand, Goa, Pondicherry, Ladakh etc.

Also in News

Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR)

➤ About **25 crore APAAR IDs** have been created by Ministry of Education.

➤ **About APAAR**

⊕ Introduced in alignment with **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and **National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCrF)**.

⊕ This is **part of 'One nation, One Student ID'** initiative.

⊕ It aims to provide **unified academic experience for students** by assigning a **unique and permanent 12-digit ID to every student**, consolidating their academic achievements in one place.

⊕ It **reduces fraud and duplicate educational certificates** by providing a single, trusted reference for educational institutions.

High Powered Microwave (HPM) Weapons

➤ Chinese scientists unveiled a novel **HPM weapon, powered by Stirling engines**.

⊕ Stirling engine is an **external combustion engine** working on the principle of compression and expansion to **convert thermal energy into mechanical energy**.

➤ HPM weapons are a type of **Directed Energy Weapon (DEW) system**.

⊕ DEWs are **electromagnetic systems** capable of **converting chemical or electrical energy** to radiated energy and focusing it on a target, resulting in **physical damage**.

➤ HPM weapons generate **beams of electromagnetic energy** over a broad spectrum of radio and microwave frequencies.

⊕ These **beams interact** with and potentially **damage or disrupt electronics in targeted systems**.

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

➤ Centre launched **PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana**, a **rooftop solar scheme** for free electricity.

➤ **About Scheme**

⊕ **Aim:** To light up **1 crore households** by providing up to **300 units of free electricity** every month.

⊕ **Removes cost burden:** Provides **subsidies** directly to people's bank accounts as well as heavily **concessional bank loans**.

⊕ **Enhanced convenience:** All stakeholders will be integrated into a **National Online Portal**.

⊕ **Awareness Generation:** Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats shall be incentivised to **promote rooftop solar systems** in their jurisdictions.

⊕ **Other benefits:** More income, reduced power bills and employment generation.

Nor'easter

➤ A strong **Nor'easter storm** hit **Northeast of USA**.

➤ Nor'easter is a **storm along East Coast of North America**. It is called so because **winds over coastal area are typically from northeast**.

⊕ During winter, polar jet stream transports **cold Arctic air** southward **across plains of North America** and then eastward toward Atlantic Ocean.

⊕ Simultaneously, **warm air from Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic** tries to move northward.

⊕ Difference in temperature between air over land and ocean **fuels Nor'easters**.

➤ **Impact of Nor'easters:** Precipitation (heavy rain or snow), high speed winds of gale force, rough seas, and coastal flooding.



Hori Habba

- Casualties reported during Hori Habba raise concerns about animal and human safety.
- **Hori Habba** also known as Hatti Habba, is a **bull-taming rural sport** held in **Karnataka**.
- **Other Animal Sports in India**
 - ⊕ **Jallikattu**: Bull-taming sport held during Pongal in Tamilnadu.
 - ⊕ **Kambala**: A traditional buffalo race from coastal Karnataka.
 - ⊕ **Rooster fight (Cockfight)**: It is associated with gambling in many states including Andhra Pradesh.
 - ⊕ **Bulbul fights**: Held in Assam during Magh Bihu.
 - ⊕ **Bullock Cart Race**: Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu etc.



Kaji Nemu (Citrus limon)

- Assam government has declared **Kaji Nemu** as 'State Fruit'.
- **About Kaji Nemu**
 - ⊕ Known for its **unique aroma** and health benefits.
 - ⊕ **High rich nutrient** content/vitamin C content. Its **flavor is different from other lemons**.
 - ⊕ Carries **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag.
- GI is an indication used to identify goods having special characteristics originating from a definite geographical territory.
 - ⊕ It is provided under **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.



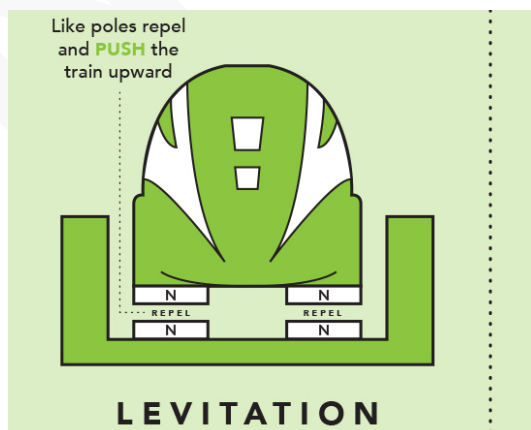
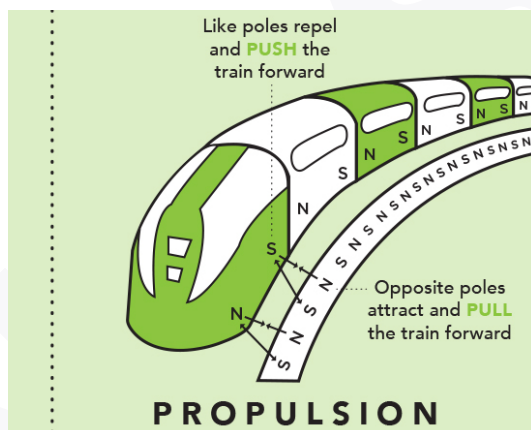
The Weimar Triangle

- Foreign Ministers of Germany, Poland, and France have met recently to revive the Weimar Triangle.
- **Weimar Triangle** is a regional group created in 1991, to develop a shared vision for Europe and forge closer ties between these three countries' societies.
 - ⊕ The Triangle was initially the **key forum for supporting German-Polish reconciliation after World War II**.
 - ⊕ The group **takes** its name from the **city of Weimar, Germany**, where the initial meeting took place.



Maglev (Magnetic levitation)

- In a significant breakthrough, China's maglev train **surpassed its previous record of 623 km/h**.
- Maglev is a system in which the **vehicle runs levitated from the guideway** (corresponding to the rail tracks of conventional railways).
 - ⊕ In Maglev, **superconducting magnets suspend the train** above a U-shaped concrete guideway.
 - ⊕ Like ordinary magnets, these **magnets repel one another** when matching poles face each other.
- **Advantages**
 - ⊕ Produce **no emissions** as they lack engine.
 - ⊕ **No friction** between wheels and rail enables **higher speeds**
 - ⊕ Any **two trains travelling the same route cannot catch up and crash** into one another.



Places in News



Rwanda (Capital: Kigali)

- As per UN document, Rwandan Army is using sophisticated weapons like surface-to-air missiles in eastern DR Congo.
- **Political Boundaries**
 - ⊕ **Landlocked country** lying **south of Equator** in east-central Africa.
 - ⊕ Bounded by **Uganda** (north), **Tanzania** (east), **Burundi** (south), and **Democratic Republic of Congo** (west).
- **Geographical features**
 - ⊕ **Highest point**: Mount Karisimbi in Virunga Range
 - ⊕ **Major Lakes**: Lake Kivu, Muhazi Lake etc.
 - ⊕ **Major Rivers**: Akagera, Akanyaru, Mukungwa (in Nile Basin) and Rubyi, Ruhwa, Rusizi (in Congo Basin).

