

NEWS TODAY

Interactive Entertainment and Innovation Council (IEIC) and WinZO released India Gaming Report 2024

▶ Key findings:

- ⊖ With 568 million users, **India is officially the largest gaming market** and accounts for **every one in five online gamers** globally.
- ⊖ Indian gaming market is expected to reach **\$6 Billion by 2028**.
- ⊖ **Number of Indian gaming companies** surged from **25 in 2015 to over 1400 in 2023**.

▶ Factors responsible for boost in gaming industry:

- ⊖ Rise of **affordable high-speed internet** (\$0.17/GB) and increase in **smartphone penetration** (820 million users).
- ⊖ Burgeoning share of **young population** (600 million) and rising **disposable income**.
- ⊖ **Supply side factors** include global investments in game development, rewarding gaming career, vernacular language content and gamification of Indian culture etc.

▶ Gaming's contribution to society: Reduction in social isolation, community building, especially for women gamers, and its role in enhancing research, education and skilling.

▶ Challenges to gaming sector:

- ⊖ Sustainability issues from '**internet pollution**' (3.7% of **Greenhouse Gas emissions**).
- ⊖ **Financial literacy gaps**, regulatory complexities, and **data security challenges**.

▶ Recommendations:

- ⊖ Utilise **green innovations and virtual environments** for sustainable gaming.
- ⊖ Establish a **global gaming cluster** with policy support, supporting startups and talent development.
- ⊖ Prioritise **R&D for online safety and digital literacy**.

Government Interventions for promotion of sector:

- ▶ **MeitY acts as nodal agency** for online gaming regulations and development.
- ▶ **Schemes like** Make in India, Digital India, and Production Linked Incentive (PLI).
- ▶ **Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comic (AVGC)** taskforce report, Draft National AVGC Policy and National AVGC centre of excellence.
- ▶ **100% FDI in gaming sector**, utilizing automatic route within Electronic System and IT & BPM sectors.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has decided to delist 18 Centrally Protected Monuments (CPMs)

▶ ASI has invoked **Section 35 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act)** to delist 18 CPMs.

- ⊖ Section 35 allows **central government to declare** that any Monument of National Importance (MNI) has **ceased to be of national importance**.
- ⊖ Under AMASR Act, **MNIs are to be conserved and maintained** by ASI as an important site pertaining to history and culture.
 - ◆ Any kind of **construction-related activity is not allowed** around a protected site.
- ⊖ Delisting effectively means that it will **no longer be conserved, protected, and maintained** by the ASI.

▶ These monuments are part of a **list of 24 untraceable monuments (out of 3,693 CPMs)**, which the Ministry of Culture submitted to Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture in 2022.

- ⊖ Untraceable monument means a site that has been **lost to activities such as urbanization, encroachments, etc.** and has **no surviving public memory**.
- ⊖ These monuments include **Kos Minar No.13** in Haryana, **Barakhamba Cemetery** in Delhi, **Gunner Burkill's Tomb** in Jhansi, and **Telia Nala Buddhist ruins** in Varanasi etc.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ▶ Headquartered in **New Delhi**, it was founded in **1861 by Alexander Cunningham**.
- ▶ It is a **government agency that is responsible** for archaeological research and the conservation and preservation of cultural historical monuments in the country.
- ▶ **Ministry:** Ministry of Culture.

Western Ghat Regions (WGR) are witnessing an alarming rate of Soil erosion: IIT-Bombay study

- » Study was conducted **between 1990 and 2020** using data from LANDSAT-8, rainfall records etc.
- » **Key findings**
 - ⊕ Portions of WGR in **Tamil Nadu and Gujarat registered 121% and 119% increase** in soil erosion respectively.
 - ⊕ Across whole of WGR, the increase in erosion rate was **94%**.
 - ⊕ **In absolute terms, Maharashtra** had the highest 79 ton per hectare per year soil loss in 2020, while **Kerala** had the lowest loss.
- » **Causes identified for erosion:** Increasing rainfall erosivity factor (rainfall's potential to cause soil erosion), steep slopes and high rainfall, climate change and unsustainable land use, cultivation of tea, coffee etc.
- » **Concerns:** threat to biological diversity, agricultural productivity, water quality across WGs.
- » **Protection measures:**
 - ⊕ **Gadgil** committee and Dr. K. **Kasturirangan** committee to assess WG's ecology.
 - ⊕ **Western Ghats Natural Heritage Management Committee** under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
 - ⊕ Number of protected areas, like Tiger Reserves, National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, etc.
- » **About Western Ghats**
 - ⊕ About **1,600 km long**, they are a chain of mountains running parallel to India's western coast.
 - ⊕ Spread across **six states:** Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Significance of WGs:

- » It is a **UNESCO world heritage site** and one of **36 biodiversity hotspots** on Earth.
- » Recognized as **one of the world's eight 'hottest hotspots'**.
- » Best representatives of **non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests**.
- » Acts as **barrier to eastward moving clouds** during monsoon.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) finalised the Omnibus Framework for recognising Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) for Regulated Entities (REs)

- » Omnibus framework contains **broad parameters** viz., objectives, responsibilities, eligibility criteria, governance standards etc. which will be **common for all SROs**.
- » **Objectives of SROs** include promoting compliance culture, support to smaller entities, act as collective voice of members, collect sectoral information, and encourage R&D culture.
- » **Eligibility:** An SRO shall be setup as a **not-for-profit company** registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.
 - ⊕ It should have **adequate net worth**, sufficiently **diversified shareholding** and must **represent the sector**.
- » **Characteristics:** SRO shall have **sufficient authority** derived from membership agreements along with **strong governance mechanisms**.
 - ⊕ It shall develop standards for **improving compliance culture** and surveillance methods for **sector monitoring**.
- » **Responsibilities of SROs:**
 - ⊕ **Towards members:** Promote best business practices, establish minimum conduct benchmarks, disseminate sector specific information and dispute resolution/arbitration structure.
 - ⊕ **Towards Regulator:** Ensuring regulatory compliance, promote sector development, foster innovation and detect early warning signals.
- » **Governance framework:**
 - ⊕ **Articles of Association (AoA)/ bye-laws** shall provide for manner of functioning of Governing Body and specify the functions of SRO.
 - ⊕ At least **one-third of members in Board of Directors** including Chairperson shall be independent.
 - ⊕ **Compliance with relevant Acts, regulations, guidelines, directions or circulars** issued by RBI.

India supports Philippines in upholding its national sovereignty on the issue of South China Sea: EAM Jaishankar

- » India iterated its support to **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982** regarding it as constitution of the seas.
 - ⊕ Both called for free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- » **India Philippines bilateral relations**
 - ⊕ **Strategic:** Part of India's **Act East**, both see China as common challenge.
 - ◆ Both cooperate at NAM, ASEAN.
 - ⊕ **Defence and Security Cooperation:** Signed contract to supply BrahMos missile system, MoU on **Defence Industry and Logistics cooperation**.
 - ⊕ **Trade and Investments:** Bilateral trade is **USD 3.05 billion** in 2022-23.
 - ◆ India is **largest supplier of pharma products** to Philippines.
 - ◆ Indian investments in Philippines are valued around **US \$ 5 billion**.
 - ⊕ **Developmental cooperation:** Philippines is beneficiary of India's capacity building programme – **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation**.
 - ◆ India also offers scholarships to students from Philippines under 'Study in India' programme.
 - ⊕ **Diaspora:** Indian community in the Philippines is estimated to be around 1,50,000.
 - ◆ Indian students go to Philippines for **medical studies**.
 - ⊕ **Humanitarian assistance:** India supported aftermath of super typhoon Haiyan (2013), and during COVID-19 etc.
- » **Challenges in relations:** Untapped trade and investment relations, Philippines relations with China fluctuating etc.

CPCB report to NGT shows 80% in CPCB environmental funds remain unutilized

- » Despite collecting a total of Rs 777.69 crore through **Environment Protection Charge (EPC)** and **Environmental Compensation**, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has utilized only 20% of these funds.
 - ⊕ **These funds were utilised for:** R&D on air quality, health impact studies, infrastructure development for air and water quality surveillance, remediation of contaminated sites etc.
- » **CPCB receives compensation under two heads:**
 - ⊕ **Environment Protection Charge (EPC):** The dealer/manufacturer is required to pay **one per cent EPC** for specified new diesel vehicles, registered only in Delhi and NCR.
 - ◆ It is received as per order of **Supreme Court**.
 - ⊕ **Environmental compensation** is **policy instrument** for protection of environment which **works on the Polluter Pay Principle**.
 - ◆ It is received as per **orders of NGT**.
 - ◆ It is utilized to **protect environment** through strengthening of laboratories/monitoring network, projects in compliance of NGT orders, capacity building of pollution control boards, etc.
- » CPCB is **Statutory Body** formed under **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
 - ⊕ Also, it is entrusted with powers and functions under **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
 - ⊕ Functions under **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.

Also in News



Ex-parte Injunctions and SLAPP suits

- » **Supreme Court** has highlighted the **problem of affluent getting pre-trial injunctions** from courts against the media and civil society, restricting free speech and public's right to information.
 - ⊕ According to bench, an **injunction, particularly ex-parte (without hearing all parties to a case), should not be granted without establishing** that the content sought to be restricted is **'malicious' or 'palpably false'**.
- » Court also urged trial courts to take note of trend of **Strategic Litigation against Public Participation (SLAPP)** suits whereby **entities with vast economic resources use litigation to prevent public from knowing** about their operations involving public interest.



Machine-to-Machine Communications

- » Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released recommendations on **'Usage of Embedded SIM for Machine-to-Machine Communications (M2M)'**.
- » M2M communications refer to automated applications which involve **machines or devices communicating** through a network without human intervention.
 - ⊕ **Sensors and communication modules** are embedded within M2M devices.
 - ⊕ These **enable data transfer** from one device to another through wired and wireless communications networks.
- » **Applications:** Robotics and conveyor belts in factories, Smart Grid and Smart Water systems, jet engines, bus fleets, home appliances, and more.



Luna Structure

- A study has confirmed that Luna Structure in **low-lying Banni plains of the Gujarat's Kutch region** is an **impact crater**.
 - ⊕ It is a **1.8 kilometre wide crater** which was formed when a **massive object primarily made of iron** struck the planet.
 - ⊕ Luna region was one amongst the several settlements **linked to the ancient Harappan Civilization**.
- Other impact craters in India include **Dhala** in Madhya Pradesh, **Lonar** in Maharashtra, and **Ramgarh** in Rajasthan.



Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

- The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** notified new wage rates for unskilled manual workers under the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005** for FY2024-2025.
 - ⊕ MGNREGA gives **legal guarantee of 100 days** of wage employment in a financial year to adult members of a rural household who are willing to do unskilled manual work.
- MoRD revises **state-wise wage rates for MGNREGA workers every year**, under **section 6** of MGNREGA, 2005.
 - ⊕ This revision is based on **changes in CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index- Agriculture Labor)**.



Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary

- Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary is witnessing forest fires.
- **About Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary**
 - ⊕ Situated near Warangal (Telangana)
 - ⊕ It lies on **border of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh**.
 - ⊕ Rivers **Dayyam Vagu and Godavari** flows through it.
 - ⊕ **Flora:** Bamboo, Maddi, Dry Deciduous Teak, Thiruman, Madhuca
 - ⊕ **Fauna:** Sloth Bear, Chinkara, Nilgai, Black Buck etc.



Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs)

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) releases **2023-24 – List of D-SIIs**.
 - ⊕ Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re) and New India Assurance Company **continue to be identified as D-SIIs**.
- D-SIIs refer to **insurers of such size, market importance**, and domestic and global inter **connectedness**, whose distress or failure would cause a **significant dislocation in the domestic financial system**.
 - ⊕ D-SIIs are perceived as **'too big or too important to fail' (TBTF)**.
 - ⊕ D-SIIs are **subject to additional regulatory measures**.



Irrigation as a Service (IaaS)

- Two organizations, **AgriRain and Oorja** are providing IaaS in selected parts of the country.
- **About IaaS**
 - ⊕ It is an irrigation technology that provides **hassle free, pay per use and cost effective** on demand irrigation to small and marginal farmers.
 - ⊕ It functions on a **subscription or pay-per-use basis meaning** farmers pay a fixed monthly fee or a fee based on water usage.
- **Benefits:** Improved water efficiency and crop yields, beneficial for water intensive crops like sugarcane, soil health monitoring etc.



Mushk Budiji Rice

- Recent study revealed that **altitude and temperature** play an important role in development of aroma for this rice.
- It is an **indigenous rice variety** variety grown in the **Kashmir Himalayas**.
- It is distinguished by its rich **aroma and unique taste**.
- It was on **verge of extinction** due to rice blast disease, low yield, lack of profitability etc.

Places in News



Malaysia (Capital: Kuala Lumpur)

- External Affairs Minister paid an official visit to Malaysia.
- **Political features:**
 - ⊕ Lies in **Southeast Asia**.
 - ⊕ **Land boundaries:** Thailand (West), Brunei (North), Singapore and Indonesia (South).
 - ⊕ **Maritime borders:** Vietnam and Philippines.
 - ⊕ **Surrounding Water bodies:** Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, South China Sea
- **Geographical features:**
 - ⊕ Occupies parts of **Malay Peninsula** and **Borneo Island**.
 - ⊕ **Separated by South China Sea** into two regions – Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia.
 - ⊕ **Strait of Malacca** lies between Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia.
 - ⊕ **Major rivers:** Rajang (**longest**), Kinabatangan, Pahang
 - ⊕ **Highest Peak:** Mount Kinabalu

