

NEWS TODAY

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) allocated annual fund of Rs 20 crore for 'Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme' across States and Union Territories (UTs)

- This provides relief to poor prisoners who are either unable to pay fine imposed on them or are unable to secure bail due to financial constraints.
 - ⊖ Prisons/ Persons detained therein, is a State subject.
- Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme was announced in Union Budget 2023-24.
 - ⊖ Through this, MHA will enable underprivileged prisoners, majority of whom belong to socially disadvantaged or marginalised groups with lower education and income levels, to get out of prison.
 - ⊖ It will solve the problem of overcrowding in jails.
- Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedure for implementation of Scheme
 - ⊖ National Crime Records Bureau has been designated as Central Nodal Agency (CNA). Funds to States/UTs will be provided through CNA.
 - ⊖ Constitute an Empowered Committee in each District of State/UT, which will assess requirement of financial support in each eligible case of a prisoner for securing bail etc.
 - ⊖ Oversight Committee may be constituted at State Government level.
 - ⊖ Maximum assistance would be Rs. 40,000 for undertrial prisoners and Rs 25,000 for convicted prisoners.
 - ◆ For any amount over and above Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 25, 000, proposal may be approved by State level Oversight Committee.

Other Measures taken to improve condition of Prison and Prisoners

- Model Prisons Act, 2023 for ensuring transformation of inmates into law-abiding citizens and their rehabilitation in society.
- Fast Track Courts to expedite trial of pending cases.
- National Human Rights Commission to protect basic rights of prisoners.
- Model Prison Manual 2016 provides detailed guidelines on facilities which may be provided to under trial inmates.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) created dedicated organic promotion division

- This division is now serving as a focal point for coordinating efforts to promote country's organic export potential.
- APEDA also formulated roadmap to push organic exports from Uttarakhand and Sikkim, focusing on enhancing farming practices, optimizing certification procedures, and identifying prime export product.
 - ⊖ Sikkim is the first Organic State of India.
- Organic farming is a sustainable agriculture system that excludes use of synthetic inputs in farming and relies on on-farm inputs like crop residues, farmyard manure, enriched composts, etc. for nutrient management of crops.
 - ⊖ India's rank 6th in terms of World's Organic Agricultural land as per 2021 data.
 - ⊖ Madhya Pradesh is largest producer of organic products followed by Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Odisha.
 - ⊖ Organic products are exported to USA, Canada, Great Britain, Switzerland, Turkey, Australia, Ecuador, etc.
- Significance of organic farming: Improve soil fertility, reduce soil erosion, lowers environmental pollution, reduce greenhouse gas etc.
- Challenges with Organic farming
 - ⊖ Yield of organic farming is around 18.4% lower than that of conventional farming.
 - ⊖ High certification cost, and inadequate supporting infrastructure.
 - ⊖ Requires more time for observation, timely control, and intervention. It is naturally more labor-intensive.

Initiatives to promote Organic farming

- Revising National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) guidelines to bolster accessibility of organic products in international markets.
 - ⊖ NPOP is involved in accreditation of Certification Bodies, fixing standards for organic production and packaging etc.
- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana 2015.
- Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North East Region.
- Jaivik Kheti organic e-commerce portal of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare notifies Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024

- In exercise of powers conferred under Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021, Government makes following rules to **amend Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022.**
 - ⊕ Couples (husband or wife), certified by **District Medical Board** as suffering from medical conditions, do not require **both gametes from intending couple**, provided that **child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from intending couple.**
 - ◆ Previously, Rule 7 of Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022 prohibited the use of donor gametes.
 - ⊕ **Single woman** (widow or divorcee) undergoing surrogacy **must use self-eggs and donor sperms** to avail surrogacy procedure.
- In 2023, Supreme Court in **Arun Muthuvel vs. Union of India** case allowed a **woman with Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) Syndrome to undergo surrogacy with a donor egg.**
 - ⊕ MRKH is a rare congenital disorder that affects reproductive system and cause infertility.
- **Surrogacy** is a practice whereby one woman bears and gives birth to a child for an intending couple.
- **About Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**
 - ⊕ **Only altruistic surrogacy is allowed** and penalises commercial surrogacy.
 - ⊕ **Intending couple** must be **legally married** (age limit **23-50** for female and **26-55** for male) and **must not have a surviving child.**
 - ⊕ **Surrogate Mother** must be **married woman having a child** of her own and between **age of 25- 35 years.**

Prime Minister of Greece paid State visit to India

- **Key highlights**
 - ⊕ Greece decided to **join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).**
 - ◆ IPOI is an initiative of **India** which builds upon the **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative announced in 2015.**
 - ⊕ Both countries **agreed to collaborate** in the **Eastern Mediterranean region** and advance the development of the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).**
 - ◆ **IMEC was launched by India** on the sidelines of the **G20 Leaders' Summit in 2023.**
 - ⊕ Announced to establish a **Joint Working Group (JWG)** to enhance coordination on common challenges in **defence, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism, and maritime security.**
 - ◆ Emphasized the need for increased cooperation in defence manufacturing.
 - ⊕ Reiterated their **commitment to double trade** between the two nations by 2030.
 - ◆ Bilateral Trade in 2022-23 was USD 1.9 billion.
- **Key Aspects of India-Greece Relations:**
 - ⊕ Key Partner in the **Mediterranean Region** and act as a gateway to the **European Union (EU).**
 - ⊕ Relations were elevated to **Strategic Partnership** in 2023.
 - ⊕ Supported India's membership in **Wassenaar Arrangement, Australia Group** etc.
 - ◆ Supports **United Nation Security Council (UNSC) expansion**, with India as a permanent member.
 - ⊕ Joined India led Initiatives like **International Solar Alliance (ISA).**

RAISINA Dialogue

- **Greek PM** was the **chief guest** of 9th edition of the **Raisina Dialogue.**
- Raisina Dialogue is **India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics**, committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the international community.
- The theme of the 2024 edition is **Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create.**
- Jointly organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation.

Union Cabinet approves continuation of Flood Management and Border Areas Programme

- **FMBAP** continuation has been approved for period of 5 years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
 - ⊕ It was initially launched during Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012).
- **FMBAP** aims to supplement the efforts of the **State Governments** to protect human life, land and property from flood fury by providing **technical guidance** and **financial assistance.**
 - ⊕ Also, promotes **bilateral co-operation** in the field of water resources with neighboring countries.
- **Key Features of Scheme:**
 - ⊕ **Type:** Centrally sponsored Scheme
 - ⊕ **Ministry:** Ministry of Jal Shakti
 - ⊕ **Sub-components:**
 - ◆ **Flood Management Programme (FMP)**
 - » Covers critical works related to flood control, anti-erosion, drainage development and anti-sea erosion, etc.
 - » **Funding Pattern:** 90%:10% between Centre and 8 North-Easter States and Hilly States (For rest state 60%:40%).
 - » 427 projects have been completed under it.
 - ◆ **River Management and Border Areas (RMBA):**
 - » Covers **flood control** and **anti-erosion** works on common border rivers with neighbouring countries.
 - » Hydrological observations and flood forecasting.
 - » Investigation & pre-construction activities of **joint water resources projects** (with neighbouring countries) on common border rivers.
 - » **Funding Pattern:** 100% central assistance.

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) notifies a series of Amendments

- Amendments are in line with the Union Budget 2023-24 announcements to **review regulations** to reduce the **cost of compliance** and enhance the **ease of doing business**.
 - ⊖ Also, Amendments will enhance **transparency** in whole ecosystem.
- **Key Reforms:**
 - ⊖ **National Pension System (NPS) Trust:** Strengthened provisions related to **appointment of Trustees**, their terms and conditions, holding of meetings of Board of Trustees and appointment of CEO.
 - ◆ **NPS** was introduced by the Union Government in **2004** to help the individuals have income in the form of pension.
 - ⊖ **Pension Fund:** Brought under the ambit of the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002**.
 - ◆ Constitution of **additional Board committees** by Pension Funds such as Audit Committee and Nomination & Remuneration Committee.
 - ◆ Aims to improve governance in line with **Companies Act, 2013** and enhanced disclosure by Pension Funds.
 - ⊖ **Trustee Bank (TB):** When TB proposes to change its status or constitution, it shall obtain prior approval of the PFRDA.
 - ⊖ **Central Recordkeeping Agency (CRA):** Implementation of fraud prevention and mitigation policy by CRA to protect the interest of subscribers.
 - ◆ Introduced criteria of **fit and proper person**, similar to SEBI's initiative.

About PFRDA

- **Statutory body** established under PFRDA Act, 2013.
- **Objective is to promote** old age income security by establishing, developing and regulating pension funds.
- Works under **Ministry of Finance**.

Also in News



Venture Debt

- According to report, India's venture debt (VD) market raised \$ 1.2 billion in 2023, a 50 % surge from 2022.
 - ⊖ Consumer and fintech emerged as the top sectors for raising funds through venture debt.
- **About Venture Debt:**
 - ⊖ It is a type of financing often **used by early stage startups** that **do not yet have a proven track record of generating revenue**.
 - ⊖ Unlike traditional debt financing, venture debt is usually **provided by specialized lenders** willing to take on more risk for potentially higher returns.



Pigeon Pea (Red gram, Tur, Arhar)

- Hyderabad-based International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics announces **World's first Pigeon Pea speed breeding protocol**.
 - ⊖ The protocol will **shorten breeding cycle to 2- 4 years** (traditionally -13 years) and will **strengthen food security in Asia and Africa**.
- **About Pigeon Pea**
 - ⊖ **High nutritional value** (iron, calcium, phosphorous etc.).
 - ⊖ **India is largest producer** in 2021.
 - ⊖ **Climate requirement**
 - ◆ **Crop of tropical areas** mainly cultivated in semi-arid regions of India.
 - ◆ **Temperature: 26°C to 30°C in rainy season** (June to October) and **17°C to 22°C in post rainy season** (November to March).



Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana (RUVV)

- **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** launched RUVV under Skill India Mission.
- **About RUVV**
 - ⊖ Tailored specifically for **beneficiaries of PM SVANidhi (Street Vendors AtmaNirbhar Nidhi) scheme**.
 - ⊖ Offers individuals with **comprehensive entrepreneurship training** (over a **period of 22 weeks**) combining theoretical knowledge with practical exposure through experiential learning.
 - ⊖ Focuses on **reskilling and upskilling employees** to enhance their competitiveness and adaptability.
 - ⊖ It will be piloted initially in selected districts, with focus on **ensuring 40% women participation**.
 - ⊖ Training will be conducted through **offline, online and hybrid modes, with certificates awarded upon completion**.



Miyawaki Method

- Coal/Lignite Public Sector Undertakings have adopted Miyawaki plantation method in its suitable areas.
- **About Miyawaki method**
 - ⊖ Based on work of **Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki**, it **enhances green cover within a limited area** and establishes **dense forest in 10 years**.
 - ⊖ It involves **cultivating multi-layered forests** that exhibit rapid growth and **replicate natural biodiversity found in native forests**.
 - ⊖ Such forests **lack some qualities of natural forests**, like medicinal properties and ability to bring rain.
 - ⊖ **Benefits:** Mitigate ecological impact of mining activities; Creating carbon sinks, Providing livelihood opportunities for local communities etc.



Baleen Whales (Mysticetes)

- Scientists discover anatomy behind songs of Baleen Whales. They use a **larynx, or voice box, anatomically modified to enable underwater vocalization.**
- **About Baleen Whales**
 - ⊕ There are **14 species of baleen whale** including **blue, bowhead, right, humpback, minke, sei, Bryde, rorquals and gray whale.**
 - ⊕ All species of baleen whales are **listed under CITES Appendix I**, prohibiting commercial international trade.
 - ⊕ Three of the **species occur in India** i.e. **blue, Bryde and humpback whale.**
 - ⊕ **Characteristics:** No teeth, Grow to lengths of 30 meters; Expert divers etc.



BrahMos missiles

- Cabinet Committee on Security has cleared the acquisition of over 200 BrahMos extended-range supersonic cruise missiles for navy.
- **About BrahMos missiles**
 - ⊕ Developed under the joint venture agreement between **India and Russia.**
 - ⊕ A **Supersonic Cruise Missile** i.e travels at a speed of around 2-3 Mach.
 - ◆ **Cruise Missile** is propelled by jet engines.
 - ⊕ **Key Features:**
 - ◆ **Fire and Forget** principle of operation.
 - ◆ **Long flight range (290km)** with varieties of flight trajectories.
 - ◆ **Low radar** signature.
 - ◆ **Pin point accuracy** with high lethal power aided by large kinetic energy on impact.



Umbrella scheme for safety of women

- Union cabinet approved funds for implementing the **Umbrella scheme for safety of women** for the period **2021-22 to 2025-26.**
- **About Umbrella scheme**
 - ⊕ **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs
 - ⊕ **Objective:** Strengthening mechanisms in **States/ Union Territories** for ensuring timely intervention and investigation in case of **crime against women** and crime prevention in such matters.
 - ⊕ **Key Projects covered:**
 - ◆ Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) 2.0.
 - ◆ Upgradation of **Central Forensic Sciences laboratories**, including setting up of National Forensic Data Centre.
 - ◆ Strengthening of **DNA Analysis, Cyber Forensic capacities** in State Forensic Science Laboratories, etc.



Guinea Worm Disease (GWD)

- According to World Health Organization, world is near to eradicate GWD.
- **About GWD (Dracunculiasis)**
 - ⊕ It is an infection **caused by parasite Dracunculus medinensis.**
 - ⊕ **Spread by drinking water** containing Guinea worm larvae. Larvae are immature forms of worm.
 - ⊕ **Affects people in rural, deprived, and isolated communities** who depend mainly on open stagnant surface water sources like ponds.
 - ◆ Also infections in animals, particularly in dogs, have been reported.
 - ⊕ It is **one of the Neglected Tropical Diseases.**
 - ⊕ There is **no vaccine and drug** to prevent the disease and treat patients.
 - ⊕ **India successfully eradicated GWD in 2000.**

Places in News



Albania (Capital: Tirana)

- Albania has announced to open an Embassy in India.
- **Political Boundaries:**
 - ⊕ Located in **Southeastern Europe** in the Balkan Peninsula.
 - ⊕ It shares land border with **Montenegro** (North West), **Kosovo** (North East), **North Macedonia** (East), and **Greece** (South and South East).
 - ⊕ **Water Bodies:** **Adriatic Sea** (West) and **Ionian seas** (South West)
- **Geographical Features:**
 - ⊕ **Physiography:** About three-fourths of its territory consists of mountains and hills; the remainder consists of coastal and alluvial lowlands.
 - ⊕ **Major Rivers:** Drin, Seman, and Shkumbin
 - ⊕ **Highest Point:** Mount Korab
 - ⊕ **Climate Type:** Mediterranean climate

