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Current Affairs

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Corporate Office: 44-A/4, Kalu Sarai, New Delhi-110016

Visit us at: www.madeeasypublications.org

 +91 - 9021300500

E-mail: infomep@madeeasy.in

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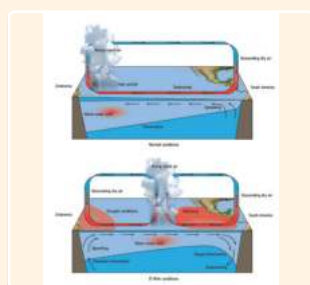


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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA)

The Union government has extended the Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA) in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. At the same time, the AFSPA has been removed from several areas in Northeast India.

- In **Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Northeast India**, the **AFSPA** is a contentious and unpopular law as it allows security services to operate without the risk of prosecution or requirement of a warrant. There have been repeated calls to repeal the law over the years.
- It has long been alleged that human rights violations and extrajudicial arrests and killings take place under the garb of AFSPA.

Origin of AFSPA:

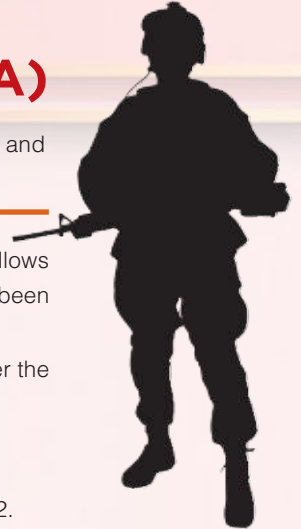
- The Act in its original form was promulgated by the British in response to the Quit India movement in 1942.
- After Independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to retain the Act, which was first brought in as an ordinance and then notified as an Act in 1958.
- The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, enacted in the year 1958, grants extraordinary powers and immunity to the armed forces to bring back order in the “disturbed areas”.
- The Act came into force in the context of increasing violence in the Northeastern States decades ago, which the State governments found difficult to control.

Meaning:

- Armed forces have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.
- If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search a premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.
- Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.

Provisions:

- **Under Section 3**, the Central Government or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.
- An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- **Section 4** gives the Army powers to search premises and make arrests without warrants, to use force even to the extent of causing death, destroy arms/ammunition dumps, fortifications/shelters/hideouts and to stop, search and seize any vehicle.
- **Section 6** stipulates that arrested persons and the seized property are to be made over to the police with the least possible delay.
- **Section 7** offers protection of persons acting in good faith in their official capacity.
- The prosecution is permitted only after the sanction of the Central Government.



Lithium Reserve Discovery in Jammu and Kashmir



The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has found lithium resources in Jammu and Kashmir for the first time.

Key Highlights:

- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has established “inferred” lithium resources of 5.9 million tonnes in Salal-Haimana area of Reasi District of Jammu and Kashmir.
- state governments received 51 mineral parcels, including lithium and gold.
- Non-ferrous metal lithium is one of the essential elements of EV batteries
- The current government's focus EV's are expected to be nearly three-fourth of Indian two-wheelers by 2030, and all new cars are expected to be EVs. The majority of them will have to be powered by lithium-based battery packs in the near term.
- Technologies such as lithium-ion batteries, hydrogen fuel cells are likely to play a key role in India's plan to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030 and to be carbon neutral by 2070
- According to the Central Electricity Authority, the country will need 27 GW of grid-scale energy storage systems by 2030. This will require large amounts of lithium.

Lithium

- Lithium is a chemical element with the symbol Li and atomic number 3. It is a soft, silvery-white alkali metal.
- Under standard conditions, it is the least dense metal and the least dense solid element.
- Like all alkali metals, lithium is highly reactive and flammable, and must be stored in vacuum, inert atmosphere, or inert liquid such as purified kerosene or mineral oil.
- In India, there is some potential to recover lithium from brines of Sambhar and Pachpadra areas in Rajasthan, and Rann of Kutch, Gujarat.
- The major mica belts located in Rajasthan, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh and the pegmatite belts in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, alongside rock mining being undertaken at Mandya, Karnataka, are other potential geological domains of the country.

BIS announced 'Learning Science via Standards' initiative

Recently, The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the National Standards Body of India has announced the launch of 'Learning Science via Standards' Initiative.



Key Highlights:

- It is a unique initiative for students for learning science via standards.
- The initiative focuses on a series of lesson plans aimed to use scientific concepts, principles and laws to help students understand their practical applications in manufacturing, functioning and testing of quality characteristics of different products as stated in the relevant Indian Standards.
- The subjects for the lesson plans are largely related to products used in day-to-day life and have been chosen based on their relevance to education as part of the course curriculum as well as to industrial applications.
- This initiative runs in a continuum with an earlier BIS 'Standards Clubs' Initiative.

About Standards Clubs Initiative

- It is launched by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)
- Its aim is to expose science students of class 9th and above classes to the concept of Quality and Standardization with the help of student-centric activities
- Under the initiative, Standards Clubs have been set up in schools and colleges. Each Standards Club comprises a science teacher as its mentor and a minimum of 15 students as members.
- BIS organizes a two-day residential training for Mentors of Standard club wherein they are introduced to concepts of Standards and Quality, their role and expectation as mentors and different student-centric activities that can be taken up.
- Such schools have also initiated conducting activities under the aegis of the Standards Club such as quizzes, standard writing competitions, essay writing etc.



Jan Aushadhi Train flagged off

The Jan Aushadhi Train was flagged off recently in New Delhi by Union Ministers Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya and Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw.



Key highlights

- It was launched as part of the week-long celebrations commemorating the Jan Aushadhi scheme. This is the second such train to be flagged off to create awareness about the scheme.
- The train, Chhattisgarh Samparkranti Express, seeks to raise awareness about Jan Aushadhi Generic medicines that are available through more than 9,000 Kendras spread across India.
- It is wrapped with the branding of the Jan Aushadhi scheme.
- It will travel to more than 4 states, including Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, over 2 months. It will cover 1,278 km.

About Jan Aushadhi Day

- Jan Aushadhi Day is commemorated on March 7 every year.
- The main purpose of the day is to spread awareness of the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana. The scheme focuses on increasing the usage of generic medicines.
- Generic medicines are less expensive and therefore are highly affordable to BPL families.

UNDP and NITI Aayog held LIFEathon

UNDP and NITI Aayog held LIFEathon to create pro-planet network.



Key Highlights:

- A virtual hackathon aimed at promoting sustainable living and climate-positive behavior jointly organized by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and NITI Aayog brought together over 400 young people.
- The hybrid event, called 'LIFEathon,' brought together young people from 60 plus countries to share ideas and innovations for individual action towards climate change.

- The hackathon was part of the Indian government's Mission LiFE campaign, which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in Gujarat last year.
- This campaign aims to promote environmentally friendly lifestyles by encouraging small individual actions, such as using less plastic and waste less food, and taking public transport.

Govt. launched Star-rated Appliances Program and iDEEKSHA Portal

The Union Minister of Power has launched the Voluntary Star Labelling Programme for multi-door refrigerators, table and wall-mounted fans, pedestal fans, and induction hobs. The Minister also launched the iDEEKSHA Portal.

iDEEKSHA Portal:

- iDEEKSHA is a platform developed under the Accelerating Smart Power and Renewable Energy (ASPIRE) Technical 1 Assistance Programme.
- iDEEKSHA is designed to serve as a one-stop shop for all energy efficiency and decarbonization needs of Indian energy-intensive industries.
- **Aim :** It aims to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and experience, and best practices related to the wide gamut of stakeholders such as industries, industrial associations, technology and service providers and research institutions, etc.

About Star Labeling Programme

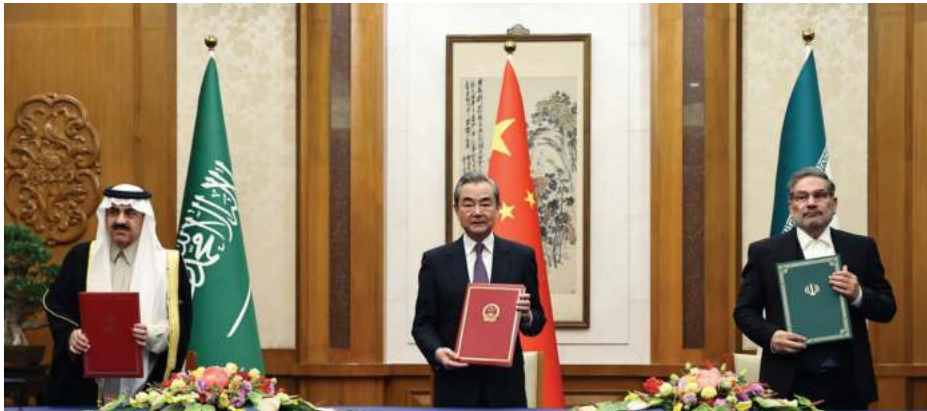
- Star Labeling Program has been formulated by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) as part of its mandate under the Energy Conservation Act, of 2001.



- Its aim is to provide consumers an informed choice regarding the energy savings and thereby the cost-saving potential of various energy-consuming appliances.
- This scheme prescribes minimum energy performance levels for appliances/ equipment, rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most energy efficient.
- Presently, the programme covers the star labeling program for 34 appliances, including the four newly-added energy-efficient appliances.

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



Saudi Arabia, Iran agrees to restore diplomatic ties

Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to resume diplomatic ties that have been severed for years. Recently, China-Brokered Talks have led to the normalcy of diplomatic relations between the middle-eastern countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia

- Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to restore ties and reopen diplomatic missions after a seven-year-long rift that has fuelled tensions in the Gulf and deepened conflicts from Yemen to Syria.
- The agreement was reached recently during talks in Beijing between top security officials from the two rival Middle East powers.
- While the rivalry between predominantly Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia has dominated Middle East politics in recent years, spreading into Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.
- The execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr in Tehran in 2016 was the most recent incident which led to protests and the cutting of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia.
- Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to respect state sovereignty and not interfere in each other's internal affairs.
- Both countries have also agreed to activate a security cooperation agreement signed in 2001.
- The foreign ministers of both nations will meet to prepare for the exchange of ambassadors.

Implications of Agreement

- The agreement has potentially wide implications for the Iran nuclear deal and the civil war in Yemen, where the two sides are locked in a proxy war.
- The deal shows the new determination of Saudi Arabia to conduct a foreign policy independent of the West.
- Some quarters from Israel have described the pact as a "serious and dangerous" development and a "fatal blow to the effort to create a regional alliance" against the Islamic Republic.
- Saudi Arabia has refused to join the Abraham accords that normalized relations between Israel and some Arab states.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to respect state sovereignty and not interfere in each other's internal affairs.

Raisina Dialogue 2023

Recently, the eighth edition of the Raisina Dialogue was held in New Delhi. This year saw the participation of intelligence and security chiefs from over 26 countries.

- India's Minister of State for External Affairs highlighted the importance of multilateralism in the context of changing geopolitics at the ongoing Raisina Dialogue and added that India would work towards reforming multilateralism.
- There is a better methodology for resolving conflicts and not letting them happen in the first place in the interest of maintaining social order.
- The minister of State for External Affairs stressed on the need of shaping the New World on the pillars of multilateralism, security and prosperity, alleviation of poverty, sustainable development, equal opportunities, human rights, democracy and commitment to a peaceful and just international order.
- India's theme of VasudhaivaKutumbakam- One Earth, One Family, One Future for its G20 Presidency, signals the need for unity of purpose and unity of action.
- Minister of State for IT speaking at a panel discussion on 'Democracy's Eleven: Protecting our Technology Future', said there is a fundamental reset underway in semiconductor, electronics and innovation world order post-COVID, and like-minded nations need to work together on a cooperative framework to shape the future of technology.
- The Chief of Navy Staff said working in smaller groups and regional frameworks is helpful in building trust, interoperability and overall outcome. He also highlighted the vision of SAGAR or security and growth for all in the region.
- Speaking at the Raisina Dialogue, Finance Minister said that the country will have government-owned professionally run companies in four broad strategic sectors - atomic energy, space and defence; Transport and telecommunication; Power, Petroleum, Coal and other minerals; and Banking, Insurance and Financial Services.



RAISINA DIALOGUE

- The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier foreign policy conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- The first session was held in 2016.
- It is organized on the lines of the Shangri La Dialogue (which takes place annually in Singapore) & the Munich Security Conference (the 59th edition of which took place in February 2023).
- It is co-hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

25 Years of Indo-French Strategic Partnership

India and France recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Indo-French Strategic Partnership.



Key Highlights:

- The Indo-French Strategic Partnership has continued to gain momentum over shared values and strategic autonomy.
- France was among the first countries with which India signed a civil nuclear deal.
- France has emerged as a key trading partner of India with annual trade of \$12.42 billion in 2021-22
- France is the 11th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of \$10.31 billion in past two decades, which represents 1.70% of the total foreign direct investment inflows into India
- France has emerged as a key defence partner for India, becoming the second largest defence supplier in 2017-2021. France is a major strategic partner for India with crucial defence deals and increased military to military engagement
- New Delhi and Paris, as part of their joint efforts on climate change, launched the International Solar Alliance in 2015
- Both countries share concerns over the rise of China and its aggressive behaviour, regionally and globally, and have committed to working together to ensure that there is no imbalance in the Indo-Pacific.
- There is a broad understanding of each other's position and resolve to coordinate to find a solution when they find themselves in opposite camps for example Russia-Ukraine crisis

3

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ChatGPT

AI powerhouse OpenAI announced GPT-4, the next big update to the technology that powers ChatGPT and Microsoft Bing, the search engine using the technology.

- Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) refers to a series of Large Language Models (LLMs) built by OpenAI. These models use billions of data points to read written text inputs, based on which they generate content

Key highlights:

- GPT-4 is a large multimodal model created by OpenAI. It can generate content from both image and text prompts.
- The most noticeable change to GPT-4 is that it's multimodal, allowing it to understand more than one modality of information. ChatGPT were limited to textual input and output meaning they could only read and write. However, GPT-4 can be fed images and asked to output information accordingly.
- ChatGPT model could handle 4,096 tokens or around 8,000 words but GPT-4 pumps those numbers up to 32,768 tokens or around 64,000 words.
- Machine learning data is mostly in English currently. So, training Large Language Models (LLMs) like GPT in other languages models is challenging. But GPT-4 is multilingual.
- According to OpenAI, GPT-4 has a few similar limitations as its prior versions and is less capable than humans in many real-world scenarios. GPT-4 still struggles with social biases, hallucinations and adversarial prompts.
- Inaccurate responses are known as "hallucinations", which have been a challenge for many AI programs.

ChatGPT

- ChatGPT is a prototype dialogue-based AI chatbot capable of understanding natural human language and generating impressively detailed human-like written text.
- It is the latest evolution of the GPT – or Generative Pre-Trained Transformer – family of text-generating AIs.
- It is trained using a machine learning technique called Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF),
- It can simulate dialogue, answer follow-up questions, admit mistakes, challenge incorrect premises and reject inappropriate requests.
- A tool like ChatGPT could be used in real-world applications such as digital marketing, online content creation, answering customer service queries or as some users have found, even to help debug code.
- The bot can respond to a large range of questions while imitating human speaking styles.

Limitation

- OpenAI claims ChatGPT will occasionally produce inaccurate information and that its knowledge is restricted to global events that occurred before 2021.
- AI technology can also perpetuate societal biases like those around race, gender, and culture.



ChatGPT

The technology that underlies ChatGPT is referenced in the second half of its name, GPT, which stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer.

Transformers are specialized algorithms for finding long-range patterns in sequences of data.

A transformer learns to predict not just the next word in a sentence but also the next sentence in a paragraph and the next paragraph in an essay. This is what allows it to stay on topic for long stretches of text.

ChatGPT is a new AI chat tool from OpenAI that uses the latest advances in natural language processing and machine learning to generate intelligent and engaging responses to user input.

Recent

Current Affairs Questions

- Consider the following statement regarding India's Tourism sector:
 - 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is allowed under the automatic route in the tourism and hospitality industry in India.
 - In the Union Budget 2022-23, Rs. 2,400 crore has been allocated to the Ministry of Tourism which is 18.42% lower than the allocation for FY 2021-22.Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Which of the following released "Global Economic Prospects" report?
 - International Monetary Fund
 - World Trade Organization
 - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
 - World Bank
- Who was the first Indian architect to receive the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2018?
 - Charles Correa
 - Raj Rewal
 - Dr Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi
 - Bijoy Jain
- Consider the following statements:
 - The Param Vir Chakra (PVC) is India's highest military decoration, awarded for displaying distinguished acts of valour during wartime.
 - Parakram Diwas is observed on the death anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Which of the following sports are included in Saansad Khel Mahakumbh?
 - Wrestling
 - Carrom
 - Table tennis
 - Hockey
 - Kho KhoSelect the correct answer using the code given below:
 - 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
 - 2, 3 and 4 only
 - 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
 - 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- The term 'Shadow banning' was recently seen in the news, related to:
 - Economic sanctions imposed by Asian Development Bank
 - Measure to reduce the impacts of single-use plastic products
 - Content moderation by Social Media Platforms
 - Prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons
- Which of the following organisations releases the Global Risks Report?
 - World Bank (WB)
 - World Economic Forum (WEF)
 - International Monetary Fund (IMF)
 - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Report on municipal finances" was recently released by which of the following?
 - NITI Aayog
 - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
 - Reserve Bank of India
 - Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
- Which of the following is the Theme of the National Youth Festival 2023?
 - Viksit Yuva Viksit Bharat
 - YUVAAH – Utsah Naye Bharat Ka
 - It's all in your mind
 - Fit Youth Fit India

ANSWERS

1. (a) 2. (d) 3. (c) 4. (a) 5. (d) 6. (c) 7. (b) 8. (c)
9. (a)