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Daily Current Affairs

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Concerns Raised over the Amendment into the RTI Act

Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005

- **Aim:** It was designed to promote transparency in the functioning of the government by giving citizens the right to access information from public authorities.
- **Scope:** The Act applies to public authorities, which include government departments, ministries, and organizations that are substantially funded by the government.
- **Information Accessible to the Public:** Citizens have the right to request information from public authorities. This includes the right to access records, documents, and other information.
- **Exclusions:** Information that may compromise national security, breach confidentiality, or harm the integrity of ongoing investigations.
- **Timeframe for Response:** Public authorities are required to respond to information requests within 30 days. In certain cases, this period can be extended to 45 days.
- **Penalties:** The Act provides for penalties against officials who withhold information without reasonable cause or provide false information.

India and Russia Approved Strategic Projects

Background

- The “**Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership**” was signed in October 2000 during President Vladimir Putin’s visit to India.
- In 2010, the partnership was elevated to a “**Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership,**” reflecting increased cooperation across key sectors: defense, politics, economics, and culture.
- India-Russia ties are characterized by high-level engagements, institutional dialogue mechanisms, and cooperation in multilateral forums like BRICS, SCO, and the UN.

Key Points of the 8th IRWG-PIP Session

- **Six New Strategic Projects:** India and Russia have agreed to collaborate on six new strategic projects with the goal of boosting bilateral investment.
 - Sectors involved include trade, technological innovation, and economic development.
- **Framework:** The IRWG-PIP operates under the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation.

Delay in Reporting Births and Deaths Data

Civil Registration System (CRS) App

- The mobile app, prepared by the **Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (Ministry of Home Affairs)**, is expected to significantly reduce the time required for the registration of births and deaths.
- According to the **Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023**, all reported births and deaths in the country occurring from **October 1, 2023** are to be digitally registered.
- **The digital birth certificates** will be a single document to prove the date of birth for various services such as admission to educational institutions, government jobs and marriage registration.
- The centralized database will also help update the **National Population Register (NPR)**, ration cards, property registration and electoral rolls.

India Needs an Ecosystem That Better Enables Deep-tech Innovation

Comparison with china

- **Indian** start-ups focus on food delivery apps, online services like betting, and influencer-driven content.
 - India lacks significant intellectual property (IP) in cutting-edge sectors, unlike China.
 - India lacks a globally competitive AI model and is still in the process of evaluating proposals.
- **Chinese** start-ups are focused on electric vehicles (EVs), battery technology, AI, robotics, and infrastructure.
 - China is a global leader in electric mobility and it leads in AI with Deepseek, showing that an effective AI model can be built at a fraction of the expected cost.
 - China has over 6,000 deep tech start-ups, which have raised nearly \$100 billion in venture capital and private equity.

Startup Mahakumbh

- – Startup Mahakumbh is a landmark event that showcases innovation and entrepreneurship in India.
- The **theme** ‘**Startup India @ 2047**: Unfolding the Bharat Story.’
- It aims to promote global exposure and collaboration, drive innovation, and position India as a global startup hub by 2047.

Weaponization of Trade and Finance

What is Weaponization of Trade and Finance?

- Weaponization of trade and finance refers to the **strategic use of trade policies and economic measures** by countries to **exert political or economic pressure** on others.
- This practice departs from the traditional role of trade and finance as instruments of cooperation and globalization.
- **Tools of trade weaponization:** Tariffs and Sanctions, Restrictions on exports of critical technologies or materials, Currency Manipulation etc.

Recent incidents of trade and finance weaponization

- **Tariff War 2.0:** The ongoing US-China trade friction has seen high tariffs and investment restrictions being imposed to gain strategic advantage and secure supply chains.
- **Financial Sanctions:** The West's exclusion of Russia from the **SWIFT network** and freezing of its central bank reserves post-Ukraine invasion is a classic case of financial weaponization.
- **Technology Denial Regimes:** Restrictions on semiconductor exports to China and controls over AI or quantum computing hardware highlight technology weaponization.

Jatra Utsav

Syllabus: GS1/ History and Culture

Context:

Tripura is planning to host a *Jatra Utsav* with the objective of safeguarding its traditional art, culture, and heritage.

About:

Jatra or *Jatrapala* is a well-known folk theatre form originating from Bengal, typically staged in open-air settings, which encourages direct engagement with the audience.

The term *Jatra* translates to "journey," reflecting its roots in itinerant theatrical performances.

Geographical Spread:

Jatrapala enjoys popularity in states like West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, and Tripura, showcasing the shared cultural and linguistic traditions of these regions.

Key Characteristics:

- Blends narrative drama with music, dance, and elements of social critique
- Known for its vibrant costumes, expressive acting, booming dialogues, and often includes a moral message
- **Themes :**
The content usually revolves around mythological epics, historical narratives, and pressing contemporary social

Mahavir Jayanti

Syllabus: GS 1 - History, Famous Personalities

In News:

Mahavir Jayanti is being observed with deep reverence across India.

About Mahavir Jayanti:

The festival marks the birth anniversary of **Lord Mahavir**, the 24th and final **Tirthankara** in Jainism. It is an important day for Jains to reflect upon and practice the core teachings of Lord Mahavir. The celebration includes **prayers, meditation**, and acts of **compassion**, encouraging individuals to live an ethical life grounded in kindness toward all beings. It is predominantly celebrated in **India**, as well as in countries like **Nepal**, the **United States**, and the **United Kingdom**.

Vardhaman Mahavira:

- Regarded as the **founder of Jainism** and the last Tirthankara.
- Born in **599 BCE in Vaishali**, the capital of the **Vajji confederacy**.
- His father, **Siddhartha**, was a Kshatriya chief.
- At the age of **30**, he renounced worldly life to seek spiritual truth, leading a life of severe austerity.
- Upon attaining enlightenment, he was titled **Mahavira** (the Great Hero).
- He advocated for strict **celibacy (brahmacharya)** and self-discipline.

Philosophy and Teachings:

- Mahavira **rejected the concepts of God**, elaborate rituals, and the **caste hierarchy**, promoting **equality** and **spiritual independence**.
- He encouraged followers to observe the **five great vows**:
 - **Ahimsa** (non-violence)
 - **Satya** (truthfulness)
 - **Asteya** (non-stealing)
 - **Brahmacharya** (celibacy)
 - **Aparigraha** (non-attachment)
- His path to **liberation (moksha)** included the **Three Jewels**:
 - **Right Belief**,
 - **Right Knowledge**,
 - **Right Conduct**.
- His core message of **Ahimsa** influenced practices like **vegetarianism** and meticulous care for all life

Legacy:

- He preached across regions such as **Anga, Mithila, Magadha,** and **Kosala.**
- He attained nirvana in **527 BCE at Pawapuri.**

Did You Know?

- The term **Jaina** stems from the Sanskrit word *Jina*, meaning “conqueror”—one who has overcome inner passions.
- Mahavira earned the title *Jina* after achieving spiritual victory over desires.
- He spread his teachings in **Ardha Magadhi,** a common language, making them accessible to all.
- **Jainism later split into two main sects:**
 - **Digambaras** (sky-clad)
 - **Swetambaras** (white-clad)
- Jainism flourished under rulers like **Bimbisara** and **Ajatashatru,** with significant growth in its **art, architecture, and literature.**

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Anniversary

Syllabus: GS 1 – History

In News:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah paid homage to social reformer **Mahatma Jyotirao Phule** on his birth anniversary.

About Jyotiba Phule:

Jyotirao Phule was a pioneering **social reformer** who dedicated his life to fighting caste-based discrimination, promoting **education**, and uplifting **women and marginalized communities** in India.

Early Life:

- Born in **1827** into a **Mali (gardener)** family in **Poona (Pune)**, Maharashtra.
- The Mali caste belonged to the **Shudra varna**, ranked just below the Maratha-Kunbi peasant caste.
- A turning point in his life came in **1848**, when he faced **humiliation at a Brahmin wedding**, which strengthened his resolve to challenge casteism.
- He drew inspiration from reformist thinkers and missionaries like **Cynthia Farrar** and **Thomas Paine**.

Major Contributions:

- In **1848**, Phule and his wife **Savitribai Phule** established **India's first girls' school**, later expanding to **18 schools**.
- He also set up **night schools** for laborers and farmers.
- In **1873**, he founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of Truth-Seekers)**—an anti-caste, inclusive reform movement positioned as an

Social Reforms and Ideological Stance:

- Phule opposed **upper-caste dominance** in social reform movements and had ideological clashes with figures like **Bal Gangadhar Tilak**, though he showed generosity by helping Tilak during his imprisonment.
- He did not view the **1857 Revolt** as a struggle for independence but as a danger of restoring **Peshwa-era Brahminical oppression**.
- In his work **Gulamgiri**, he drew a parallel between caste-based discrimination in India and **slavery in the U.S.**, criticizing Brahminical authority as rooted in superstition and narrow-mindedness.
- He was a strong advocate of **universal primary education**, proposing incentives such as **scholarships** and **prizes** to encourage poor families to send their children to school.
- His book **Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak** rejected religious exclusivity and emphasized **equality and rationalism**, challenging religious orthodoxy and caste hierarchies.
- In **Shetkaryanche Asud**, he urged the government to focus on **farmer education, irrigation, soil development, and military-led infrastructure building**.
- He also criticized **polygamy** and questioned **gender-based double standards** in religion and marriage practices.
- **Legacy:**
Mahatma Phule **denounced the caste system**, questioned religious orthodoxy, and envisioned an egalitarian and rational society. His courageous and compassionate activism laid the groundwork for future **social justice movements in India** and continues to inspire

Chittorgarh Fort

Syllabus: GS1 - History

Context:

The Rajasthan government informed the Supreme Court that it is *seriously considering* a **total ban on mining** within a 10-kilometre radius of the historic Chittorgarh Fort's boundary.

About the Fort:

- Chittorgarh Fort was originally built in the **7th century AD** by **Chitrangada Mori**, a ruler from the **Maurya dynasty of Rajasthan**.
- In **728 AD**, it was taken over by the **Mewar rulers**, who made it their capital and developed it into a **symbol of Rajput strength and resistance**.
- The fort holds a key place in Rajput history, representing the **valor and sovereignty** of Mewar.
- According to **Malik Muhammad Jayasi's** epic *Padmavat*, **Alauddin Khilji** attacked the fort in pursuit of **Queen Padmini**, wife of **Rana Ratan Singh**.
- In **2013**, it was recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** under the category of **Hill Forts of Rajasthan**.

Architectural Highlights:

- The fort is protected by **thick stone walls** and fortified with **seven large gateways (pols)**.
- Notable structures within the complex include:
 - **Vijay Stambh (Tower of Victory)**: Erected by **Rana Kumbha** to commemorate his triumph over Malwa; it is a **nine-story tower** with detailed carvings.
 - **Kirti Stambh (Tower of Fame)**: A **Jain monument**, adorned with sculptures of **Jain Tirthankaras**.

Panama Canal

Syllabus: GS1 - Places in News

In News:

Panama reaffirmed that the **United States acknowledges Panama's sovereignty** over the **Panama Canal**, despite recent tensions. Both countries have also agreed to expand **U.S. military training efforts** in Panama.

About the Canal:

- The **Panama Canal** is a **man-made waterway** linking the **Atlantic and Pacific Oceans**, serving as a crucial passage for **global maritime trade**, with nearly **6% of global shipping** transiting through it.
- It was **opened in 1914** by the **United States**, symbolizing a major feat of **American engineering and economic dominance**.
- Initially under U.S. control, the canal was handed over to Panama on **December 31, 1999**, following the **Torrijos-Carter Treaties**.
- However, the U.S. retains the right to ensure the **neutrality of the canal** and to **prioritize military access** in times of emergency.

Did You Know?

- The **Panama Canal Treaty** dissolved the **Canal Zone** and formally transferred authority to Panama.
- The **Permanent Neutrality Treaty** guarantees **open access** to ships from all nations under neutral terms.

Vitamin D Deficiency

Syllabus: GS2 – Health

In News:

A recent study has highlighted that **20% of Indians suffer from Vitamin D deficiency**, with the **eastern region** being most affected.

Key Highlights:

- **Urban populations** are more prone to deficiency due to predominantly **indoor lifestyles** and **insufficient sun exposure**, unlike their rural counterparts.
- **Vitamin D** (calciferol) is a **fat-soluble vitamin** crucial for maintaining overall health.
- The body naturally synthesizes Vitamin D when the skin is exposed to **UVB rays** from sunlight.
- It is also found in **eggs, meat, fish**, and **fortified foods** like cereals, dairy, and plant-based milk.
- It helps regulate **calcium and phosphate** levels in the body.
- Deficiency can result in **osteomalacia** (bone softening), **osteoporosis** (bone density loss), and **rickets** in children.

Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP)

Syllabus: GS2 – Governance

Context:

The **Maharashtra government** has approved the allocation of **256 acres** of salt pan land in **Mulund, Kanjurmarg, and Bhandup** for the DRP.

About the Project:

- **Dharavi**, in central Mumbai, is one of **Asia's largest slums**, covering 240 sq. km.
- The **Dharavi Redevelopment Project** aims to upgrade this informal settlement into a **planned urban locality** with **proper housing, sanitation, and infrastructure**.
- It is being developed under a **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** model.

Significance:

- **Decent Living Conditions:** Supports **SDG 3** (Good Health) and **SDG 6** (Clean Water and Sanitation).
- **Reducing Inequality:** By accommodating all dwellers, including ineligible ones, it furthers **SDG 10** (Reduced Inequality).
- **Sustainable Urban Development:** Aims to fulfill **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities) by transforming slums into

Vizhinjam International Seaport

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy

In News:

MSC Türkiye, one of the world's **largest and most fuel-efficient** container ships, docked at Vizhinjam Port – a **first** for any Indian or South Asian port.

About Vizhinjam Port:

- A **deepwater international transshipment port** in Kerala, focused on container handling and multipurpose cargo.
- Developed under the **landlord model** with a **PPP** component on a **DBFOT (Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Transfer)** basis.
- It is India's **first deepwater transshipment port**, with a **natural depth of 18 meters**,

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

Syllabus: GS3 - Security

Context:

A Delhi court has sent **Tahawwur Rana**, a 26/11 accused extradited from the U.S., to **NIA custody**.

About NIA:

- **Established under** the NIA Act, 2008, following the **26/11 Mumbai attacks**.
- Acts as the **central counter-terrorism agency** of India.
- Investigates offences affecting **sovereignty, security, and international obligations**.

NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019:

- **Jurisdiction extended** to cover crimes involving Indian citizens/interests **outside India**.
- Expanded to include crimes under laws like the **Explosive Substances Act, Arms Act, Human Trafficking, and Cyber Terrorism**.
- Works under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, with headquarters in **New Delhi**.
- Operates **51 Special Courts**, including **2 exclusive NIA courts** in **Ranchi and Jammu**.

Sea Lions

Syllabus: GS3 - Species

In News:

Off the coast of **California**, **sea lions** have displayed **unusual aggression** towards humans, attributed to an **algal bloom**.

About Sea Lions:

- Belong to the **pinniped** family (fin-footed marine mammals).
- Have **short, coarse hair, large front flippers**, and the ability to “walk” on land using **rotating hind flippers**.
- Known for being **vocal**, highly **social**, and forming **large herds**.

Latest Findings:

- The aggression is due to **domoic acid**, a **neurotoxin** secreted by the algae *Pseudo-nitzschia*.
- The toxin affects the **brain**, leading to **stress, muscle spasms, aggression**, and even **permanent damage**.
- The bloom is caused by **nutrient-rich upwelling** (linked to climate change) and **runoff** containing fertilizers that promote algal growth.