



Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fiber Connection Project

For Prelims: KLI-SOFC Project, [Digital India](#), [Fibre Optic Cables](#), [National Broadband Mission](#), [Lakshadweep Islands](#)

For Mains: Government Policies & Interventions, Significance of Digital Connectivity Infrastructure

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India inaugurated the **Kochi-Lakshadweep islands submarine optical fiber connection (KLI-SOFC) project** among various developmental projects covering a wide range of sectors including technology, energy, water resources, healthcare and education.

What are the Key Facts About the KLI-SOFC Project?

▪ Background:

- Lakshadweep required digital connectivity, prompting a high-capacity submarine cable link due to **limitations in satellite communication**, marked by inadequate bandwidth to meet growing demand.

▪ KLI-SOFC Project:

- The KLI-SOFC project will lead to an **increase in internet speed**, unlocking new possibilities and opportunities.
- The project introduces **Submarine [Optic Fiber Cable](#) connectivity** for the first time in Lakshadweep since independence.
 - Fiber optics, or optical fiber, refers to the **technology that transmits information as light pulses** along a glass or plastic fiber.
- The **[Department of Telecommunications \(DOT\)](#)** funded by the **[Universal Services Obligation Fund \(USOF\)](#)**, completed the project. **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)** was the Project Executing Agency.
- The KLI project extended submarine cable connectivity from the mainland (**Kochi**) to **eleven Lakshadweep Islands** namely, Kavaratti, Agatti, Amini, Kadmat, Chetlet, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Androth, Kiltan, Bangaram and Bitra has been extended.

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▪ Significance:

- The project aligns with the goals of '[Digital India](#)' and '[National Broadband Mission](#),' fostering the rollout of various **e-governance projects** in Lakshadweep Islands.
 - E-Governance, Tourism, Education, Health, Commerce, and Industries will experience significant enhancements, contributing to **improved standards of living** and overall socio-economic development on the islands.
- The population of Lakshadweep Islands will benefit from high-speed wireline broadband connectivity, facilitated through Fibre to the Home (FTTH), and [5G/4G Mobile network technologies](#).
 - The bandwidth generated by the project will be accessible to all **Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)**, reinforcing telecom services in Lakshadweep Islands.

Other Projects in Lakshadweep Islands

▪ Low-Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) Plant at Kadmat:

- Produces 1.5 lakh litres of clean drinking water every day. **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC)** in Agatti and Minicoy Islands.
 - All households on the Agatti and Minicoy islands now have functional household tap connections.
 - The LTTD is a process under which the **warm surface seawater is flash evaporated at low pressure** and the vapour is condensed with cold deep sea water.

- **Solar Power Plant at Kavaratti:**
 - The first-ever battery-backed [solar power](#) project in Lakshadweep.
- **Primary Health Care Facility in Kalpeni:**
 - Foundation stone laid for the renovation of the primary health care facility in Kalpeni.
- **Model Anganwadi Centres (Nand Ghars):**
 - Five model [Anganwadi centres](#) (Nand Ghars) to be constructed in the islands of Androth, Chetlat, Kadmat, Agatti, and Minicoy.

What are the Key Facts About the Lakshadweep Islands?

- India's smallest Union Territory Lakshadweep is an archipelago **consisting of 36 islands** with an area of 32 sq km.
- The **capital is Kavaratti** and it is also the principal town of the UT.
 - All Islands are 220 to 440 km away from the coastal city of Kochi in Kerala, in the emerald **Arabian Sea**.
 - The name Lakshadweep in Malayalam and Sanskrit means 'a hundred thousand islands'.
- Lakshadweep has a **tropical climate and it has an average temperature of 27° C - 32° C**.
 - As the climate is equitable during monsoons, ship-based tourism is closed.
- It is directly under the **control of the Centre through an administrator**.
- The entire indigenous population has been classified as [Scheduled Tribes](#) because of their economic and social backwardness.
 - According to the [Scheduled Castes](#) and Scheduled Tribes list (modification orders), 1956, there are no Scheduled Castes in this Union Territory.
- In 2020, the Lakshadweep Islands administration established **the world's first conservation area for sea cucumbers**, the Dr. KK Mohammed Koya Sea Cucumber Conservation Reserve, spanning 239 square kilometers **in the Cheriyan Reef**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Where was the first desalination plant in India to produce one lakh litres freshwater per day based on low temperature thermal desalination principle commissioned? (2008)

- (a) Kavaratti
- (b) Port Blair
- (c) Mangalore
- (d) Valsad

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai has developed the world's first Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) plant in Kavaratti, the capital of Lakshadweep to cater to the requirements of the local population of Karavatti, Minicoy and Agatti.
- The reverse osmosis, a membrane process which is globally accepted technology suitable for desalination of saline water, is quite different from LTTD technology.
- The LTTD is a process under which the warm surface sea water is flash evaporated at low pressure and the vapour is condensed with cold deep sea water.
- The LTTD technology does not require any chemical pre and post-treatment of seawater and thus the pollution problems are minimal and the process is suitable for island territories. Since no effluent treatment is required, it gives less operational maintenance problems compared to other desalination processes.
- Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

India's Toy Industry

For Prelims: India's Toy Industry, Success Story of Made in India Toys, [Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade \(DPIIT\)](#), National Action Plan for Toys (NAPT), Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

For Mains: India's Toy Industry, Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow at the behest of [Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade \(DPIIT\)](#) under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, has conducted a Case Study on "**Success Story of Made in India Toys**", highlighting a significant rise in Toy Exports in FY 2022-23 in comparison to FY 2014-15.

What is the Status of Indian Toy Industry as per the Study?

- **Significant Growth Trends:**
 - The Indian toy industry exhibited **remarkable growth between FY 2014-15** and FY 2022-23, marked by a substantial decline in imports by 52% and a significant rise in exports by 239%.
 - This growth indicates a shift towards self-sufficiency and global competitiveness.
- **Quality Improvement:**
 - There's been an overall enhancement in the quality of toys available in the domestic market. **This emphasizes the importance of meeting international standards** and ensuring consumer satisfaction and safety.
- **Growth Drivers:**
 - **Enhanced Manufacturing Ecosystem:** Government efforts have **facilitated the creation of a more conducive** manufacturing ecosystem. Doubling the number of manufacturing units in six years, reducing dependence on imported inputs from 33% to 12%, increasing in gross sales value by a **CAGR of 10%** and improving labor productivity are noteworthy achievements.
 - **Global Integration and Export Focus:** India's emergence as a top exporting nation in the toy industry indicates **successful integration into the global toy value chain**. Zero-duty market access in key countries like the UAE and Australia has contributed to this growth trajectory.

What are the Government Initiatives to Foster the Growth in the Toy Industry?

- **National Action Plan for Toys (NAPT):**
 - A comprehensive plan comprising 21 specific action points, coordinated by DPIIT and implemented by multiple Central Ministries/Departments. This plan addresses various aspects like design, quality control, promotion of indigenous toy clusters, etc.
- **Increase in Basic Customs Duty (BCD):**
 - A substantial **increase in BCD on toys (from 20% to 60% in February 2020, and subsequently to 70% in March 2023)** aims to protect the domestic toy industry from cheaper imports and encourage local manufacturing.
- **Mandated Sample Testing:**
 - The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**, under the Ministry of Commerce

and Industry mandated sample testing for each import consignment to prevent the import of substandard toys, ensuring better quality control.

- **Quality Control Order (QCO) for Toys:**

- Issued in 2020, this **order emphasizes quality standards for toys**, effective from January 2021, to enhance the overall quality of toys manufactured and sold in the country.

- **Provisions for Toy Manufacturers:**

- Special provisions by BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) have been made, including granting licenses to small units without testing facilities for a specified period, facilitating compliance with quality standards.

- **BIS Standard Marks:**

- Over 1200 licenses have **been granted to domestic manufacturers** and over 30 to foreign manufacturers, ensuring adherence to quality standards through BIS marks.

- **Cluster-based Approach:**

- Supporting the domestic toy industry through schemes like [SFURTI \(Scheme of Funds for the Regeneration of Traditional Industries\)](#) by the Ministry of MSME and providing support for designing and tooling to various toy clusters by the Ministry of Textiles.

- **Promotional Initiatives:**

- Events like The **Indian Toy Fair 2021** and [Toycathon](#) aim to promote indigenous toys, encourage innovation, and create a platform for showcasing and ideation in the toy industry.

Way Forward

- To position India as a competitive alternative to **major toy manufacturing hubs like China and Vietnam**, consistent collaborative efforts between the toy industry and the Government are deemed essential.
- Embracing technology, focusing on [e-commerce](#), encouraging partnerships and exports, investing in brand-building, and engaging with educators and parents for effective communication with children are key aspects identified.

Annual Exchange of Nuclear Installation Lists: India and Pakistan

For Prelims: [India and Pakistan](#), Exchange of Nuclear Installation Lists: India and Pakistan, [Line of Control](#), [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor](#), [Indus Water Treaty](#), [SAARC](#).

For Mains: Major Areas of Dispute Between India and Pakistan, Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack Against Nuclear Installations and Facilities

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, [India and Pakistan](#) have exchanged lists of their **respective nuclear installations and facilities** through diplomatic channels in **New Delhi (India) and Islamabad (Pakistan)**.

- This exchange falls under the **Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities** between the two countries.

What is the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack Against Nuclear Installations and Facilities?

- **About:** The Agreement on the **Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities** was signed on 31st December, 1988, by the then Pakistani Prime Minister **Benazir Bhutto** and **Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi**.
 - The treaty came into force on **27th January, 1991**.
 - The recent one is the **33rd consecutive exchange of such lists between the two countries**, the first one having taken place on **01st January, 1992**.
- **Background:** While other factors might have played a role, the direct trigger for the negotiation and signing of the agreement was the tension generated by the **1986-87 Brasstacks exercise by the Indian Army**.
 - **Operation Brasstacks** was a **military exercise** conducted in the Indian state of **Rajasthan**, near the Pakistan border.
- **Mandate:** The agreement mandates both countries to **inform each other about any nuclear installations and facilities** to be covered under the agreement on the **1st of January of every calendar year**, providing a confidence-building security measure environment.
 - According to the agreement, the term '**nuclear installation or facility**' includes **nuclear power and research reactors, fuel fabrication, uranium enrichment, iso-topes separation, and reprocessing facilities** as well as any other installations with fresh or irradiated nuclear fuel and materials in any form and establishments storing significant quantities of radioactive materials.

What are the Major Areas of Dispute Between India and Pakistan?

- **Kashmir Dispute:**
 - **Line of Control Violations:** Frequent ceasefire violations along the LoC, resulting in casualties and escalating tensions.
 - **Disagreements over Demilitarization:** Calls for demilitarization on both sides of the LoC remain unaddressed, hindering progress towards peaceful resolution.
- **Terrorism:**
 - **Cross-border Infiltration:** Accusations by India of **Pakistan-backed militants infiltrating** the LoC to carry out **terrorist attacks**.
 - **Designation of Terror Groups:** Differences in **designating militant groups as terrorist organizations** by both countries create obstacles to counter-terrorism cooperation.
 - **Impact on Civilian Populations:** Terrorist attacks claim **innocent lives and foster further animosity** between the two communities.
- **Water Sharing:**
 - **Construction of Dams:** Dispute over construction of dams and hydroelectric projects on the **Indus River and its tributaries**, impacting water flow and usage rights.
 - **Implementation of Indus Water Treaty:** **Differences in interpreting and implementing clauses** of the treaty regarding water allocation and dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Trade and Economic Ties:**
 - **Trade Barriers:** **Restrictive trade policies** and high tariffs imposed by both countries hinder cross-border trade and economic connectivity.
 - In August 2019, Pakistan halted trade with India in response to constitutional amendments made in the Jammu and Kashmir region.
 - India imposed a 200% tariff on Pakistani imports in 2019, when Pakistan's **Most Favored Nation (MFN) designation** was removed in the aftermath of the **Pulwama terrorist incident**.
 - **Limited Cross-border Investment:** Political tensions and security concerns **discourage investment and joint ventures** between businesses in both countries.
 - **Dependence on Third-party Trade Routes:** Reliance on **trade routes outside the region** increases costs and reduces efficiency for both economies.
- **Regional Geopolitics:**
 - **China's Role in Pakistan:** Increased **Chinese investment and presence in Pakistan**, including projects like the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**, create concerns for India about strategic alliances and balance of power.

How can India and Pakistan Move Towards Dispute Resolution?

- **Building Confidence Measures:**
 - **Strengthening Communication:** Establishing **direct, secure communication channels** at various levels for open dialogue and crisis management.
 - **De-escalation at the LoC:** Implementing and **strengthening ceasefire agreements**, reducing troop deployments, and establishing joint mechanisms for investigating violations.
 - **People-to-People Initiatives:** Promoting **cultural and academic exchanges, sports events**, and joint initiatives addressing common challenges like climate change and healthcare.
- **Addressing Core Issues:**
 - **Kashmir Dispute Resolution:** Seeking a **just and lasting solution to the Kashmir issue through dialogue**, considering the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and respecting international legal frameworks.
 - **Combating Terrorism:** Intensifying **joint efforts to dismantle terrorist networks**, addressing financing and ideological sources, and ensuring accountability for past acts.
 - **Water Cooperation:** Implementing the **Indus Water Treaty effectively**, sharing data and information transparently, and exploring joint water management projects for mutual benefit.
- **Regional and International Cooperation:**
 - **Encouraging Mediation:** Facilitating talks through regional forums like **SAARC**, seeking solutions acceptable to both parties.
 - **Balancing External Influences:** Both countries need to navigate their relationships with **external powers like China and the US** to avoid jeopardizing bilateral progress.
- **Fostering Public Understanding and Support:**
 - **Media Responsibility:** Promoting **responsible media coverage, avoiding negative stereotyping**, and emphasizing positive stories of cooperation and shared history.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. "Increasing cross border terrorist attacks in India and growing interference in the internal affairs of several member states by Pakistan are not conducive for the future of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)." Explain with suitable examples. **(2016)**

Q. Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India – Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples. **(2015)**

Section 132 of the Income Tax Act,1961

For Prelims: [Fundamental Rights](#), [Income-Tax Act,1961](#), [Supreme Court](#), [Right to Privacy](#), **Wednesbury principle**, **Doctrine of Proportionality**.

For Mains: Puttaswamy judgment and subsequent changes in the understanding of personal liberties, Balancing law enforcement needs with individual rights.

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

The landmark judgment in [Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India, 2017](#) declared the [fundamental right to privacy](#). However, concerns have emerged regarding the extra-constitutional powers granted by **Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act, 1961** in India as they seem to violate the [fundamental rights](#) of the citizens.

What is Section 132 of the Income Tax Act, 1961?

- The section was **introduced in 1961, as part of Income Tax Act, 1961**, to replace the **Taxation on Income (Investigation Commission) Act, 1947**, which was struck down by the [Supreme Court](#) in **Suraj Mall Mohta vs A.V. Visvanatha Sastri (1954)** on the ground that it treated a certain class of assesses differently from others, thereby **violating the guarantee of equal treatment** contained in [Article 14 of the Constitution](#).
 - The original income-tax law in 1922 lacked search and seizure powers.
- Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act, 1961, empowers the **tax authorities to conduct searches and seizures** of persons and properties, **without any prior judicial warrant**, if they have a **“reason to believe”** that the person has concealed or evaded income.
 - It grants authorities the power to search buildings, places, vehicles, or aircraft based on suspicion of hiding financial assets.
 - It allows for the seizure of books of account, money, bullion, jewellery, or other valuable items discovered **during the search**. Additionally, tax officials can seize such items found in the possession of any person during a search or survey under the Act.

Case Related to Section 132 of the Income Tax Act, 1961

- **Pooran Mal vs Director of Inspection (1973):**
 - The constitutionality of this provision was challenged in the **case of Pooran Mal vs Director of Inspection (1973)**.
 - The Supreme Court **upheld the law, citing its own judgment in M.P. Sharma vs Satish Chandra (1954)** by emphasizing that the **power of search and seizure is essential for the protection of social security** and is regulated by law.
 - The court also noted that the **Constitution does not recognize a fundamental right to privacy** similar to the **American Fourth Amendment** about searches and seizures.
 - The American Fourth Amendment **protects against unreasonable searches and seizures** by the government.
 - It was concluded that statutory provisions for searches do not defeat the **constitutional protection under Article 20(3)**.
 - The judgment in M.P. Sharma was concerned with **searches under the Code of Criminal Procedure**, while searches under the **Income-Tax Act do not require a judicial licence**.
 - The Court's reading of the law has since changed, with M.P. Sharma being formally overruled. The **right to privacy is now considered intrinsic to the right to personal liberty guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution**.

What are the Challenges Regarding Section 132 of the Income Tax Act, 1961?

- **Breach of the Proportionality Principle:**
 - Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act, despite not being formally challenged, suggests a potential breach of the doctrine of proportionality principle.
 - The state's power to search and seize is no longer viewed as a simple tool of social security but is subject to the **doctrine of proportionality**. This means that its use must be **intended for a legitimate aim, rationally connected to its**

objective, with no alternative less intrusive means available, and a balance struck between the means chosen and the right that is violated.

- The Supreme Court in the case of **Principal Director of Income Tax vs Laljibhai Kanjibhai Mandalia, 2022** revealed a reliance on the "**Wednesbury**" principle, a standard of administrative review derived from a UK court judgment, treating **search opinions as administrative, not judicial**.
 - Wednesbury principle states that if a decision is so unreasonable that no sensible authority could ever take it, such **decisions are liable to be quashed through judicial review**.
 - Critics argue that **Post-Puttaswamy**, there should be **no place for the Wednesbury rule**, especially **when fundamental rights are at stake**, and that any executive action must conform to statutory law in the strictest sense possible.
- **Violation of the Right to Privacy:**
 - The right to privacy, a **fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution**, includes protection from unreasonable searches and seizures, as well as confidentiality of personal information.
 - Income Tax searches, however, **intrude on individuals' privacy without consent**, often based on vague grounds, leading to potential abuse.
 - Additionally, there is a lack of adequate safeguards and oversight mechanisms to prevent misuse and protect the rights of the individuals subjected to I-T searches.
 - The absence of stringent safeguards exposes individuals to potential misuse of power by tax authorities.
- **Duration and Conditions of Searches:**
 - The Gujarat High Court's questioning of a raid where individuals were **allegedly kept in virtual detention for days** without proper safeguards highlights concerns about the duration and conditions of such searches.

Way Forward

- Enhance the role of the **judiciary in reviewing the application of Section 132**, moving away from the Wednesbury principle and adopting a more rigorous scrutiny standard to assess the proportionality of executive actions.
- Establish an independent oversight mechanism or **ombudsman with the authority to investigate complaints**, ensure accountability, and recommend corrective measures in cases of potential misuse of powers.
- IT searches should also be limited in terms of the duration, and extent of the searches.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. 'Right to Privacy' is protected under which Article of the Constitution of India? (2021)

- (a) Article 15
- (b) Article 19
- (c) Article 21
- (d) Article 29

Ans: (c)

Q2. Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement? (2018)

- (a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.
- (b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.
- (c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III.
- (d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q.1 Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy. (2017)

Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956

For Prelims: [Immoral Traffic \(Prevention\) Act, 1956](#), Freedom of Profession, Ujjawala, [National Commission for Women](#)

For Mains: Recognition of sex Work as a Profession, Rights of Sex worker, Government Policies & Interventions

Source: IE

Why in News?

Recently, the Kerala High Court has widened the **definition of the word 'procure' in Section 5 of the [Immoral Traffic \(Prevention\) Act, 1956](#)**, to include customers seeking the services of prostitutes.

What is the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956?

▪ About:

- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITP), 1956, aims to prevent the **commercialisation of vices and the trafficking of females**.
- It delineates the legal framework surrounding sex work. While the act itself **does not declare sex work illegal, it prohibits running brothels**. Engaging in prostitution is legally recognized, but soliciting people and luring them into sexual activities are considered illegal.

▪ Definition of Brothel:

- Section 2 defines a brothel as any **place used for sexual exploitation or abuse for the gain** of another person or for the mutual gain of two or more prostitutes.

▪ Definition of Prostitution:

- Prostitution, as per the act, is the sexual exploitation or abuse of persons for commercial purposes.

▪ Offenses Under the Act:

- The section 5 of the act penalizes those who **procure, induce, or take individuals for prostitution purposes**. The punishment includes rigorous imprisonment for **3-7 years and a fine of Rs 2,000**.
 - For offenses against a **person's will or a child**, the maximum sentence can extend to fourteen years or life.
 - Child means a person who has not completed the age of **sixteen years**.

What did the Kerala High Court Rule?

▪ The current case:

- The petitioner was arrested for being a customer in a brothel. Accused of offenses under

the ITP Act's Sections 3 (keeping a brothel or allowing premises to be used as one), 4 (living on prostitution earnings), 5 (procuring, inducing, or taking persons for prostitution), 7 (punishing prostitution in or around public places),

- The accused filed a plea seeking discharge, arguing that as a **customer, he should not be implicated under the ITP Act.**

▪ **Ruling:**

- The Kerala High Court, while recognizing that the **term "procure" in section 5 is not explicitly defined in the 1956 Act**, interpreted it in the context of the act's objective of suppressing immoral trafficking and preventing prostitution.
 - The court ruled that the **term includes customers, and therefore, a customer can be charged under Section 5.**

▪ **Implications of the Ruling:**

- The Kerala High Court ruling expands the meaning of "procure" in Section 5, asserting that **customers, in addition to pimps and brothel-keepers**, can be held liable for procuring persons for prostitution.
- The ruling does not declare the petitioner guilty under Section 5; rather, it **allows charges to be filed, necessitating a trial.**
 - Notably, the petitioner was discharged of offences under Sections 3, 4, and 7 by the High Court.

▪ **Differing High Court Opinions:**

- **Mathew vs the State of Kerala(2022):**
 - The Kerala HC ruled that a customer caught in a brothel can be prosecuted under the ITP Act. **"Section 7(1) of the Act penalizes two types of persons for indulging in prostitution within the areas specified.**
 - Those persons are (i) the person who carries on prostitution and (ii) the person with whom such prostitution is carried on," the HC said, adding that the act of immoral traffic **cannot be perpetrated or carried on without a 'customer'.**
- **Goenka Sajan Kumar vs The State Of AP (2014) and Sri Sanulla vs State Of Karnataka (2017):**
 - The Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka HCs ruled against prosecuting brothel customers under sections 3-7 of the ITP Act.

What is the Legality of Sex Work?

▪ **Sex Work as a Profession:**

- The Supreme Court has [recognised sex work as a "profession"](#) and observed that its practitioners are **entitled to equal protection of the law and criminal law** must apply equally in all cases, on the basis of **'age' and 'consent'**.
 - The Court held that **Voluntary sex is not a crime.**

▪ **Equality in Business:**

- Courts have held that individuals, regardless of their chosen profession, have an **equal right to carry on any business.**
- The [Supreme Court of India](#) in **Budhadev Karmaskar v. State of West Bengal (2011)**, secured the rights of sex workers and emphasized the **protection afforded by Article 21.**

▪ **Fundamental and Human Rights:**

- In the case of **Gaurav Jain vs Union Of India And Ors(1989)** the Supreme Court recognized the fundamental and human rights of sex workers, asserting their right to dignity and protection under the law.
 - The Court found that the children of the sex workers have the **right to equality of opportunity, dignity, care, protection and rehabilitation** and to be part of the **"mainstream of social life" without any attached "pre-stigma"**.

What Initiatives Have Been Taken to Address Sex Workers?

▪ **Ujjawala:**

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing "Ujjawala" – a Comprehensive Scheme for the Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation, Re-

integration and **Repatriation of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.**

▪ **National Commission for Women:**

- The establishment of the [National Commission for Women](#) reflects the government's commitment to ensuring the rights of women and girls involved in prostitution are protected.

▪ **National Human Rights Commission:**

- [NHRC](#) recognised sex workers as informal workers.

▪ **Awareness Campaigns:**

- The Supreme Court urged the government in 2018 to take action against the **exploitation of women in the sex industry** and consider legalization in specific locations with rigorous regulation.
 - In response to the court's directive, the **government initiated widespread awareness campaigns** to educate the public about the risks associated with the commercial sex trade.

What are the Societal Perceptions Regarding the Sex Work?

▪ **Cultural Stigma:**

- While legal in certain contexts, prostitution is often viewed as unethical and a breach of cultural values. Some cultures perceive it as a threat to the sanctity of marriage and family.
 - Women in Sex Work (WSW) have been identified as one of the most discriminated and vulnerable populations in India.
 - Sex workers often face **social isolation** due to the stigma attached to their profession.

▪ **Gender Dynamics:**

- Many see prostitution as a **degrading and abusive profession**, particularly targeting women.
 - The profession is often associated with exploitation and harm.
 - Sex workers encounter derogatory terms, physical violence, and discrimination, exacerbating their vulnerability.

▪ **Advocacy for Autonomy:**

- On the flip side, proponents argue that **women should have the agency to decide how they use their bodies.**
 - Some view prostitution as a profession where women can exercise their freedom of choice.

Way Forward

- The ethical implications of prostitution in India remain a subject of ongoing debate. Regardless of one's stance, **upholding trafficking laws is deemed crucial** to preventing women and girls from falling victim to enslavement.
- Encourage **open dialogue and educational programs** to sensitize communities to diverse perspectives on sex work, considering cultural sensitivities.
- **Emphasize the legal recognition of the equality of all citizens**, regardless of their chosen profession.

India to Join SKAO as a Full Member

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

India will also be part of the **world's largest radio telescope project** called the [Square Kilometre Array Observatory \(SKAO\)](#).

- Countries have to **sign, and ratify, the SKAO convention** to formally become members. The **Government of India's** approval for joining the project, with a financial sanction of Rs **1,250 crore**, is the first step towards the ratification.

What is the SKAO?

- **About:** SKAO is an intergovernmental organization that aims to build and operate **cutting-edge radio telescopes**. Its global headquarters is located in the **Jodrell Bank Observatory, United Kingdom**.
 - The project will not have a single telescope but an **array of thousands of antennas**, to be installed in **remote radio-quiet locations in South Africa and Australia**, that will operate as one large unit meant to observe and study celestial phenomena.
 - SKAO objectives also include study of [gravitational waves](#).
 - Some of the countries taking part in building the SKA include the **UK, Australia, South Africa, Canada, China, France, India, Italy and Germany**.
- **India's Role in SKAO:**
 - India, through the Pune-based **National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA)** and other institutions, has played a key role in the development of the ambitious SKAO project since its inception in the **1990s**.
 - India's primary contribution to SKAO lies in the development and operation of the **Telescope Manager element**, essentially the "**neural network**" or software that controls the entire telescope's operation.

Note

NCRA is a research institution in India that specializes in radio astronomy. It is located on the **Pune University Campus** and is part of the **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR)** in Mumbai.

What is a Radio Telescope?

- **About:** A **radio telescope** is a specialized type of **antenna and receiver system** used to detect and collect radio waves emitted by celestial objects.
 - Radio waves are **EM (Electromagnetic)** waves that have wavelengths between **1 millimeter and 100 kilometers**.
 - Unlike optical telescopes, **radio telescopes can be used in the daytime as well as at night**.
- **Applications:** Radio telescopes are used to study a wide range of astronomical phenomena, including:
 - The formation and evolution of stars and galaxies
 - Black holes and other active galactic nuclei
 - The interstellar medium
 - Planets and moons in our solar system
 - The search for extraterrestrial life
- **Major Radio Telescopes:**
 - [Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope \(India\)](#)
 - In **June 2023**, GMRT (near Pune) played a crucial role in the **first-ever**

detection of nano-hertz gravitational waves, showcasing its vital role in cutting-edge astronomical research.

- [SARAS 3 \(India\)](#)
- [Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array \(ALMA\)](#) (Atacama Desert, Chile)
- **Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Telescope (FAST)** (China)

What are Gravitational Waves?

- **About: Gravitational waves** are ripples or vibrations in the very fabric of spacetime. For instance, when a pebble is dropped in a pond, the resulting ripples are analogous to gravitational waves, but instead of water, **they propagate through the fundamental structure of the universe.**
 - In 1916, Albert Einstein forecasted the presence of gravitational waves within his theory of general relativity.
- **Prominence:** Gravitational wave research, **as evidenced by the 2017 Nobel Prize awarded for the first detection using [Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory \(LIGO\)](#)**, holds immense potential for scientific breakthroughs. Recently, India gave its go-ahead to construct the third node of the LIGO in **Hingoli district of Maharashtra.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following (2008):

Assertion (A): Radio waves bend in a magnetic field.

Reason (R): Radio waves are electromagnetic in nature.

Which of the following is correct?

- (a) Both A and R are individually true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- (b) Both A and R are individually true, but R is not the correct explanation of A
- (c) A is true but R is false
- (d) A is false but R is true

Ans: (a)

Q. A layer in the Earth's atmosphere called Ionosphere facilitates radio communication. Why? (2011)

1. The presence of ozone cause the reflection of radio waves to Earth.
2. Radio waves have a very long wavelength.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

Northeast African Cheetah

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

Northeast African Cheetah is facing decline in genetic diversity due to illegal trade in cubs to Arab countries.



What are the Key Facts About Northeast African Cheetahs?

- **Scientific Name:** *Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii*
- **About:**
 - It is a Cheetah subspecies and was first described under the scientific name *Cynailurus soemmeringii* by the **Austrian zoologist Leopold Fitzinger in 1855** on the basis of a specimen from Sudan's Bayuda Desert brought to the Tiergarten Schönbrunn in Vienna.
 - It is also known as the **Sudan cheetah**. This subspecies is more closely related to the **Southern African cheetah** than to Saharan cheetah populations.
- **Distribution:**
 - They are found in Northeast Africa, Ethiopia and In South Sudan.
 - They **live in wide open lands**, grasslands, semi-arid areas, and other open habitats where **prey is abundant such as in the East Sudanian Savanna**.
- **Habitat:**
 - Their habitats typically encompassed **a range of environments such as savannas**, grasslands, and semi-arid areas, often with sparse vegetation that allowed for their hunting strategy of high-speed pursuits.
- **Threat:**
 - They are being heavily trafficked across the [Red Sea](#) to **Arab countries** like Saudi Arabia,

the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

- Due to habitat loss, human encroachment, and hunting, their numbers have significantly dwindled, with only a few scattered populations remaining, primarily in protected areas.

▪ **Conservation Status:**

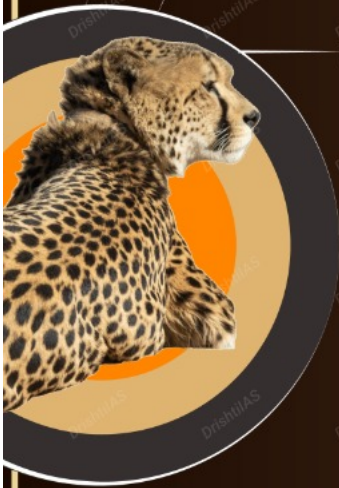
- **IUCN Red List:** Endangered.

Cheetah

Common Name - Cheetah

Scientific Name - *Acinonyx jubatus*

- *Acinonyx jubatus jubatus* (African Cheetah)
- *Acinonyx jubatus venaticus* (Asiatic Cheetah)



Reintroduction of Cheetah to India:

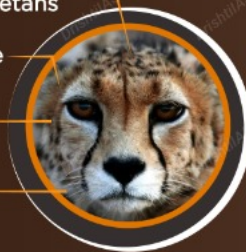
- The "Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India" was released by MoEF&CC at the 19th meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) (January 2022).
 - Such a plan was first proposed in 2009.
- In September 2022, eight cheetahs landed in India from Namibia.
 - The 8 cheetahs have been relocated to the Kuno-Palpur National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
 - The relocation of cheetahs to India from Namibia is the world's first inter- continental large wild carnivore translocation project.

Slightly brownish and golden skin; thicker than the Asiatic Cheetahs

More prominent spots and lines on the face

Found all over the African continent

IUCN Red List Status - Vulnerable



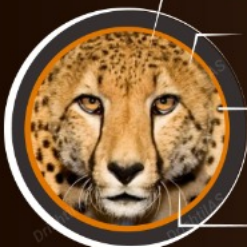
African Cheetah

Slightly smaller than the African ones.

Pale yellowish fawn coloured skin - more fur under body, belly specifically.

Found only in Iran; the country claims there are only 12 of them left. Year 1952 - Asiatic Cheetah officially declared extinct from India.

IUCN Red List Status - Critically Endangered



Asiatic Cheetah



Roche's Breakthrough Antibiotic

Roche, a Swiss healthcare giant, has discovered a groundbreaking [antibiotic](#), **Zosurabalpin**, targeting the notorious [gram-negative bacteria](#).

- It has shown promising efficacy against **drug-resistant Acinetobacter strains**, particularly **Carbapenem-resistant A baumannii (CRAB)** that is listed as a critical pathogen by the WHO.
- **Zosurabalpin's** action **disrupts the bacteria's outer membrane construction**, specifically targeting the transport mechanism of **lipopolysaccharide**, a crucial barrier in gram-negative bacteria.
- Bacteria are classified into two groups: **Gram-positive or Gram-negative**, depending on whether they retain a specific stain color. Gram-positive bacteria retain a **violet-colored stain**, while Gram-negative bacteria appear **pinkish or red**.
 - **Gram-negative bacteria** have a **thin peptidoglycan layer in the cell wall**, which is sandwiched between two lipid membranes, giving them a complex structure.
 - This outer membrane acts as a **barrier**, making them **more resistant to antibiotics**.

[Read more...](#)

Term of Trade

Over the last decade and a half, **Terms of Trade (ToT)** for Indian agriculture has shown significant improvement based on national income statistics.

- The ToT improvement in agriculture is attributed to the **global agri-commodity price boom** and policy interventions, especially [minimum support price \(MSP\) hikes](#).
- **ToT** for Indian agriculture refers to the movement in prices of farm commodities relative to non-farm goods and services.
 - Terms of trade refers to the ratio of agricultural prices to industrial prices, measured as price indices.
- A rise in the terms of trade implies better purchasing power for the agricultural sector in terms of industrial goods.
 - A **ratio above one (or 100%) implies favorable pricing power**, in terms of what farmers sell versus what they buy.
 - A **TOT ratio below one** indicates **unfavorable conditions of exchange**.
- The increase in procurement prices has led to a rise in food subsidy bills, contributing to fiscal deficit and macroeconomic management issues.

Panspermia

The theory of panspermia, which posits that **life could travel between planets**, has been the subject of speculation and scientific inquiry for centuries.

- Panspermia, first proposed by the **Greek philosopher Anaxagoras**, suggests that **life has the**

potential to travel as 'seeds' between planets.

- Scientific advances have demonstrated that microorganisms can endure the extreme conditions of **interplanetary travel and survive the impact** of reaching a new world.
 - 19th-century researchers, including **Svante Arrhenius**, suggested mechanisms, such as **radiation pressure from the Sun**, that could propel microorganisms through space.
 - Modern panspermia theory involves three stages: **escape from a planet, transit through interplanetary space, and landing on another planet.**
 - Panspermia, doesn't explain the origin of life itself and is considered a fringe theory due to the difficulty of proving its validity.
-

Moradabad's Brassware Industry

The construction of the **Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh** has sparked a revival in **Moradabad's brassware industry**, as a surge in demand for religious idols, particularly those of Lord Ram.

- Moradabad was established in 1600 by Murad, the son of the **Mughal Emperor Shahjahan**, as a result, the city came to be known as Moradabad.
 - Moradabad is **renowned for brass work** and has carved a niche for itself in the handicraft industry throughout the world.
 - The brassware is exported to countries like the US, Britain, Canada, Germany, the Middle East and Asia. Therefore **Moradabad is also called "Brass City" or Peetal Nagri.**
 - **Brass, an alloy of copper and zinc**, holds historical and enduring significance due to its remarkable **hardness and workability.**
 - In the 1980s, the industry diversified with the introduction of **various metal wares such as brass, iron, and aluminium.** This expansion brought new technologies like **Electroplating, lacquering, and powder coating** to Moradabad's art industry.
 - Moradabad Metal Craft (Word Mark) has a **[geographical indication \(GI\) tag.](#)**
-

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