

Star Campaigners

❖ Context

- The EC has restored the maximum number of star campaigners to 40 from 30 that was reduced in October 2020 to prevent large gatherings to curb COVID.

❖ Key Highlights

- A star campaigner is a celebrity vote seeker in an election for a party. This person can be a politician or even a film star. There is no law governing who can or cannot be made a star campaigner.
- They are nominated by the concerned political parties specifying their constituencies and duration of the status.
- Since political parties appoint star campaigners, the Election Commission has issued guidelines the Model Code of Conduct regulating poll campaign by them.
- A 'recognised' party declared as such by the Election Commission -- can nominate a maximum of 40 star campaigners.
- An unrecognised political party can nominate a maximum of 20 star campaigners.

❖ PM as star campaigner

- The MCC guidelines say when a prime minister or a former prime minister is a star campaigner, the expenditure incurred on security including on the bullet-proof vehicles will be borne by the government and will not be added to the election expenses of the party or the individual candidate.

❖ What is the need of them?

- The Election Commission keeps a tab on expenditure incurred by individual candidates during campaign Rs 70 lakh for most states in one constituency by each candidate.
- Expenditure incurred on electioneering by the star campaigner is not added to a candidate's poll expenditure giving him/her more leeway. According to the Representation of People's Act, these expenses will be borne by the political parties.

❖ Terms & conditions

- For an individual candidate to get a relief from campaign expenditure, the star campaigner has to limit oneself to general campaigning for the party.
- If she/he shares stage with a candidate, the entire campaign cost except expenditure incurred on travelling will be added to the candidate's election expenses. This applies even if the star campaigner seeks to vote for the candidate taking his or her name.
- If the candidates are not present but their posters or photographs have been displayed in their constituencies where a star campaigner holds a poll rally, the entire expense will be added to the election expenses of the contestants.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

❖ Context

- The draconian **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) of 2002** has evolved as the Government's "hatchet" law in recent years, considering the series of raids and arrests of politicians, their relatives, and activists.

❖ Key Highlights

- The frequency and timings of these raids and arrests have raised suspicions of whether the PMLA and its agency, the **Enforcement Directorate (ED)**, are the tip of the spear used to strike rival camps with political embarrassment.
- The unease about the law has become so rife that a bunch of petitions filed by people across the country have questioned the almost **blanket powers given to the ED for search, seizure, investigation and attachment of assets considered** to be the proceeds of crimes listed under the PMLA.

❖ Arguments Raised in SC

- Lawyers argue that the **PMLA is invoked against a political rival or a dissenter**, because the "process is itself the punishment".
- They point out that the **ECIR, an equivalent of the FIR**, is considered an "internal document" and not given to the accused.
 - Which means that, pursuant to the registration of the ECIR, as the ED begins to summon accused persons and seeks details of all their financial

❖ About PMLA 2002

- Enacted in **2002** and it came into force in 2005.
- It was a response to **India's global commitment (including the Vienna Convention)** to combat the menace of money laundering.
- It is at the core of India's legal framework to **combat money laundering**.
- This act's provisions **apply to all financial institutions**, including banks (including the RBI), mutual funds, insurance companies, and their financial intermediaries.

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- transactions and that of their family members, the accused does not even know facts of the allegation against him/her.
- Even "ordinary" crimes are being investigated by the PMLA, and the assets of genuine victims have been attached.
 - The PMLA was a comprehensive penal statute enacted to counter the threat of money laundering, specifically from the narcotics trade.
 - Currently, the offenses in the schedules of the act are extremely overbroad, and in **several instances, have no relation to either narcotics or organized crime.**
 - There is also **ambiguity over the ED's selection of cases** to investigate.



- The act was amended in 2005, 2009 and 2012.
 - **Agencies administering the PMLA**
 - The **Directorate of Enforcement in the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance** is responsible for investigating the cases of the offense of money laundering under PMLA.
 - **Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND) under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance** is the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analyzing and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions to enforcement agencies and foreign FIUs.
- ❖ **About Money Laundering**
- Money laundering is the **illegal process of making large amounts of money generated by a criminal activity**, such as drug trafficking or terrorist funding, appear to have come from a legitimate source.
 - The money from the criminal activity is considered dirty, and the process "launders" it to make it look clean.

President's Fleet Review

❖ Context

- Recently, president Ram Nath Kovind participated in the **Indian Navy's 12th Presidential fleet review** at Visakhapatnam.

❖ About President's Fleet Review

- In simplest terms, it is the **country's President taking stock of the Navy's capability.**
- It **showcases all types of ships and capabilities** the Navy has.
- It takes place **once under every President**, who is the supreme commander of the armed forces.
- The President is taken on one of the Naval ships, which is called the President's Yacht, to look at all the ships docked on one of the Naval ports.
- According to a statement by the Navy, the **President's Yacht** this year "is an indigenously built Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel, INS Sumitra, which will lead the Presidential Column.
- The yacht will be **distinguished by the Ashoka Emblem** on her side and will fly the President's Standard on the Mast".

❖ Reviews Have Been Held So Far

- There have been **11 President's Fleet Reviews** since Independence.
- The **first was conducted in 1953**, under Dr Rajendra Prasad.
- The next one was done not by the President but by the then Defense Minister, Y B Chavan, in 1964. Since then, it has been the President reviewing the fleet.
- The longest gap between reviews was of 12 years — between 1989 (President R Venkatraman) and 2001 (President K R Narayanan).
- The last one was done in 2016, under President Pranab Mukherjee.
- **The reviews in 2001 and 2016 were International Fleet Reviews**, in which some vessels from other countries also participated.
 - The Indian Navy too has participated in international fleet reviews in other countries, including Australia, America, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, and the UK.

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❖ Significance

- It is one of the **most important events** for the Navy, which is essentially **showing its allegiance and commitment to defending the country**.
- It is a **long-standing tradition** followed by navies across the world, and according to Navy officials it is a strong bond that links seafarers of the world.
- “Historically, a Fleet Review is an **assembly of ships at a pre-designated place** for the purpose of **displaying loyalty and allegiance to the Sovereign and the state**.
- In turn, the **Sovereign**, by reviewing the ships, reaffirms his **faith in the fleet and its ability** to defend the nation’s maritime interest.

News in Between the Lines

Kessler’s Syndrome



❖ Context

- The growing push towards Low Earth Orbit satellites as of the new age solution to provide internet connectivity also raise some concerns like space debris.

❖ Key Highlights

- LEO satellites are deployed **at orbits of 2,000km or less from the Earth’s surface** and are typically smaller in size than most other types of satellites that offer satellite connectivity.
- SpaceX eventually hopes to have as many as 42,000 satellites in this so-called mega constellation to provide low-cost internet to remote locations.
- Space Pollution can become so high that **collisions cause an unending cascade** of follow-on collisions which produce more debris.
- That would create a **snowball effect** in space with potentially disastrous consequences.
- However advantages associated with LEOs are
 - Lower Latency.
 - Cheaper to build and deploy.

Notorious Markets List



❖ Context

- Latest , 2021, annual list of the world’s notorious markets released by the **US Trade Representative**.

❖ Key Highlights

- It identified 42 online and 35 physical markets around the world.
- They are reported to engage in or facilitate substantial trademark counterfeiting or copyright piracy.
- The three Indian markets in the list are **Heera Panna (Mumbai), Kidderpore (Kolkata) & Tank Road (Delhi)** and the online market is **IndiaMart.com**.

GERD



➤ Context

- **Ethiopia** began producing electricity recently from GERD.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a **multi-billion-dollar hydropower plant on the River Blue Nile**.
- It was formerly known as **Millennium Dam** and sometimes **Hidase Dam**.
- It is the **largest hydropower plant in Africa**.
- The neighbours **Sudan** and **Egypt** worried that the dam would cause water shortages downstream.
- The dam would bring electricity to 60% of the Ethiopian population.

Synthetic Biology

❖ Context

- The Centre is working on a **national policy** on synthetic biology.

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❖ Key Highlights

- It is an emerging science that deals with engineering life forms for a wide range of applications from making designer medicines to foods.
- As part of the 12th Five-Year Plan, India had set up a task force on systems biology and synthetic biology research in 2011.
- This body underlined the **potential benefits** from synthetic biotechnology in **biofuels, bioremediation, biosensors**, food and health and made a strong case for a push for the technology.
- However, Parliament is yet to clear the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill, 2013, that had mooted the creation of an independent regulator to adjudicate research around genetic engineering that could have also encompassed synthetic biology.
- There's also a ban on commercial genetically modified brinjal and many States have restrictions on field trials on GM food crops.
- Synthetic biology, the report notes, is seen as **one of the top 10 breakthrough technologies as part of the "New Industrial Revolution"** that are "most likely to change the world", and the regulation of both the benefits and risks become important for the international community.

Yaba



❖ Context

- During the talks between the border guarding forces of India & Bangladesh, the officers of the Border Guards Bangladesh have expressed concern over smuggling of Phensedyl and Yaba tablets.

❖ Key Highlights

- These tablets usually originate in **Myanmar and come to India from Bangladesh**.
- Yaba is a mixture of **methamphetamine and caffeine**, sold as **cheap red or pink pills**, and works as a **stimulant to the central nervous system**.
- Phensedyl, a **codeine-based cough syrup**, remains a challenge for the border guarding forces.
- A bottle of Phensedyl costs about ₹200 in India and the moment it crosses the border, the price goes up to thousands. In Bangladesh, with a majority Muslim population, the religious faith prohibits consumption of liquor. In this scenario, cough syrups with codeine phosphate are an easy way for people to get high.

Leprosy



❖ Context

- Recently a study found that the COVID19 pandemic leading to social distancing and lockdowns caused **a fall of 62.5% in the detection of active leprosy cases** between April and September 2020 as compared to year 2021 in **Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh**.

❖ Key Highlights

- **Report published by-** The Leprosy Mission Trust India. In 2019, these States accounted for **35% of the total new leprosy cases reported in the country**.
- The report highlights that the proportions of multibacillary (**MB**) **leprosy and grade2 disability (G2D)** among the new cases increased by 20% and 12%, respectively, from April to September 2020.
- Moreover, the proportion of women and children among new cases decreased by 70% from the numbers during the two quarters in 2019.

❖ About Leprosy

- Leprosy is **also known as Hansen's disease**.
- It is an infectious disease which is **caused by a Bacillus Mycobacterium leprae**. The disease has been **named after Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen** who was a **Norwegian physician**. Hansen proved that **leprosy is not a hereditary disease** but is caused by a bacterium.

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Cryptodactylus Exercitus



- The disease is a **curable disease** and treatment at the early stage can prevent any disability.
- It can **cause a progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes** if it is left untreated.
- The **incubation period of the disease is usually 5 years**. Symptoms of the disease can be seen within 1 year but it could also **take 20 years or even more** years to occur.

❖ Context

- Recently, A team of herpetologists have recorded a new species of bent-toed gecko from a wooded part of **The Umroi Military Station** in Meghalaya.

❖ Key Highlights

- **Scientific name**
 - *Cryptodactylus exercitus*
 - English name is Indian Army's bent-toed gecko.
 - *Exercitus* in Latin means army.
- The name was **given to honour the Army** for its services to the country.
 - The military station where the bent-toed gecko was discovered was also a factor behind its name,
- The finding of the study was published in the latest issue of the **European Journal of Taxonomy**.
- **Other Gecko Species Found**
 - The paper recorded another new bent-toed gecko, the **Cyrtodactylus siahaensis** named after **Mizoram's Siaha** district where it was found.
 - The study also recorded the **Cyrtodactylus lungleiensis**, a new species of bent-toed gecko named after **Mizoram's Lunglei town**.

❖ About Gecko

- Geckos are **reptiles** and are **found on all the continents except Antarctica**.
- These colorful lizards have adapted to habitats from rainforests, to deserts, to cold mountainslopes.
- The genus *Cyrtodactylus* is represented by about 320 species worldwide and is the third most speciose vertebrate genus in the world.
- The members of the genus range from **South Asia to Melanesia** with high diversity in south Asia.
- **India is now home to 40 species** of the bent-toed gecko with the northeast accounting for 16 of them.

Nabin Chandra Sen



❖ Context

- Recently, the nation remembered **Revolutionary Bengali poet and writer Nabin Chandra Sen** on his **175th birth anniversary**.

❖ Key Highlights

- He **described the Battle of Plassey** and the arrival of British rule in India as **"A Night of Eternal Gloom"**.
- Nabin Chandra Sen's novel-in-verse *Bhanumati* and memoir of his travels '*Prabaser Patra*' brought him fame.
- His five-volume autobiography, **Aamar Jiban-My Life** is an important document chronicling the politics and social aspirations of the Bengali literati in the late nineteenth century.