

India-United States Trade Policy Forum (TPF)

❖ **Context**

- **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry** visited Washington D.C. to participate in the **13th Ministerial Meeting of the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum.**

India-US Trade Policy Forum:

- **The TPF is a platform for** continuous engagement between the two countries in the area of trade and to further bilateral trade and investment relations.
- The 12th TPF Ministerial meeting was held in New Delhi.
- There was no TPF in 2022.

Highlights of the 13th India – USA TPF 2023

- Ministers appreciated that, bilateral trade in goods and services continued to rise rapidly and reached about **\$160 billion in 2021.**
- India appreciated the **resumption of inspections by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).**
- **India asked U.S. side** to also resume inspections of new facilities and non-priority areas at the earliest.
- The Ministers welcomed the finalization of the **Turtle Excluder Device (TED) design.**



- It will ensure that the TEDs are effective in **minimizing the impact of fishing on sea-turtle populations.**

- India highlighted its interest in restoration of its beneficiary status under the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences program.
- The United States noted that this could be considered, as warranted, in **relation to the eligibility criteria determined by the U.S. Congress.**
- The Ministers acknowledged the ongoing discussions on a **Social Security totalization agreement** and supported intensifying the work to achieve early outcomes in the matter.
- The Ministers launched a new working group on **“Resilient Trade” to deepen bilateral dialogue.**
- Ambassador Tai welcomed India’s G20 Presidency and said the United States looks forward to **working together in the Trade and Investment Working Group.**

Vibrant Democracies:

- **Both India and USA are natural partners** and have trade complementarities, long standing strategic and economic relationship, and people to people contact.
- The two countries are also collaborating under the **QUAD, I2U2 (India-Israel/ UAE-USA)** and **IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework).**
- **Regular exchanges** at the leadership-level have been an integral element of the expanding bilateral engagement.
- The outcomes emerging from these visits have been instrumental in further **strengthening the multifaceted ties between the two countries.**

Basic Structure of the Indian Constitution

❖ **Context**

- Recently, Vice President of India criticised the Supreme Court for using the doctrine of basic structure to strike down the constitutional amendment that introduced the **National Judicial Appointments Commission Act.**

Key Highlights:

- The Doctrine of Basic Structure is a form of **judicial review** that is used to test the legality of any legislation by the courts.
- The doctrine was **evolved by the Supreme Court** in the 1973 landmark ruling in **Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala.**
- A 13-judge Constitution Bench ruled that the **‘basic structure’ of the Constitution is inviolable**, and could not be amended by Parliament.
- If a law is found to “damage or destroy” the “basic features of the Constitution”, the Court declares it unconstitutional.
- **Significance**
 - The test is applied to constitutional amendments to ensure the **amendment does not dilute the fundamentals of the Constitutional itself.**
 - The test is widely regarded as a **check on majoritarian impulses** of the Parliament since it places substantive limits on the power to amend the Constitution.
 - It **protects the fundamental rights** of the citizens against arbitrariness and **authoritarianism of the legislature.**
 - It **strengthens the cause of democracy** and maintains the sanctity of the vision of our founding fathers.

- The doctrine **has not been specifically defined** but the various court judgements have helped in formulating a scope of the same and it includes the following:
 - Supremacy of the Constitution.
 - Republican and democratic form of government.
 - Secular character of the Constitution.
 - Separation of powers between the legislature, executive and the judiciary.
 - Federal character of the Constitution.
 - The mandate to build a welfare state contained in the Directive Principles of State Policy.
 - Unity and integrity of the nation.
 - Rule of law.
 - Sovereignty, liberty and republic nature of Indian polity.
 - Judicial review.
 - Harmony and Balance between fundamental rights and directive principles.
 - Parliamentary system.
 - Rule of equality.

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- Free and fair elections.
- Powers of SC under Article 32,136,142,147.
- Power of HC under Article 226 and 227.

- Limited power of parliament to amend the constitution.
- Freedom and dignity of an individual.

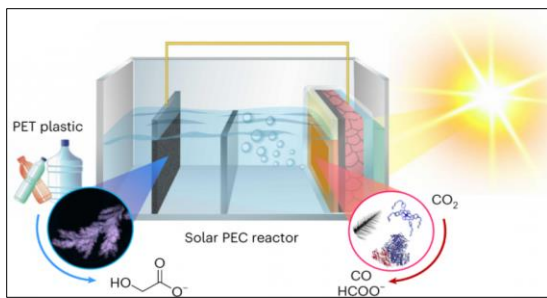
A System that can Transform Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) Plastic Waste and Greenhouse Gases into Sustainable Fuels

❖ Context

- Recently, Cambridge researchers find way to turn PET plastic bottles and carbon dioxide into sustainable fuels like CO, syngas or formate.

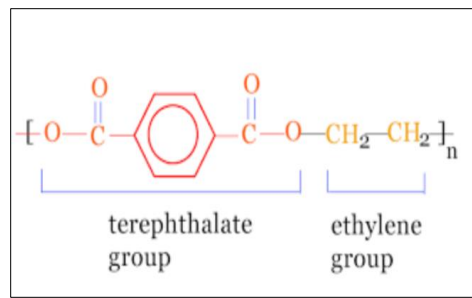
Key Highlights:

- Conversion of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and plastics into value-added products, driven by solar energy, is an important step in the transition to a more sustainable, **circular economy**.
- **Mechanism**
 - The researchers developed an **integrated reactor with two separate compartments**: One for plastic and one for greenhouse gases.
 - The reactor **uses a light absorber based on perovskite** — a promising alternative to silicon for next-generation solar cells.



- The team designed different catalysts, which were integrated into the light absorber.
- By changing the catalyst, the researchers could then change the end product.

- The reactor produced these products at a rate that is also much higher than conventional photocatalytic CO2 reduction processes.
- **Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET)**.
 - Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) is a form of polyester that is **used in the production of plastic bottles and containers for food, beverages, and cosmetics**.
 - It was **patented in 1973** by chemist Nathaniel Wyeth by combining modified **ethylene glycol and purified terephthalic acid**.



- It is popular among manufacturers for its ease of production, transparency, lightweight, and the fact that is easily recyclable.

News in Between the Lines

Standards For Basmati Rice



❖ Context

- **First time in India**, FSSAI notifies comprehensive regulatory standards for Basmati Rice.

❖ Key Highlights:

- FSSAI has specified the **identity standards for Basmati Rice** including Brown Basmati Rice, Milled Basmati Rice, Parboiled Brown Basmati Rice and Milled Parboiled Basmati Rice.
- As per these standards, **Basmati rice shall possess natural fragrance** characteristic of basmati rice and be free from **artificial colouring**, polishing agents and artificial fragrances.
- **These standards also specify** various identity and quality parameters for basmati rice such as **average size of grains** and their **elongation ratio** after cooking; maximum limits of **moisture, amylose content, uric acid**, defective/damaged grains and incidental presence of other non-basmati rice etc.
- **These standards** will be enforced w.e.f 1st August, 2023.

White Tufted Royal Butterfly



❖ Context

- Recently, a team of butterfly observers and researchers found **White Tufted Royal Butterfly**, a rare butterfly species at Kalliyad in Kannur.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The species had **earlier been spotted in Agasthyakoodam in 2017 and Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary in 2018**.
- The wingspan of the butterfly is just **32-40 mm**.
- Its larvae feed on **Scurrula parasitica**, a plant belonging to the **Loranthaceae family**.
- There were eight species of the butterfly. While two are common, the others are rare.
- Unregulated laterite and granite quarries operating in Kalliyad is effecting the survival of such rare species.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972 - Schedule 2.**

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Swami Vivekananda



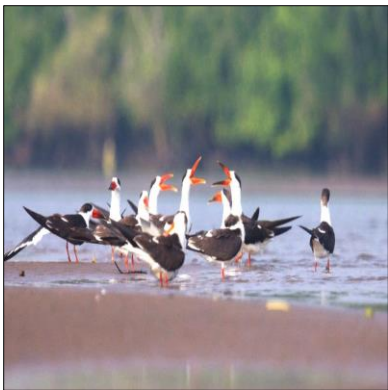
❖ Context

➤ The Prime Minister has paid tributes to **Swami Vivekananda on his Jayanti.**

❖ About Swami Vivekananda:

- **Vivekananda, original name Narendranath Datta**, was born on **January 12, 1863**, near Calcutta.
- He **was educated at a Western-style university** where he was exposed to Western philosophy, Christianity, and science.
- Social reform became a prominent element of Vivekananda's thought, and he joined the **Brahmo Samaj**.
- He later became the **most-notable disciple of Ramakrishna**, who demonstrated the essential unity of all religions.
- He was an activating force in the movement to promote **Vedanta philosophy** in the United States and England.
- In 1893, he **appeared in Chicago at the World's Parliament of Religions** where a newspaper account described him as **"an orator by divine right and undoubtedly the greatest figure at the Parliament."**
- Vivekananda **founded the Ramakrishna Mission** at the monastery of Belur Math.
- He adapted and made relevant to the 20th century the **very highest ideals of the Vedantic religion.**

Indian Skimmers



❖ Context

➤ Around **250 Indian Skimmers** were sighted in **Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary** in a day during the Asian Waterbird Census-2023.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Indian skimmer or Indian scissors-bill (**Rynchops albicollis**) is **one of the three species** that belong to the skimmer genus Rynchops in the family Laridae.
- **Characteristics**
 - They are very brightly marked in black, white & orange, making them difficult to miss.
- **Distribution and Habitat**
 - It is found on large rivers and lakes, swamps and coastal wetlands such as estuaries.
 - It is most common in freshwater, particularly during the breeding season.
 - In India, the **species can be sighted near the Chambal river** in Central India, in a few parts of Odisha and in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List- Endangered.**
 - In 2020, **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** has initiated a **'Guardians of the Skimmer'** programme, which is a community-based conservation initiative.

New Dust Control Technology



❖ Context

➤ **CMPDIL** Invents New Dust Control Technology.

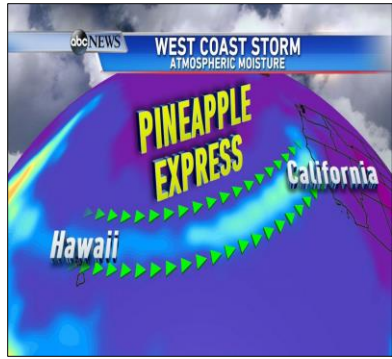
❖ Key Highlights:

- In order to minimize and control the fugitive dust in mining areas, Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Limited (CMPDIL), Ranchi has invented a **"System and Method for Controlling Generation and Movement of Fugitive Dust"**.
- They have and **obtained patent** for the same in December, 2022.
- This system can be used **in mines, thermal power plants, railway sidings, and ports**, construction sites wherein coal or fugitive materials are stored under open sky.
- Apart from reducing the dust generation from open sources, it will also provide noise attenuation.
- **Fugitive dust is a form of particulate matter** that contributes to air pollution that is generated from various sources which are exposed to air and **not discharged into the atmosphere through a confined flow stream.**
- The present invention relates to the **synchronized application of windbreak (WB) and vertical greenery system (VGS)** for reducing generation and dispersion of fugitive dust.

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Pineapple Express



❖ Context

- Over the past two weeks, California and other parts of the West Coast have been hit with a series of what meteorologists call atmospheric rivers.
- Forecasters said the rain arriving in California is being **caused by a “true Pineapple Express”**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- True Pineapple Express is a **specific example of a common atmospheric phenomenon that resembles a conveyor belt for moisture**.
- It is **long, narrow regions in the atmosphere** that transport most of the water vapor outside the tropics.
- These rivers in the sky occur often on the West Coast but can happen in other locations, including the eastern United States, where they often channel moisture from the Caribbean.
- They **carry a lot of moisture** — enough water vapor to equal or sometimes exceed the average flow of the Mississippi River at the point where it flows into the Gulf of Mexico.
- When this moisture begins to interact with land, it can fall as rain or snow.
- Often, as is the case lately in California, the precipitation is abundant because these atmospheric rivers provide a continuous flow of moisture.

BIS Standards



❖ Context

- Central Consumer Protection Authority **issues notices to e-commerce** entities for selling toys that violate compulsory BIS Standards.

❖ Key Highlights:

- CCPA issued notices to e-commerce entities, **Amazon, Flipkart and Snapdeal for sale of toys in violation to standards**.
- **CCPA has sought response from the e-commerce entities within 7 days** from issuance of notice, failing which necessary action may be initiated against them under the provisions of the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- CCPA has **expanded the country-wide campaign** to prevent sale of spurious and counterfeit goods that violate Quality Control Orders.
- **Section 17 of the BIS Act, 2016 prohibits** any person to manufacture, import, distribute, sell, hire, lease, store or exhibit for sale any such goods or article for which direction (QCO) of compulsory use of Standard Mark been published by the Central Government.

Golden Globe Award



❖ Context

- Recently, The **song Natu-Natu** from **SS Rajamouli’s film RRR** has won the Golden Globe Award.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Golden Globe Awards are accolades **bestowed by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA)** starting in January 1944.
- It recognizes excellence in both American and international film and television.
- Within the entertainment industry, the Golden Globes are considered second in importance both to the Academy Awards (for film) and to the Emmy Awards (for television).

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