

CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES

09/08/2023

The PM lauds performance of Indian athletes at 31st World University Games held in China

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has lauded the performance of Indian athletes at 31st World University Games with a record-breaking haul of 26 medals including 11 Golds, 5 Silvers, and 10 Bronzes.

The Prime Minister emphasized that this is India's best performance at the World University Games since its inception in 1959 and congratulated the athletes, their families, and coaches for this success.



“A sporting performance that will make every Indian proud!”

At the 31st World University Games, Indian athletes return with a record-breaking haul of 26 medals! Our best performance ever, it includes 11 Golds, 5 Silvers, and 10 Bronzes.

A salute to our incredible athletes who have brought glory to the nation and inspired upcoming sports persons.”

“What is especially gladdening is that India had won a total of 18 medals in the World University Games since its debut in 1959, until now. Thus, this year's exemplary result of 26 medals is truly remarkable.

The stellar performance is a testament to our athletes' unwavering dedication. I compliment the athletes, their families and coaches for this success and wish them the very best for their upcoming endeavors.”

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

Artificial intelligence is an exciting and fast-changing technology. But it has a big CO₂ footprint and is being used to boost activities that make climate change worse.



AI and Environmental Intersection

- The realm of artificial intelligence (AI) has ushered in a technological revolution with vast implications across various sectors.
- Concurrently, the urgency of addressing environmental concerns, including climate change, pollution, and resource depletion, has surged.
- As AI continues to evolve, its intersection with environmental issues presents both potential solutions and challenges that warrant exploration.

Positive Impacts of AI on the Environment

Climate Modeling and Prediction

AI has become instrumental in enhancing climate models, enabling more accurate weather forecasts and long-term climate change predictions.

Through data analysis and pattern recognition, AI-driven models contribute to a deeper understanding of climate dynamics, thus facilitating informed decision-making for climate mitigation strategies.

Renewable Energy Optimization

The integration of AI in energy management systems has led to the optimization of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power.

AI algorithms analyse real-time data, enabling energy grids to balance supply and demand dynamically.



This, in turn, promotes efficient energy production, consumption, and storage, fostering the transition to sustainable energy systems.

- Natural Resource Management.
- Biodiversity Conservation.
- Waste Management and Recycling.
- Environmental Monitoring and Disaster Management.

Negative Impacts and Challenges

- Carbon Footprint of AI
- Data Privacy and Security Concerns
- Algorithmic Bias and Fairness

AI Solutions in Action

Project Drawdown's Regenerative Agriculture: AI's potential in addressing environmental challenges is exemplified by Project Drawdown's utilization of AI-enhanced soil monitoring and predictive analytics. By analysing soil health data, AI empowers farmers to adopt regenerative practices, leading to carbon sequestration and sustainable land management.

Ocean Cleanup's AI-Powered Debris Detection: AI's innovative application emerges in the Ocean Cleanup project, which employs AI algorithms to analyse satellite imagery for plastic debris detection. This technology aids in locating and cleaning up ocean pollution, illustrating AI's role in combating global environmental threats.

Google's Coral Reef Monitoring: Google's AI-driven coral reef monitoring demonstrates the potential for AI to protect marine ecosystems. By processing underwater imagery, AI algorithms assess coral health and detect bleaching events, enabling timely interventions to preserve these vital habitats.

IBM's Green Horizons Project: In China, IBM's Green Horizons project uses AI to predict and manage air quality. By analyzing various data sources, including satellite imagery and weather forecasts, the project provides accurate air quality predictions, aiding policymakers in making informed decisions.

Future Possibilities and Collaborations

- AI-Driven Circular Economy.
- Smart Cities and Climate Resilience.
- Interdisciplinary Partnerships.

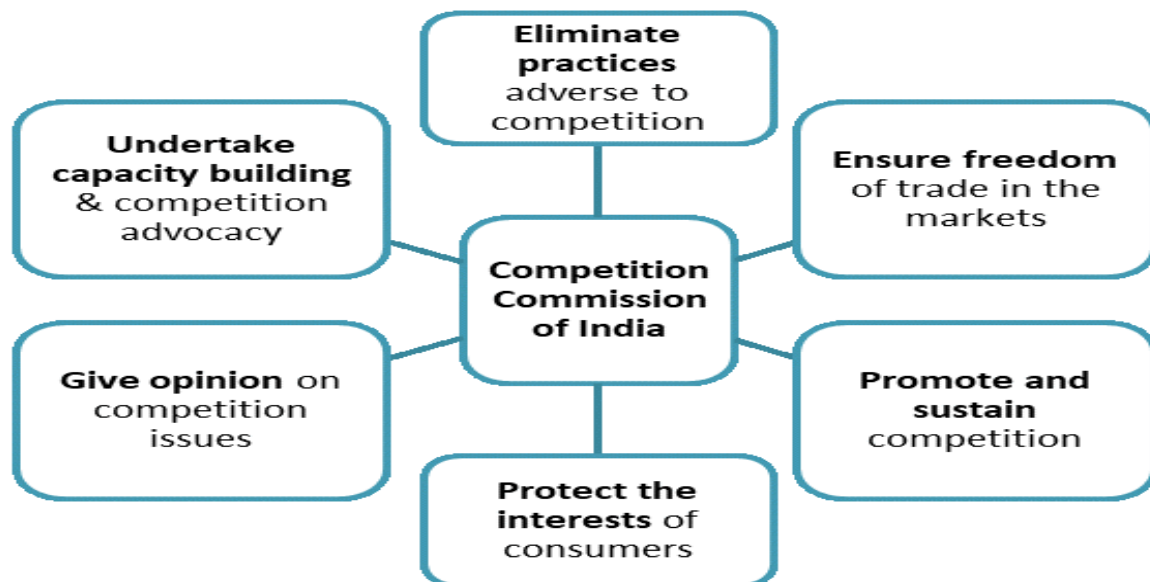
- Regulatory Frameworks and Sustainable AI Development.

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing the Competition Act, 2002, it was duly constituted in March 2009.

The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act) was repealed and replaced by the Competition Act, 2002, on the recommendations of the Raghavan committee.

The Commission consists of one Chairperson and six Members who shall be appointed by the Central Government.



The commission is a quasi-judicial body which gives opinions to statutory authorities and also deals with other cases. The Chairperson and other Members shall be whole-time Members.

The Competition Act was passed in 2002 and has been amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007. It follows the philosophy of modern competition laws.

The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations, which causes an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.



In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment Act, the Competition Commission of India and the Competition Appellate Tribunal have been established.

The government replaced the Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMPAT) with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) in 2017.

To eliminate practices having adverse effects on competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.

To give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority

Ensure fair and healthy competition in economic activities in the country for faster and inclusive growth and development of the economy.

Implement competition policies with an aim to effectuate the most efficient utilization of economic resources.

Effectively carry out competition advocacy and spread the information on benefits of competition among all stakeholders to establish and nurture competition culture in the Indian economy.

What are the Achievements of CCI till now?

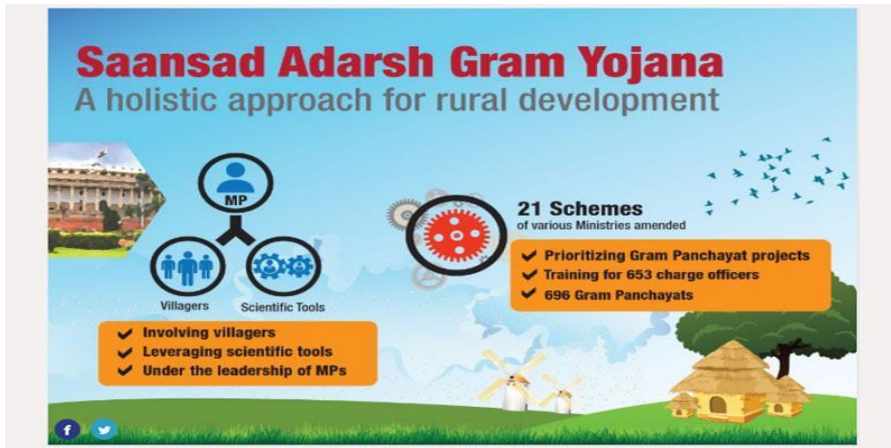
The Commission has adjudicated more than 1,200 antitrust cases i.e., case disposal rate is 89 % in antitrust cases.

It has also reviewed more than 900 mergers and acquisitions till date, cleared most of them, within a record average time of 30 days.

The Commission has also come up with several innovations like the 'Green Channel' provision for automated approval on combinations/transactions and cleared more than 50 of such transactions.

Yojana Saansad Adarsh Gram

The Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) was launched on 11th October 2014 with the vision to improve the standard of life of the villagers through holistic development of identified Gram Panchayats (GPs) by implementing existing Government Schemes in convergence mode without allocating additional funds, so that these GPs serve as model for inspiration of other GPs.



The Members of Parliament have identified 1,782 Gram Panchayats (GPs) from 2019 to 2023 and there has been continuous and progressive development of the identified GPs under SAGY.

There is no apex Committee to assess the scheme. However, under the SAGY guidelines, there are two Committees at the national level to monitor the implementation of the schemes viz.

- National Level Committee under the chairmanship of Minister of Rural Development with the participation of 12 Union Ministers and 4 Members of Parliament
- A National Level Committee under the chairmanship of Secretary, Rural Development Department with representatives from 20 Central Ministries/ Departments as members. There is no such proposal to form a Committee to give a report on the scheme as of now.

WORLD TRIBAL DAY

The cultural significance of festival celebrations within indigenous tribal communities, focusing on two major festivals: the Sarhul Festival and the Karam Festival.

Details

Festivals hold a significant place in the lives of tribal communities, reflecting their culture and traditions.

Festivals serve as occasions of joy, a celebration of life's colors, and connections with nature, ancestors, and deities.



Indigenous peoples' close proximity to nature influences their festivals, which revolve around activities like agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, and worship of the five elements.

Indigenous peoples' festivals are closely intertwined with nature and the Panchabhutas (five elements): Prithvi, Jal, Agni, Vayu, and Aakash.

These elements symbolize Earth, water, fire, wind, and sky, reflecting their close bond with the natural world.

Sarhul Festival

Celebrated by Jharkhand's indigenous people.

Marks the flowering of the Sal tree (*Shorea Robusta*) during Chaitra (March/April).

Signifies not entering the forest until Sal trees bloom, preserving nature in its pristine form.

Story of Bindi, Mother Earth's daughter, symbolizes reverence for nature and the cycle of life.

Bindi's disappearance led to desolation, shedding leaves from trees.

Compromise with the god of death allowed Bindi to spend half her life on Earth, rejuvenating nature upon her return.

Karam Festival

Celebrated during the 11th moon of Bhadrapada (August/September).

Involves planting the Karam tree (*Adina Cordifolia*), symbolizing fertility and prosperity.

Folklore recounts the tale of seven brothers and the Karam tree's power.

Brothers' anger at their wives led to uprooting the Karam tree, resulting in losses.

The Younger brother's worship of Karam devata led to regaining lost wealth.

Brothers bring Karam tree branches to celebrate the Karam festival annually.

Devotion, respect, singing, and dancing characterize the festival.

World Tribal Day

World Tribal Day, also known as International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, is observed on August 9th each year.

Recognizes and celebrates the unique cultures, traditions, and contributions of indigenous peoples around the world.

Historical Background

Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994 through Resolution 49/214.

Marks the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982.

Havana Syndrome

It is a set of mental health symptoms that are said to be experienced by United States intelligence and embassy officials in various countries.

The word 'syndrome' means a set of symptoms. So, Havana syndrome does not mean a unique medical condition, but a set of symptoms that are usually experienced together.



Its origins may be difficult to confirm. The syndrome typically involves symptoms such as hearing certain sounds without any outside noise, nausea, vertigo and headaches, memory loss and balance issues.

As of July 2023, the 2021 incident was the only reported occurrence of the syndrome in India.

Indian security establishment claims that they were not aware of any weapon with such capacities being in the possession of an Indian agency.

Indian officials have said there is no reason to use Havana syndrome as a weapon against the US by India.

Eris

- A new strain of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was identified in the United Kingdom last month.
- It has been named the 5.1 variant, code-named Eris.
- It is a strain of Omicron
- Geographical Spread



- Patients in the United States, Europe and Asia have also been found infected with Eris.
- In the UK, about 39.4 per cent of the cases are due to the 1.16 strain, also known as Arcturus.
- It is currently not clear whether any EG.5.1 variants have been reported in India and as per scientists there is no concern due to the nature of the virus and the country's past exposure.

Nutrition and TB

As per Lancet's India research, Improved nutrition, early weight gain can cut TB cases, mortality.



The two studies were conducted between August 2019 and August 2022 in four districts of Jharkhand.

The study was named Reducing Activation of Tuberculosis by Improvement of Nutritional Status (RATIONS) trial.

The findings of the studies by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in collaboration with the National TB Elimination Programme and National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis, Chennai, have also been published in The Lancet.

Findings of the study

- Improved nutrition can reduce the incidence of all forms of TB by up to 40 per cent, and of infectious TB by up to 50 per cent among those in contact with patients suffering from infectious lung TB.
- Early weight gain among underweight patients with TB could reduce the risk of mortality by up to 60 per cent, as it ensured higher treatment success.

WHO and government's initiatives

- The national strategic plan 2017-2025 sets the target of India reporting no more than 44 new TB cases or 65 total cases per lakh population by 2025.
- Under the national programme to eliminate TB by 2025, TB patients are given monthly nutritional support of Rs 500 through direct benefit transfer for the duration of their treatment.
- The programme also aims to reduce the mortality to 3 deaths per lakh population by 2025.
- Under the Ni-Akshay Mitra programme, volunteers can provide monthly nutrition kits to their “adopted” patients.



- More accurate molecular diagnostic tests like CB-NAAT and TureNat have been developed to test and detect TB cases.
- 79-line probe assay laboratories and 96 liquid culture testing laboratories have been set up for the diagnosis of multi and extremely drug-resistant TB.

The World Health Organisation's end TB strategy calls for an 80% reduction in the number of new cases, a 90% reduction in mortality, and zero catastrophic cost by 2030.

India accounts for 28% of all TB cases in the world, according to the Global TB Report 2022.

Improvements in treatment protocols

Newer drugs such as **Bedaquiline and Delamanid** for the treatment of drug-resistant TB have been included in the government's basket of drugs provided to free TB patients. These oral drugs can replace the injectable kanamycin that was associated with serious side effects like kidney problems and deafness.

Quit India Movement Day 2023

Every year Quit India Day is observed on August 8 to commemorate the occasion. This year marks the 81st anniversary of the event.

The Quit India Movement, also known as the August Movement or Bharat Chodo Andolan, was a significant civil disobedience movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress on August 8, 1942 at Gowalia Tank Maidan also known as August Kranti Maidan in Bombay.



On this day, August 8th, in 1942, Gandhi gave the famous "Do or Die" speech, urging the Indian people to act decisively and non-violently against British rule.

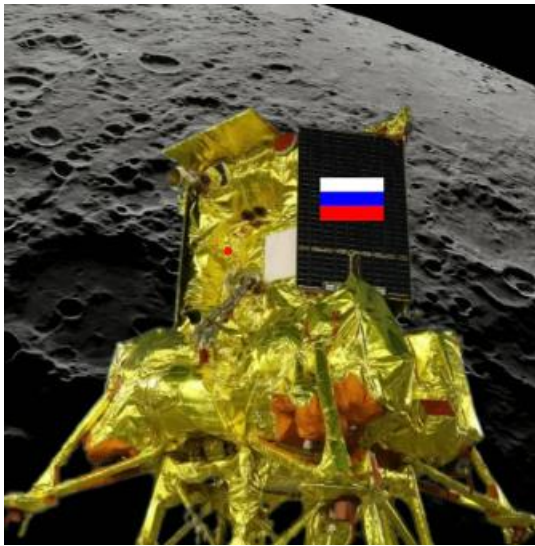
While factors leading to such a movement had been building up, matters came to a head with the failure of the Cripps Mission.

The failure of the Cripps Mission made Gandhi realize that freedom would come only if Indians fought tooth and nail for it.

The movement aimed to demand an end to British colonial rule in India and achieve full independence.

Luna-25

Russia is set to launch its first lunar landing spacecraft in nearly half a century on August 11. It is also designated as the Luna-Glob-Lander which is a Russian lunar lander mission.



It is targeted to the south polar region of the Moon.

There are two primary scientific objectives of the mission: to study composition of the polar regolith, and to study the plasma and dust components of the lunar polar exosphere.

It will take off from the Vostochny cosmodrome.

Lander structure:

- Luna 25's lander features a four-legged base housing landing rockets and propellant tanks.
- An upper compartment contains solar panels, communication equipment, onboard computers, and scientific instruments.
- It carries eight science instruments, including gamma-ray and neutron spectrometers, infrared spectrometers, mass spectrometers, and imaging systems.
- The primary landing site for Luna 25 is near the lunar south pole, with a reserve site located southwest of the Manzini crater.
- It is expected to operate on the lunar surface, studying regolith and exospheric dust and particles, for approximately one year.

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