



Yudh Abhyas

Armies of India and the United States will begin another edition of their joint military exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' at Fort Wainwright in Alaska.

About Yudh Abhyas:

It is a joint military exercise conducted annually between the armies of India and USA.

It has been ongoing since 2004.

It is designed to promote cooperation between the two militaries while sharing training, cultural exchanges, and building joint operating skills.

Yudh Abhyas 2023:

- This marks the 19th edition of the joint exercise, which is hosted alternately between both countries.
- The training schedule focuses on the employment of an integrated battle group under Chapter VII of the UN Mandate.
- The schedule will include all operations related to peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

List of Exercises between India and USA:

Army: Yudh Abhyas and Vajra Prahar

Navy: MALABAR (Multilateral)

Air Force: Cope India, Red Flag (Multilateral)

The Press and Registration of Periodicals (PRP) Bill 2023

- The Union Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister introduced the Press and Registration of Periodicals (PRP) Bill 2023 in the Rajya Sabha.



- The Bill seeks to replace the existing **Press and Registration of Books (PRB) Act 1867**, which governs the registration of print and publishing industry in the country.

About the PRB Act 1867:

The Act aims to -

- Regulate printing press and newspapers in India,
- Preserve copies of books and newspapers printed in India, and
- Provide for registration of books and newspapers.

Under the Act, only the district magistrate (DM) could cancel the declaration of a periodical, while the Press Registrar General (PRG) did not have suo motu powers to cancel or suspend the Certificate of Registration granted by it.

It made improper declaration of information a punishable offence with a prison term of up to six months.

Salient Provisions of the PRP Bill 2023:

The Bill seeks to simplify the registration process for periodicals.

The Bill will make it mandatory for digital news platforms to do a “one-time registration” in order to operate.

The Bill empowers the PRG to suspend/cancel registration.

As per the new Bill, a person who has been convicted by any court for an offence involving terrorist act or unlawful activity or having done anything against the security of the state shall not be permitted to bring out a periodical.

The Bill also seeks to do away with two provisions that required publishers and printers to file a declaration before the DM.

Only an online intimation has to be filed before PRG and DM.

It waters down the provision (of the PRB Act) for prosecution and imprisonment of publishers for improper declaration of information.

The punishment of jail up to six months is envisaged only in cases where -

A periodical is published without a certificate of registration and



The publisher fails to cease the printing of such publication even after six months of a direction issued to that effect by PRG.

The new Bill also provides for an appellate authority. The Appellate Board (Press and Registration Appellate Board) will comprise chairperson, Press Council of India (PCI), and two members of PCI to hear an appeal against -

Refusal of grant of registration,

Imposition of any penalty or suspension/cancellation of registration by PRG.

Significance of the PRP Bill 2023:

- It aims to bring transparency and ease of doing business by providing for a simple process that will help small and medium publishers.
- It brings digital news media under its purview, which is expected to weed out apps, websites and social media accounts spreading fake news.
- At present, while traditional print and electronic media are governed by various laws, digital news platforms are not covered by any registration process.
- To fix this, the government introduced the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021, which made it mandatory for digital news platforms to register themselves with the government.
- Books, which were part of the PRB Act, 1867, have been taken out of the purview of PRP Bill, as books as a subject are administered by the Ministry of Education.
- The statute has been substantially decriminalised as against the PRB Act 1867.

WHO report on tobacco control

- World Health Organisation (WHO) has released a report on tobacco control measures recently.
- This was the ninth WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic. It tracks the progress made by countries in tobacco control since 2008.



- In 2008, WHO had developed the MPOWER measures to help countries implement the demand-reduction measures of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
- MPOWER measures include:
 1. monitor tobacco use and prevention policies;
 2. protect people from tobacco smoke;
 3. offer help to quit tobacco;
 4. warn about dangers of tobacco;
 5. enforce bans on tobacco advertising; and
 6. raise taxes on tobacco products.

WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

- The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is an international treaty adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2003.
- It is designed to address the global health risks associated with tobacco use and to provide a comprehensive framework for governments and organizations to implement effective tobacco control policies and strategies.
- The FCTC recognizes that tobacco use is a major public health concern, causing numerous preventable deaths and illnesses worldwide.
- The FCTC operates as a legally binding treaty.

It means that countries that have ratified it are obligated to implement the measures outlined in the convention within their national jurisdictions.

Objective

- Reduce tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke.
- Protect people from the health risks associated with tobacco use.
- Implement measures to provide information, education, and communication about tobacco-related issues.
- Regulate tobacco product packaging and labeling.
- Ban tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.
- Increase taxes on tobacco products to reduce their affordability.



- Support efforts to help people quit tobacco use.
- Address issues related to illicit trade of tobacco products.

Rohini panel submits long-awaited report:

What is 'sub-categorisation' of OBCs?

- The report of a commission set up to examine the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) was submitted to President Droupadi Murmu.
- The contents of the report have not been made public as yet.

The four-member commission headed by Justice G Rohini, a retired Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, was appointed on October 2, 2017.

About the G Rohini Commission:

- It was constituted in 2017 under **Article 340 of the Constitution** with the approval of the President of India.
- Article 340 empowers the President of India to appoint a commission to investigate issues concerning OBCs and make recommendations to improve their situation.

Prior to constituting the Rohini Commission, the Centre had granted the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status by the 102nd Amendment Act, 2018.

ZARTH App

Recently, a team of researchers at the Center for Data Driven Discovery, California Institute of Technology has developed the ZARTH app that allows anyone with a smartphone to 'hunt' for transients.

ZTF Augmented Reality Transient Hunter (ZARTH) is built along the lines of **About ZARTH App**:

- The augmented reality mobile game.
- It allows the user to do serious science while playing a game.



Features

- The app uses the open-source Sky Map and adds data daily from the Zwicky Transient Facility (ZTF)'s robotic telescope at the Palomar Observatory in California.
- Palomar is also home to one of the oldest, largest, and most powerful telescopes in the world: the 200-inch Hale reflector.
- The ZTF scans the entire northern sky every two days and uses the data to make large area sky maps that have important applications in tracking near-earth asteroids and studying supernovae.
- The app is loaded daily with transients detected in real-time by the ZTF.
- The transients include flaring stars (variable stars that flare up for a short while), white dwarf binaries (burnt remains of dead stars that orbit one another and often merge and explode in supernovae), active galactic nuclei, and several other types.

PM SVANidhi

About PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme:

- It was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on June 01, 2020.
- Purpose: To provide affordable Working Capital loans to street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been adversely affected due to the Covid-19 lockdown.
- It is a micro-credit facility that provides street vendors with a collateral-free loan of Rs 10,000 with low rates of interest (below 12%) for a period of one year, aiding the vendors in getting back on their feet financially.
- The duration of the scheme initially was until March 2022. It has been extended till December 2024, with a focus on enhanced collateral-free affordable loan corpus, increased adoption of digital transactions and holistic socio-economic development of the Street Vendors and their families.

Who is Eligible for the Loan?



- All vendors who have been vending from or before (March 24, 2020) and with a certificate of vending can avail the loan.
- As per the Street Vendors Act 2014, the Town Vending Committees (which comprises the local authorities and vendors from an area) issue a certificate of vending after a survey has been conducted of all the vendors.

Scheme Benefits:

- Vendors can avail of a working capital loan of up to Rs. 10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments in the tenure of one year.
- On timely/ early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy @ 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer on a quarterly basis.
- There will be no penalty on early repayment of loan.
- The scheme promotes digital transactions through cash back incentives up to an amount of Rs. 100 per month.
- The vendors can avail the facility of escalation of the credit limit on timely/ early repayment of loan.

Implementation agency: Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) Himalayan

vulture

The conservationists script India's first captive breeding success story of the Himalayan vultures inside the Assam State Zoo in Guwahati.

- It is the **second instance (First was in France) in the world** and first in India where this species has been kept for breeding.
- The captive breeding was a joint project undertaken by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and the Assam forest department

About Himalayan vulture:



- The Himalayan vulture (*Gyps himalayensis*) or **Himalayan griffon** vulture is an Old World vulture.
- It is one of the two largest Old World vultures and true raptors.
- It is a typical vulture which **has a bald white head**, wings that are very wide and short tail feathers.

Distribution: It is native to **the Himalayas and the adjoining Tibetan Plateau** and also found in the Central Asian mountains.

- These are diurnal and mostly solitary species.

Conservation status

IUCN: Near Threatened

- **Other Vulture species found in India**

India is home to 9 species of Vulture namely the Oriental white-backed, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Himalayan, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous and Eurasian Griffon.

Offshore Areas Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023

The Lok Sabha recently passed the Offshore Areas Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023.

About Offshore Areas Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023:

- The Bill **amends the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002.**
- The new bill regulates mining in maritime zones of India.
- Highlights of the Bill:
 - It allows the government to reserve offshore areas that are not held under any operating rights.



- The Bill also allows the administering authority to grant a composite license or production lease to the government or a government company.
- It proposes to remove the provision for renewal of production lease and provide a fixed period of fifty years for production lease similar to the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act 1957.
- It also seeks to provide for the grant of production lease to the private sector only through auction by competitive bidding.
- It also provides for grant of operating rights without competitive bidding to a government or a government company, or a corporation in the mineral-bearing areas reserved by the central government.
- In the case of atomic minerals, the grant of exploration license or production lease shall be made only to a government or a government or corporation.



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