

## UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 29-09-2023

### Uttar Pradesh Achieves 100% ODF Plus Coverage under Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen. 95,767 Villages Declare Themselves ODF+ With Solid/Liquid Waste Management. Systems

Over 80,000 Villages Achieve ODF Plus Status in Last 9 Months. Achievement Comes Amidst Nationwide 'Swachhata Hi Seva' Campaign: A Jan Andolan With 88 Lakh People Participating In Mass Mobilization & Shramdaan In U.P. Alone



An ODF Plus Model village is one which is sustaining its ODF status and has arrangements for both Solid Waste Management and Liquid Waste Management; and observes visual cleanliness, i.e., minimal litter, minimal stagnant wastewater, no plastic waste dump in public places; and displays ODF Plus Information, Education & Communication (IEC) messages.

The achievement of 100% ODF Plus villages is a significant milestone, as State has moved from ODF to ODF Plus in Swachh Bharat Mission Phase II. The major components of the Phase-II of SBM (G) are Sustaining Open Defecation Free Status (ODF-S), Solid (Bio-degradable) Waste Management, Plastic Waste Management (PWM), Liquid Waste Management (LWM), Faecal Sludge Management (FSM), GOBARdhan, Information Education and Communication/Behavior Change Communication (IEC/BCC) and Capacity

Building. The SBM-G program has been instrumental in improving the health and well-being of millions of people across the country.

## **CRIIO 4 GOOD modules to advance gender equality and empower young people**

### **CRIIO 4 Good Modules to be a medium to empower girl child and spread awareness about gender equity - Shri Dharmendra Pradhan**

Union Minister for Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launched 'CRIIO 4 GOOD', a new online, life skills learning modules, to promote gender equality among girls and boys. The programme was launched in association with the International Cricket Council, UNICEF, and the Board of Control for Cricket in India at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad. Minister for Tribal Development, Primary, Secondary and Adult Education, Government of Gujarat, Dr. Kuber Dindor; Minister of State, Parliamentary Affairs, Primary, Secondary and Adult Education, Higher Education, Shri Praful Pansheriya; Representative of UNICEF, Ms. Cynthia McCaffrey; Honorary Secretary, Board of Control for Cricket in India, Shri Jay Shah; Indian cricketer and Celebrity Supporter for ICC-UNICEF CRIIO 4 GOOD initiative, Smt. Smriti Mandhana; Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Shri Sanjay Kumar; officials of the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, and over 1000 children were also present for the event.



While speaking at the event, Shri Pradhan highlighted NEP 2020's emphasis on gender parity and equal opportunities as a fundamental principle. Through CRIIO 4 GOOD, the power of sports and the popularity of cricket can be used as a medium to empower the girl child and spread awareness about gender equity, he added. He mentioned how the country witnessed history in the making with the passage of Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam and taking India to the forefront of women-led development.

Smt. Smriti Mandhana shared the first learning modules of CRIIO 4 GOOD with over 1000 school children at the stadium. The modules are highly engaging, and

they use the power of cricket to talk about essential life skills and gender equity, among girls and boys in a fun, interactive way.

‘CRIIO 4 GOOD’ is a series of 8 cricket-based animation films to promote gender parity, equip girls with life skills and encourage their participation in sports. Using the popularity and passion of cricket young audiences, ICC and UNICEF released these modules to inspire children and youth to adopt critical life skills and appreciate the importance of gender equality. The programme can be accessed free of cost on [criio.com/criio4good](http://criio.com/criio4good) in three languages: English, Hindi and Gujarati.

The themes of the eight modules are: leadership, problem-solving, confidence, decision-making, negotiation, empathy, teamwork and goal setting and are visualized through state-of-the-art animation using cricketing examples. In-depth research into local nuances has made these films real and relatable.

## **India retains 40th rank in the Global Innovation Index 2023**

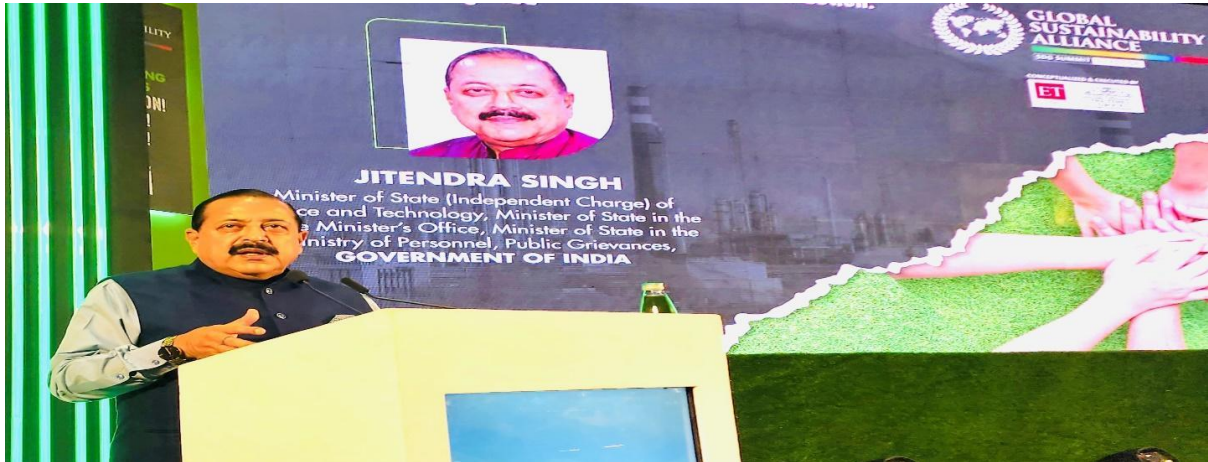
### **NITI Aayog to host India's Launch of the Global Innovation Index 2023**

India retains 40th rank out of 132 economies in the Global Innovation Index 2023 rankings published by the World Intellectual Property Organization. India has been on a rising trajectory, over the past several years in the Global Innovation Index (GII), from a rank of 81 in 2015 to 40 in 2023. Innovation has been at the forefront of our battle against the unprecedented crisis created by the pandemic and will be pivotal in driving the country’s resilience, as enshrined in the Prime Minister’s clarion call on Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

The consistent improvement in the GII ranking is owing to the immense knowledge capital, the vibrant start-up ecosystem, and the amazing work done by the public and private research organizations. All Departments of the Government, including Scientific Departments such as the Department of Science and Technology; the Department of Biotechnology; the Department of Space; and the Department of Atomic Energy and also departments such as Ministry of Electronics and IT, Department of Telecommunications, Department of Agricultural Research & Education and the Department of Health Research have played a pivotal role in enriching the National Innovation Ecosystem. Most importantly, the Atal Innovation Mission has played a major role in expanding the Innovation ecosystem.

NITI Aayog has been working tirelessly to ensure the optimization of the national efforts for bringing policy-led innovation in different areas such as electric vehicles, biotechnology, nanotechnology, space, alternative energy sources, etc. It has also played a role in expanding the innovation eco-system in states and districts. A constant thrust in monitoring and evaluating India’s position in the global rankings has been provided by the NITI Aayog, including in the GII.

## India is committed to achieve the Net Zero emissions target by 2070 as announced by PM Modi.



“India has remained steadfast in its transition towards clean energy achieving the fastest pace of renewable capacity addition amongst all major economies and ambitious transition goals articulated by Prime Minister Modi, in India’s Panchamrit declaration at COP26”: Dr Jitendra Singh

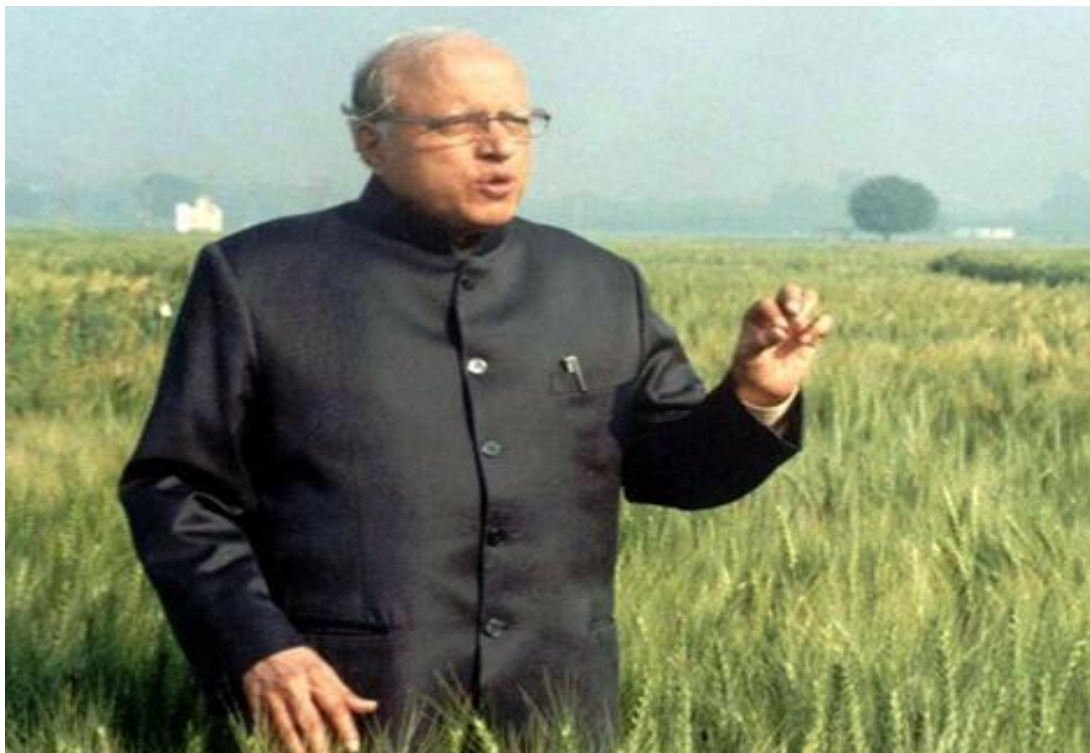
India’s energy-mix strategies include a larger shift toward clean energy alternatives, increased manufacturing capacities, energy use efficiency and a policy push for Hydrogen including production-linked incentives, says Dr Jitendra Singh

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO,

Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Space and Atomic Energy, Dr. Jitendra Singh, has said India is committed to achieve the Net Zero emission target by 2070, as announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

“We are fully committed to contribute in attaining the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - by way of Research and Innovation through international collaboration and partnerships,” he said, participating in the ‘Green Ribbon Champions’ programme in New Delhi today.

## M S SWAMINATHAN



M. S. Swaminathan passed away on September 28, 2023, at the age of 98 at his residence in Chennai. His contributions to Indian agriculture and his commitment to improving the lives of farmers will be remembered for generations to come.

### Key Highlights

S. Swaminathan was born in 1925, in Tamil Nadu, India. He completed his education in agricultural science, earning a Bachelor's degree from the University of Madras and later obtaining a Ph.D. in Genetics from the University of Cambridge.

Swaminathan is often referred to as the "**Father of India's Green Revolution**" for his groundbreaking work in agricultural research and development. He played a crucial role in the development of high-yielding varieties of rice and wheat, which helped transform India from a food-deficit nation to a self-sufficient one.

**Key Roles in Agricultural Research:** Throughout his career, Swaminathan held various significant positions in agricultural research and policy-making, including Director of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Agricultural Research and Education.

### Scientific Contributions:

Swaminathan made significant contributions to the understanding of potato genetics and the development of frost-resistant potato varieties.

He conducted research on the cytogenetics of hexaploid wheat, contributing to the development of high-yielding wheat varieties.

He played a role in efforts to grow rice with C4 carbon fixation capabilities, which would improve photosynthesis and water usage.

Swaminathan's work on radiation botany included the study of mutagens and the effects of radiation on plant responsiveness to fertilizers.

**National Commission on Farmers:** In 2004, he was appointed as the chair of the National Commission on Farmers, which aimed to address farmer distress and improve the agricultural sector. The commission's recommendations, including the proposal for a Minimum Support Price (MSP) at least 50% higher than production costs, had a significant impact on Indian agriculture.

**Awards and Recognitions:** Swaminathan received numerous awards and honours for his contributions to agriculture and science. Notably, he was awarded the first World Food Prize in 1987 and received the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Vibhushan, among other accolades.

**MS Swaminathan Research Foundation:** Following his World Food Prize win, Swaminathan established the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in Taramani, Chennai, to continue his work in agricultural research and sustainable development.

## US TRADE COMMISSION'S ANTI-TRUST LAWSUIT AGAINST AMAZON

The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has filed an antitrust lawsuit against Amazon, accusing the company of harming consumers by stifling



competition. The FTC alleges that Amazon engaged in unfair tactics to "illegally maintain its monopoly power" in the online retail industry.



**Unfair Tactics:** The FTC alleges that Amazon prevents rivals and sellers from lowering prices, degrades quality for shoppers, overcharges sellers, stifles innovation, and prevents rivals from fairly competing against Amazon.

**Search Results Manipulation:** The agency accuses Amazon of punishing sellers who offer lower prices elsewhere by burying them deep in the website's search results, making them effectively invisible.

**Forced Use of Amazon Services:** The FTC claims that Amazon forces sellers to use its warehouses and delivery services, which inflates costs for both consumers and sellers. The FTC has requested the court to issue a permanent injunction ordering Amazon to stop its unlawful conduct.

**Amazon's Response:** Amazon has countered the allegations, stating that the FTC is "wrong on the facts and the law" and accusing the agency of overreach. Amazon argues that its practices have spurred competition and innovation in the retail industry, resulting in greater selection, lower prices, and faster delivery speeds.

**Larger Antitrust Actions:** This lawsuit against Amazon is part of a broader trend of antitrust actions against major tech companies. Similar lawsuits have been filed against Google's parent company Alphabet and Meta (formerly Facebook).

### Antitrust lawsuit

Antitrust laws are designed to promote fair competition, prevent monopolies, and protect consumers from unfair business practices.

The primary purpose of antitrust laws is to ensure that markets remain competitive and that no single company or group of companies gains excessive market power or engages in practices that harm competition.

Antitrust lawsuits typically target a range of anticompetitive behaviour, including price-fixing, monopolization, collusion, bid-rigging, tying arrangements, and other practices that restrict competition.

Antitrust lawsuits can be initiated by government authorities, such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the United States or the European Commission in the European Union. Private parties, including competitors and consumers, can also file antitrust lawsuits seeking damages or injunctive relief.

One common focus of antitrust lawsuits is the prevention or breakup of monopolies. Monopolies occur when a single company or a group of companies dominate a market to the detriment of competition.

Antitrust lawsuits can lead to various remedies, including fines, divestitures (forcing a company to sell off parts of its business), injunctions (court orders to cease anti-competitive practices), and damages awards to injured parties.



In addition to government enforcement, private parties can sue for damages resulting from antitrust violations. Private antitrust lawsuits can lead to significant financial awards if plaintiffs can demonstrate harm.

Antitrust enforcement is an ongoing process, with regulatory agencies continuously monitoring markets and investigating potential anticompetitive practices.

## SOCIAL BONDS

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has issued its inaugural social bonds with a total size of Rs 1,040.50 crore.

### Key Highlights

**AAA Rating:** These bonds are the first externally certified AAA-rated Indian social bonds, indicating a high level of creditworthiness. This rating is given by rating agencies CRISIL Ltd and ICRA Ltd.

**Listing and Redemption:** The bonds are set to be listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) on September 29, 2023, and the redemption date is September 27, 2028. Investors are required to hold the bonds for a period of five years, with annual coupon payments.

**Face Value and Issue Size:** Each bond has a face value of Rs 1,00,000. The base issue size is Rs 1,000 crore, with an option to retain oversubscription up to Rs 2,000 crore, making the total aggregate size up to Rs 3,000 crore.

**Purpose of Social Bonds:** Social bonds are financial instruments issued to raise funds for projects and initiatives that have a positive social impact on society. These projects can encompass areas such as healthcare, education, affordable housing, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability.

**Sustainability Bond Framework:** NABARD has also recently announced a Sustainability Bond Framework, which aims to finance and refinance eligible green and social projects. This framework includes projects related to energy efficiency, green buildings, energy storage, and smart grids.

## Social Bonds

### About





Social bonds are a type of financial instrument designed to raise capital for projects and initiatives that have a positive social impact on society. They emerged as part of the broader sustainable finance movement, alongside green bonds, to address pressing social issues.

Social bonds are typically issued by governments, international organizations, or corporations and are characterized by their commitment to funding projects related to healthcare, education, affordable housing, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability.

## Features of Social Bonds

### Purpose-Driven

Social bonds are inherently purpose-driven financial instruments. They are dedicated to financing projects that have a clear and measurable social objective at their core. These objectives can span a wide range of critical social issues, such as improving healthcare access, advancing education, providing affordable housing, alleviating poverty, and promoting environmental sustainability. The defining characteristic of social bonds is their commitment to generating tangible and positive societal outcomes.

This purpose-driven nature ensures that the capital raised through social bonds is channelled directly into projects that address pressing social challenges, contributing to the betterment of communities and individuals.

### Issuer Variety

Social bonds enjoy a broad spectrum of issuers. They are not limited to government entities but can be issued by a diverse array of organizations. This includes governments at various levels (local, regional, and national), international multilateral organizations (such as the United Nations or World Bank), financial institutions (such as banks or development banks), and

corporations. This diversity of issuers underscores a collective commitment to addressing social issues and leveraging financial markets to do so.

The range of entities that can issue social bonds widens the pool of potential projects and capital sources, making it possible to address a more comprehensive set of social challenges.

### **Certification and Reporting**

Social bonds typically undergo a rigorous certification process conducted by external entities. The certification ensures that the bond's proceeds are used exclusively for the intended social projects and adhere to predefined social goals. Additionally, issuers are obligated to provide regular and transparent reporting on the progress and impact of the projects financed. This reporting helps investors, regulators, and the public assess whether the social bonds are fulfilling their intended purpose.

Certification and reporting mechanisms enhance accountability, transparency, and trust in the social bond market. They provide stakeholders with the assurance that their investments are genuinely contributing to positive social outcomes.

### **Significance of Social Bonds**

#### **Addressing Social Issues**

Social bonds serve as a critical financial mechanism to address and tackle pressing social issues. By mobilizing capital for projects focused on healthcare, education, affordable housing, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability, social bonds contribute directly to the improvement of living standards and overall well-being within communities and society at large. They act as a financial catalyst for positive change, helping to bridge funding gaps for initiatives that can have a transformative impact.

The ability to target specific social issues through social bonds aligns financial markets with social progress, making them a powerful tool for social development.

#### **Investor Demand**

The growing interest in socially responsible investing has led to increased demand for financial instruments that align with investors' ethical and sustainability values. Social bonds cater to this rising demand, offering investors an opportunity to deploy their capital in a socially responsible manner. These bonds provide an avenue for investors to not only seek financial returns but also to generate positive social outcomes with their investments.

Social bonds play a crucial role in aligning capital markets with the preferences of investors who prioritize ethical and sustainable investments, ultimately shaping the future of finance.

### **Accountability and Transparency**

Social bonds are characterized by stringent certification and reporting requirements. These mechanisms enhance transparency and accountability in how funds are allocated and utilized. Investors, regulators, and the public can access information on the progress and impact of the projects financed, ensuring that the capital raised is effectively deployed for its intended social purpose. This transparency builds trust and confidence in the social bond market.

The accountability and transparency associated with social bonds are essential for maintaining the integrity of the market and ensuring that investments indeed result in meaningful social outcomes.

### **Challenges**

#### **Project Identification**

Identifying suitable social projects that can effectively absorb the capital raised through social bonds can be a complex task. This challenge arises from the need to align the projects with the specific criteria and goals of social bonds. Projects must not only have a clear and measurable social impact but also be capable of efficiently utilizing the raised funds within a defined timeframe. Therefore, careful project selection and prioritization are critical to the success of social bond issuances.

Addressing this challenge requires collaboration among issuers, project developers, and relevant stakeholders to create a robust pipeline of eligible projects that can match the capital available through social bonds.

#### **Measuring Impact**

The effectiveness of social bonds hinges on their ability to generate tangible and positive social outcomes. Measuring the social impact of projects can be intricate, as it often involves assessing complex and multifaceted social variables. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are necessary to track progress and demonstrate the impact of financed projects. This involves defining clear metrics, collecting data, and assessing the extent to which project objectives have been met.

Developing standardized impact measurement frameworks and methodologies can enhance the credibility and comparability of social bonds, making them more attractive to investors and issuers.

#### **Awareness and Education**

To foster broader adoption of social bonds, there is a need to increase awareness among both investors and issuers about their benefits and mechanisms. Many potential stakeholders may not fully understand the unique attributes of social bonds, including their potential for positive social impact. Education campaigns and targeted outreach efforts can help bridge this knowledge gap and encourage more participation in the market.

Building awareness and educating stakeholders about social bonds can lead to a more robust and active social bond market in India, attracting a wider range of investors and issuers.

## Way Forward

### Project Pipeline

**Identification and Prioritization:** Efforts should focus on identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing social projects that align with India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This involves engaging with relevant government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community stakeholders to ensure that projects are well-defined and have a measurable social impact.

**Capacity Building:** Enhance the capacity of project developers and implementers to effectively utilize social bond funding. This includes providing technical assistance and resources to ensure projects are "investment-ready."

### Standardization

**Framework Development:** Establish comprehensive industry standards and guidelines for social bond issuance, reporting, and impact measurement. A standardized framework can enhance transparency, consistency, and trust in the market.

**Impact Measurement:** Develop and implement standardized methodologies for measuring and reporting the social impact of projects funded by social bonds. This can include defining key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that align with the specific social objectives of bonds.

### Education and Advocacy

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Conduct awareness campaigns and engage with stakeholders, including investors, issuers, regulatory bodies, and the public. Promote the understanding of social bonds, their benefits, and their potential to drive positive social change.

**Capacity Building:** Offer educational programs and workshops to build the knowledge and skills of investors, issuers, and intermediaries involved in the social bond market.



## Government Support

**Government Issuance:** Encourage government participation in the social bond market by issuing social bonds. This not only provides a clear example of commitment to social financing but also helps in financing critical social infrastructure projects.

**Regulatory Framework:** Develop a supportive regulatory framework that recognizes and encourages the issuance of social bonds. This framework should promote transparency and accountability while offering incentives for market participants.

## Collaboration and Partnerships

**Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between public and private sectors, including financial institutions, development agencies, and philanthropic organizations, to jointly support social bond initiatives.

**Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitate knowledge sharing and best practices among stakeholders in the social bond ecosystem to accelerate market growth.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

**Continuous Assessment:** Regularly assess the progress and impact of social bond issuances. Adapt strategies and make improvements based on lessons learned and changing market dynamics.

## COOKIES

Cookies can track online behaviour, leading to privacy concerns about digital privacy. Inadequate security of cookies can create opportunities for cybercriminals to steal personal information.



The Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 in India mandates explicit consent for collecting or processing personal data via cookies. The updated law emphasises the need for transparent and well-informed consent.

Third-party cookies have sparked debates, resulting in web browsers limiting their usage to protect user privacy. The excessive use of cookies can slow down web browsers, affecting the user experience.

## **Understanding Digital Cookies**

Digital cookies are small pieces of data stored on a user's device by websites.

They serve various functions in the digital world, including personalization and user convenience.

## **How Cookies Work**

When you visit a website, the site sends a request to your browser to store a cookie. The cookie is then stored on your device's hard drive or memory.

The next time you visit the same website, your browser sends the stored cookie back to the site, providing information about your previous interactions.

## **Types of Digital Cookies**

### **Session Cookies**

Session cookies are temporary and are deleted when you close your browser. They are often used to maintain session information, such as shopping cart contents.

### **Persistent Cookies**



Persistent cookies are stored on your device for a specified duration, even after you close your browser. They are used for tasks like remembering login credentials or user preferences.

### **First-party Cookies**

First-party cookies are set by the website you are currently visiting. They are commonly used for site functionality and personalization.

### **Third-party Cookies**

Third-party cookies are set by domains other than the one you are currently visiting. They are often used for tracking and advertising purposes.

### **Functions of Digital Cookies**

**Personalization:** Cookies remember login information, making it convenient for users to access websites without repeated logins.

**Persistence:** Some digital experiences, like online shopping carts, persist across browsing sessions due to cookies.

**Targeted Advertising:** Cookies track online behavior to deliver personalized ads aligned with user preferences.

**Analytics:** Cookies provide invaluable data for website owners to make informed decisions about site improvements.