

NEWS TODAY

INDIA WINS ELECTIONS TO KEY U.N.'s ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC) SUBSIDIARY BODIES

- India won a seat each at **UN's Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Commission on Population and Development.**
 - Terms will begin 2021 when India will also start its stint on the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member.
- ECOSOC focuses on advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development** – economic, social and environmental. It was established in 1945 as **one of the six main organs of the UN.**

Commission on Status of Women (CSW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSW, established in 1946, is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.
Committee for Programme & Coordination (CPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPC is the main subsidiary organ of the ECOSOC and the UN's General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination. CPC examines the totality of the Secretary-General's work programme giving particular attention to programme changes arising out of decisions adopted by intergovernmental organs and conferences or suggested by the Secretary-General.
Commission on Population and Development (CPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It assists ECOSOC in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. It also monitor, review and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels.

SUPREME COURT (SC) STAYS A TV SHOW BROADCAST

- SC prima facie **observed that the object of the programme is to vilify the Muslim community.**
 - SC was hearing a plea alleging that the show makes communal remarks about the **entry of members of Muslim community into the UPSC** (Union Public Service Commission).
- SC also made several other observations**
 - Need to regulate electronic media** as most channels are running for TRPs, leading to more sensationalism.
 - SC clarified it is **not suggesting censorship but some kind of self-regulation.**
 - Need to have **transparency in ownership, shareholding patterns and revenue flow** into visual media houses.
 - Press freedom was not absolute** and was in no way greater than that of the citizens.
 - SC would consider setting up a committee** to draw up standards for electronic media.
- Media Regulation in India:** Press is monitored by the Press Council of India; Cinema by the CBFC (Central Board for Film Certification); Advertising by the ASCI (Advertising Standards Council of India), content on TV is under Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.

US PARTNERS WITH MEKONG NATIONS TO COUNTER CHINA'S GROWING INFLUENCE IN SE ASIA

- Mekong partner countries (**Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam**) and **US** launched the Mekong-U.S. Partnership as a strategic forum for cooperation.
 - It builds on the earlier **Lower Mekong Initiative of 2009** to advance sustainable economic growth in the region.
 - Cooperation name is derived from Mekong river**, which starts in Tibet and flows through China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, ending in the South China Sea.
- Partnership expands areas of cooperation**, including economic connectivity, energy security, human capital development, transboundary water and natural resources management etc.
- It also includes strengthening regional governance, developing east-west transportation connectivity with India and Bangladesh and promoting women's economic empowerment.
- It will contribute in **countering China's growing military and economic influence in the region.**
 - Earlier this week, **US also signed a defence and security agreement with Maldives** for maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean.

PARLIAMENTARY PANEL PROPOSES TAX INCENTIVES FOR STARTUPS

- Panel has **recommended abolition of long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax** for investment in start-ups, besides other tax incentives, **to encourage investments during the pandemic period.**
 - Covid-19 pandemic caused significant demand contraction, disrupted supply chains and has stalled investment.
- LTCG Tax is **levied on the profit generated by an asset such as real estate and shares**, which is held for a long time period.
- An entity is considered a startup in India** if it fulfils following conditions:
 - Entity Type:** Incorporated as a private limited company or Registered as a partnership firm or as a limited liability partnership in India.
 - Age:** 10 years from date of incorporation.
 - Turnover:** Must not exceed one hundred crore rupees in any fiscal year.
 - Nature of Activity:** Innovation, Development or improvement of products or processes or services, Scalability, Job creation and Wealth Creation.
- Some Tax Exemptions to Startups**
 - Eligible for **full deduction on the profits and gains** from business.
 - Exemption from tax on LTCG** if such long-term capital gain is invested in a fund notified by Central Government.

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA (TRAI) RECOMMENDS SELF REGULATING BODY FOR CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDERS (CSP)

- CSP are companies that **offer network services, infrastructure, or business applications** in the cloud. Cloud services are hosted in a data center **that can be accessed by companies or individuals using network connectivity.**
 - India is currently home to multiple cloud regions such as **Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud, Microsoft Azure etc.**
- TRAI has **suggested that a self-governing body be set up for CSP** to take charge of disclosure and audit, monitor the code of conduct and determine transparency requirements in the industry.
 - Need is felt because of **explosion of data, coupled with the emergence of standalone data centre firms**, technology companies and telecom service providers in India.
- **Key recommendations**
 - A **light touch regulatory framework** by forming the industry body in a three-step process
 - Enrollment of CSPs
 - Formation of an ad-hoc body to frame broad rules, organisational structure and election procedure.
 - Election of office bearers to take over its functioning.
 - **Telecom service providers should not be allowed to share infrastructure and platforms** related to Telegraph with a CSP who is not a member of the industry body.

ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Israel, UAE and Bahrain sign Abraham Accord</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per the agreements, the UAE and Bahrain will establish embassies, exchange ambassadors, cooperate and work together with Israel across a range of sectors, including tourism, trade, healthcare and security. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Bahrain became the second Gulf country (after UAE) to establish diplomatic and economic relations with Israel. • Gulf countries are the seven Arab states which border the Persian Gulf, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE
<p>Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCO is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation announced in 2001 in Shanghai (China). It was preceded by Shanghai Five mechanism. • SCO's main goals: strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states, maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region, cooperation in politics, trade, economy, research etc. • Headquarters: Beijing, China. • Members: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India (joined in 2017) and Pakistan. • Observer states: Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Mongolia.
<p>Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UAPA is primarily an anti-terror law aimed at more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations and for dealing with terrorist activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It was first promulgated in 1967 to target secessionist organizations. • Act was last amended in 2019 to empower: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Government to designate individuals as terrorists on certain grounds, earlier only organisations could be designated. ➢ Officers of National Investigation Agency, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases.
<p>Aircraft (Amendment Bill, 2020) Passed by Parliament</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill amends Aircraft Act, 1934 that regulates manufacture, use, sale and license for civil aircrafts. • It seeks to provide statutory status to three pre-existing bodies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA): carries out oversight and regulatory functions. ➢ Bureau of Civil aviation security: carries out regulatory oversight functions related to civil aviation security. ➢ Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau: carries out investigations related to aircraft accidents and incidents. • It empowers DGCA to levy penalties of upto ₹1 crore on airlines, airports and other aviation entities.
<p>National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall objective of NCRMP is to undertake suitable structural and non-structural measures to mitigate the effects of cyclones in the coastal states and UTs of India. • It aims to reduce vulnerabilities through improved early warning dissemination systems, enhanced capacity of local communities etc. • NCRMP has identified 13 cyclone prone States and UTs, with varying levels of vulnerability. • National Disaster Management Authority is implementing the project in coordination with participating State Governments and National Institute for Disaster Management.
<p>Kharai camel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a unique breed of camel found only in Kutch (Gujarat). They have the special ability to survive on both, dry land and in the sea. • They can swim in seawater, up to three kilometers, and feed on saline plants and mangroves. • It is one of the most preferred choices of graziers in the arid coastal region of Kachchh. • Kharai was recognised as a separate breed in 2015 by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
<p>Microbial life at Venus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientists announced discovery of phosphine gas in Venus's clouds, that is a marker for the existence of microbes that can live without oxygen. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Phosphine, made up of hydrogen and phosphorus, is highly toxic. • Venus is Earth's closest planetary neighbor. Similar in structure but slightly smaller than Earth, it is the second planet from the sun.

