

NEWS TODAY

PENDENCY OF CRIMINAL CASES AGAINST LEGISLATORS- SC RESERVES ORDERS ON AMIGUS' SUGGESTIONS

- Supreme Court (SC) reserved its orders on Amicus Curiae, Vijay Hansaria's report for expeditious disposal of criminal trials pending against legislators (sitting and former) across the country.
 - During the hearing, **Centre also called for timely disposal of cases against legislators.**
- **Key issues and suggestions by Amicus Curiae**
 - **No uniformity with regard to setting up of Special Courts** for MPs and MLAs across the country.
 - No clarity with regard to **which Court is trying offences under** the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 or the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.
 - **Central agencies and the police had not executed warrants or served summons** which led to the stalling of trial.
 - **A special court in each district to exclusively try criminal cases against legislators.** At present, twelve such courts exist. Judicial officers heading these courts should have a minimum fixed tenure of two years.
 - To **ensure production of accused and witnesses during trial**, a nodal prosecution officer, not below the rank of Additional Superintendent of Police, is to be appointed in each district.

- There are 4442 cases pending against Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) in Courts across the country including 2556 against sitting people's representatives.
- **Supreme Court order against criminalisation of politics**
 - ▶ In 2002 (Association for Democratic Reforms vs. Union of India), **SC mandated the disclosure of information relating to** criminal antecedents, educational qualifications and personal assets of candidates contesting elections.
 - ▶ In 2013, (PIL of Lily Thomas and Lok Prahari) **SC stated that if a sitting MP/MLA is convicted in a case, punishment for which is more than two years' imprisonment, then he will be disqualified** immediately and the seat declared vacant.
 - ▶ In 2014, in **Public Interest Foundation vs. Union of India**, SC ordered that criminal trial pending against any MP or MLA must be disposed of within one year from the date of framing of the charge.
 - ▶ In 2017, **SC directed that the government should set up special courts** to exclusively conduct time-bound trials of law-makers accused of corruption and criminality.

SELF-RELIANCE IN SELECT SECTORS CAN LEAD TO IMPORT SUBSTITUTION OF USD 186 BILLION

- Findings are part of a latest study by **Export-Import Bank of India** that has identified select sectors for import substitution and enhancing domestic production.
- **Key findings**
 - **Share of manufacturing in country's gross value added declining to 15.1% in 2019-20**, as compared to 18.4% in 2010-11, despite the strong and growing private consumption demand.
 - It has **translated into greater dependence on imports** to meet the growing domestic demand.
 - **Promoting self-reliance in sectors** like electronics, defence equipment, machinery, chemicals and allied sectors, pharmaceuticals certain agricultural products, rare earth elements etc.
 - These sectors **account for more than USD 186 billion of imports by India**, with a share of nearly 39% in overall imports and 50% in the non-oil imports by India.
 - **Considerable differences in the industrial climate across the country** due to differences across Indian states in terms of policy reforms and development of industrial bases.
 - **Strategies for revitalizing manufacturing sector** includes encouraging R&D and skill development, strengthening industrial clusters, correcting inverted duty structures, developing efficient customs and port procedures, creating reliable standards and certification system etc.

SUN STARTED A NEW SOLAR CYCLE

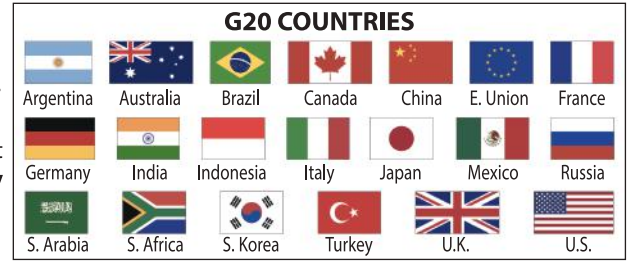
- NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced their **predictions about the new solar cycle, called Solar Cycle 25.** It started in December 2019.
- Sun is a huge ball of electrically-charged hot gas. This charged gas moves, generating a powerful magnetic field. The **Sun's magnetic field goes through a cycle, called the solar cycle.**
 - **Every 11 years or so, Sun's magnetic field completely flips.** This means that the Sun's north and south poles switch places.
- **Scientists track a solar cycle by using sunspots.** A Sunspot is **an area on the Sun that appears dark** on the surface as they are **relatively cooler** than surrounding parts.
 - **Beginning of a solar cycle is a solar minimum**, or when the Sun has the least sunspots. Over time, solar activity, and the number of sunspots, increases.
- During a solar cycle, giant eruptions on the Sun, such as **solar flares and coronal mass ejections also increases.**
 - Eruptions can have a major effect on **radio communications, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) connectivity, power grids, and satellites.**

MINISTRY OF POWER RELEASED DRAFT ELECTRICITY (RIGHTS OF CONSUMERS) RULES, 2020

- Rules are aimed to identify the **key services, prescribe minimum service levels and standards with respect to these services** and recognize them as rights of consumers.
 - **While the Electricity Act 2003 has a consumer charter**, the latest draft empowers consumers and has introduced new supply rights for them.
- **Key Features:**
 - **New connections to have Prepaid/Smart Prepaid meters:** To resolve issues of delayed billing and incorrect metering.
 - **Reliability of service:** Recognizing 24x7 power supply to the consumers as their right. However lower hours of supply may be specified for some categories of consumers like agriculture.
 - **Compensation to consumers:** A consumer can claim compensation for no supply, interrupted electricity supply and time taken for resolving electricity supply issues by DISCOMs.
 - **Online bill payment:** Bills of Rs. 1000 or more to be paid online and consumers should be compensated for paying digitally through a rebate.
 - **Electricity Prosumer:** Prosumer is a phenomenon wherein an electricity consumer also becomes a supplier. According to the draft, anyone can set up a renewable system and energy generated and sold would be adjusted against the supply made by DISCOMs.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO REDUCE LAND DEGRADATION AND CORAL REEF PROGRAM LAUNCHED

- Initiatives were launched at Environment Ministerial Meeting of the G20 countries.
- **Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation:** aims to strengthen the implementation of existing frameworks **to prevent, halt, and reverse land degradation within G20 member states and globally.** It will take into account possible implications on the achievement of other SDGs.
 - In India about **29% of the land is undergoing degradation.**
 - India is **signatory to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.**
 - India's goal is to achieve land degradation neutral status by 2030, whereby increases in land degradation would be offset by gains in land reclamation.
- **Global Coral Reef research and development (R&D) Accelerator Platform:** aims at creating a global R&D program **to advance research, innovation and capacity building** in all facets of coral reef conservation, restoration, and adaptation.
 - Coral reefs are some of the most **bio diverse and productive ecosystems.**
 - **They act as natural barriers to shorelines,** protecting them damage and flooding from storms, hurricanes, and cyclones.
 - They absorb CO₂.
 - In India, Coral reefs are present in the areas of **Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep Islands and Malvan (Maharashtra)**



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>India-US Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) Group Meeting held</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DTTI is a flexible mechanism to ensure that senior leaders from both nations are persistently focused on the opportunities and challenges associated with growing defense partnership. • DTTI aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Bring sustained leadership focus to the bilateral defense trade relationship. ➢ Strengthen India's defense industrial base. ➢ Explore new areas of technological collaboration. ➢ Expand U.S.-Indian business ties. • Four Joint Working Groups focused on land, naval, air, and aircraft carrier technologies have been established under DTTI to promote mutually agreed projects within their domains.
<p>Djibouti code of conduct/ Jeddah amendment (DCOC/JA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has joined Japan, Norway, UK and US as observer to DCOC. • DCOC/JA is a grouping on maritime matters comprising 18 member states adjoining the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa and Island countries in the Indian Ocean Region. • it is aimed at repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.
<p>Kaladan Multimodal Project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is part of India's 'Look East policy' connecting north eastern States and the ASEAN region. • Kaladan project connects Kolkata with Sittwe port in Rakhine state of Myanmar by sea. • In Myanmar, it will then link Sittwe port to Paletwa in Chin state via the Kaladan river boat route, and then from Paletwa by road to Mizoram. • Insurgent group Arakan Army who are fighting Myanmar state has been targeting the project as it passes through the Rakhine state.
<p>Parliament passed the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will establish an Ayurvedic institution- Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA) at Jamnagar (Gujarat). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ ITRA is sought to be established by conglomerating the presently existing Ayurveda institutes at Gujarat Ayurved University campus Jamnagar. • ITRA will also get Institution of National Importance (INI) status. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ ITRA will be the first institution with INI status in the AYUSH Sector, and this will enable the institution to be independent and innovative in the matter deciding course content and pedagogy.
<p>Public sector banks' NPAs under Mudra rise to 5%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) was launched in 2015 to give unsecured loans of up to Rs 10 lakh to small enterprises. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Since its inception, over 253 million loans, amounting to Rs 12.9 trillion, have been given out under the scheme. • On rising NPA, government had asked PSBs to regularly monitor asset quality for PMMY loans, make granular analysis of Mudra NPA accounts, improve underwriting standards, and maintain regular and intensive contacts with PMMY borrowers.
<p>Himayat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a placement linked skill training programme for unemployed youth of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Under this, youth will be provided free skill training for a duration of 3 to 12 months, in a range of skills. ➢ At the end of the training, youth are assured of a job and there is one year post-placement tracking. • Ministry of Rural Development is the nodal ministry and it is being implemented by Himayat Mission Management Unit, J&K State Rural Livelihoods Mission, Government of J&K.
<p>Serial Interval</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the duration between symptom onset of a primary case and symptom onset of secondary cases (contacts) generated by the primary case i.e. it is the gap between onset of COVID-19 symptoms in Person A and Person B, who is infected by Person A. • It helps to gauge effectiveness of infection control interventions besides indicating rising population immunity and forecast future incidence.

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