

NEWS TODAY

INDIA-AUSTRALIA 2+2 MINISTERIAL MEETING HELD

- Meeting was the **First-Ever 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue between India and Australia**.
 - The two-plus-two ministerial dialogue includes **discussions between foreign and defence ministers** and was instituted as part of an overall goal to **expand strategic cooperation between two countries**.
 - Till date, India has held 2+2 talks with the **US and Japan**.
 - Earlier this year, **India and Russia agreed to have a similar 2+2 dialogue**.
- **Significance of 2+2 dialogue**
 - **Boost Quad grouping:** Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to quadrilateral cooperation between Australia, India, Japan and the United States.
 - The Quad has a **shared vision for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, prosperous and inclusive, and based on respect for international law**.
 - **Strengthening India-Australia Bilateral Cooperation:** Both sides reviewed the progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and expressed commitment to further elevate engagements between the armed forces.
 - In June last year, India and Australia **elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership** and signed a **landmark deal for reciprocal access to military bases for logistics support**.
 - **Ensure free flow of trade and adherence to international rules and norms** and sustainable economic growth in the entire region.



FINANCE MINISTER ADDS MORE DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATION TRUSTS FOR INCOME TAX EXEMPTION

- 14 more **district mineral foundation (DMF) trusts** have been exempted from payment of Income Tax, (taking the total number to 165) by the **central board of direct taxes (CBDT)**.
 - **Collections under DMF** as well as **interest accrued will be exempted**.
 - Exemption will be available provided the **trust will not engage in any commercial activity**.
- **Significance: More fund availability with the Trust**, and ensuring better implementation and outcome-oriented activities.
- **Earlier**, Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2021 empowered the Central Government to direct the utilization of the DMF's. subsequently, Central government has given following directions:
 - **Strict adherence in respect of utilisation** of funds by the DMF;
 - **No fund shall be transferred from the DMF** to the State exchequer or State level fund (by whatever name called) or Chief Minister's Relief Fund or any other funds or schemes; and
 - **No sanction or approval** of any expenditure out of the fund of the DMF shall be done **at the State level by the State Government or any State level agency**.

○ About DMF

- The DMF is a **non-profit statutory 'Trust' for every Indian district** affected by mining-related operations.
- It is created under the **provisions of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015** and falls under the purview **of Ministry of Mines**.
- Fund comprises of **contribution by lease holders**, interest received from lease holders for late payment, any penalty charged to lease holder, income from interest on fund, interest received on saving bank accounts and interest received on excess fund invested in term
- **DMFs have been set up in 600 districts in 22 states** in the country which have framed DMF rules.

MAGISTRATES CAN'T EXTEND PROBE UNDER UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES PREVENTION ACT (UAPA): SUPREME COURT (SC)

- The SC directed that
 - **Only a special court designated under UAPA** (Section 43-D of UAPA) will be **authorised to deal with the issue of extending the time for filing of charge sheets** and that **magistrates cannot deal with such cases of extension**.
 - Such Special courts are **set up under National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act**.
 - **In the absence of such special courts**, this power can be exercised **only by the session court**.
- SC had given a similar verdict in the **in Bikramjit Singh vs. State of Punjab, 2020**.
- The UAPA is India's main anti-terrorism legislation, whereby the **investigation has to be completed within 90 days**. If not, the accused is entitled to **default bail**.
- Key provisions of UAPA, 1967 (amended in 2019)**
 - Central can designate an **organisation or an individual** as a terrorist organization.
 - Empowers the Director General of **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to **grant approval of seizure or attachment of property**.
 - Empowers the officers of the NIA, of the **rank of Inspector or above**, to **investigate cases of terrorism**.
- The **conviction rate in the UAPA is very low**. Only **2.2% of cases registered** under the UAPA between **2016 and 2019** resulted in **conviction by courts**.

SIGN FTAS WITH US, EU FOR HELPING DOMESTIC EXPORTERS: PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE (PSC) ON COMMERCE

- A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a **pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports among them**.
- Key concerns raised by PSC on Commerce**
 - **India's exports contracted** from 2019-20, registering a negative growth rate of (-) **15.73% in 2020**.
 - **Domestic exporters are at a disadvantage in the USA and European markets** while competing with other exporting countries **due to absence of FTAs** with USA and EU countries.
 - **Ministry of Railways is unable to provide competitive freight rate** for movement of export consignment.
 - This **adversely affects the competitiveness of India's exports** in global markets.
- Key recommendations**
 - **India needs to step up its effort in export promotion, expand its export baskets and penetrate new export markets** to recover from its current slump and increase its share in global exports.
 - **Iron out the issues hindering the signing of FTAs** with the US and EU.
 - Ministry of Railways should make concerted efforts to **increase the share of rail in freight traffic**.
 - **The share of rail freight vis--vis road is only 35%** whereas the trend is reversed in developed countries.

GOVERNMENT CUTS CUSTOM DUTIES ON EDIBLE OIL TO EASE RETAIL PRICES

- In order to ensure availability of edible oil to consumers at fair prices, Centre has **reduced the standard rate of duty on Crude Palm Oil, Crude Soyabean oil and Crude Sunflower Oil to 2.5%**.
 - The move comes amid an **unabated rise in edible oil prices in India**.
- Reasons for rise in edible oil price**
 - **Reflection of rise in international prices** as India meets around **56% of its domestic demand** through imports.
 - Covid-19 lockdowns in Malaysia resulted in a poor palm crop.
 - Dry spells in Ukraine and Russia saw sunflower oil production hit with global production falling by **9% in 2020 year-on-year**.
 - Impact of La Niña on palm and soya producing areas.
 - **Thrust on making biofuel** from vegetable oil.
 - **Rising incomes and changing food habits**.
- Measures taken**
 - **National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)** launched to promote domestic cultivation of oil palm in the next five years.
 - **Kharif Strategy for Oilseeds 2021** for the free distribution of high yielding varieties of seeds to the farmers for the Kharif season 2021 in the form of mini-kits.

TRADE TIES

Existing Agreements

- Singapore
- Thailand
- Malaysia
- Asean
- Chile
- Japan
- Afghanistan
- South Korea
- MERCOSUR
- Sri Lanka

In the Pipeline

- Australia
- EU
- New Zealand
- UK
- US
- Mauritius





CRISPR-BASED SYSTEM DEVELOPED TO SAFELY RESTRAIN MOSQUITO VECTORS VIA STERILIZATION

- The new **precision-guided sterile insect technique (pgSIT)** **alters genes in *Aedes aegypti***, the species responsible for spreading malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika.
- The pgSIT **uses CRISPR to sterilise male mosquitoes and render female mosquitoes** (which spread disease) **flightless**.
 - This technology could be **implemented by deploying eggs of sterile males and flightless females at target locations** where mosquito-borne disease spread is occurring.
- **Need: Growing mosquito resistance** to pesticides, as well as malaria parasite resistance to antimalarial drugs, has **created an urgent need for new ways to fight the disease**.
- **Superiority of pgSIT**
 - pgSIT is designed as a **much more precise** (for gene alteration) **and scalable technology since** it uses CRISPR not radiation or chemicals.
 - Unlike 'gene drive' the pgSIT **system is self-limiting and is not predicted to persist or spread in the environment**.
 - "Gene drive" systems could **suppress disease vectors by passing desired genetic alterations indefinitely from one generation to the next**.
 - Thus, Scientists were required to prove that this system is **safe and effective before releasing genetically modified mosquitoes into the wild**.

○ Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR):

- CRISPR/Cas9 edits genes by precisely cutting DNA and then letting natural DNA repair processes to take over.
- The system consists of two parts: the Cas9 enzyme and a guide RNA.
- CRISPR technology was adapted from the natural defense mechanisms of bacteria and archaea (the domain of single-celled microorganisms) against invading viruses.

ALSO IN NEWS



Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958

- The Governor of Assam **extended the 'Disturbed Area' status of the State for another six months under the AFSPA**.
- **AFSPA grants extra-ordinary powers and immunity to the armed forces to bring back order in the "disturbed areas"**.
- **In the Northeast, the AFSPA is in force in:** Assam, Nagaland, Manipur (excluding Imphal Municipal Council Area), Changlang, Longding and Tirap districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and areas falling within the jurisdiction of eight police stations in Arunachal Pradesh, bordering Assam.






Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)

- The largest allocation of SDRs in history (about US\$650 billion), to combat the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, **comes into effect today**.
- It will **boost India's forex reserves position** and provide a **cushion for import cover and strengthen the exchange rate**.
- SDRs are an **inter-national reserve asset created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves**.
- Its **value is based on** a basket of five currencies: **the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling**.



Bir Shikargah Wildlife Sanctuary

- **8 critically endangered Oriental white-backed vultures were released** into wild for the first time in India from the sanctuary.
- **About Bir Shikargah**
 - Situated in Panchkula, Haryana
 - It **houses the vulture conservation and breeding centre**, Pinjore.
 - Also **designated as an Eco-sensitive zone**.

 <p>ATL (Atal Tinkering Labs) Space Challenge 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Niti Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission in collaboration with ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) and CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) has launched 'ATL Space Challenge' for school students across India. It is designed for all school students, mentors and teachers with schools having ATL labs and non-ATL as well. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It ensures that students of classes 6 to 12 are given an open platform where they can innovate and enable themselves to solve digital age space technology problems.
 <p>Battle of Saragarhi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 12 marks the 124th anniversary of the Battle of Saragarhi which was fought between the Sikh soldiers of the British Indian army and Pashtun Orakzai tribesmen in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twenty-one soldiers were pitted against over 8,000 Afridi and Orakzai tribals but they fought courageously, facing death head on. Saragarhi was a communication relay post between Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan (also known as Fort Cavagnari) in the Sulaiman Range of the NWFP.
 <p>Personalities in News</p>	<p>Subramania Bharati (11 December 1882 – 12 September 1921)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He was a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry, fondly called Mahakavi (great poet). Raja of Ettayapuram impressed with his poetry had given him the title of 'Bharati' which means the one blessed by Goddess Saraswati. He had proficiency in 14 languages including three foreign languages. He used his writings to imbibe feelings of national pride among Indian citizens. He raised concern against child marriage, stood for reforming Brahminism and religion. He was also in solidarity with Dalits and Muslims. His motto was "Arivelu thellivu" – clarity of mind.



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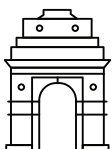
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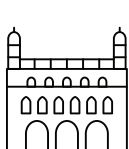
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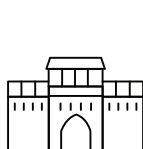
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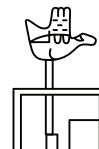
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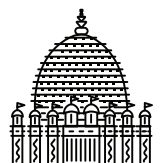
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