

# NEWS TODAY

## PRIME MINISTERS (PMS) OF INDIA AND AUSTRALIA HOLD 2ND INDIA AUSTRALIA VIRTUAL SUMMIT

### • Key Highlights of the summit

- Both countries **agreed to establish annual summits between PMs** under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (established during 1st Virtual Summit 2020).
- **Australia to invest over AUD 280mn** to drive collaboration in areas such as **clean technologies, space, and innovation**.
- Also both countries will aim to finalise a **comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA) at the earliest**.
- **Key agreements signed include-** MoU on Australian critical minerals project between Khanij Bidesh India & Australia's critical minerals facilitation office; Letter of intent regarding migration and mobility partnership agreement to benefit students and professionals etc.

### • India-Australia areas of Cooperation

- **Geostrategic:** Both countries shared common interests of a free, open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific and are members of **QUAD grouping**.
- **Trade and investment:** Bilateral trade was US\$12.3 billion in 2020-21 while total value of two-way FDI was valued at US\$1.04 billion in 2020.
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:** Strategic Partnership, Joint declaration on security cooperation, Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, regular military exercises (like AUSINDEX; AUSTRALIND etc.)



○ During the Summit, **PM Modi thanked his counterpart for returning 29 ancient artefacts to India** that include 12th century Chola bronzes, 11th-12th century Jain sculptures from Rajasthan, 12th-13th century sandstone Goddess Mahisasuramardini from Gujarat etc.

## CABINET APPROVES EXTENSION OF NATIONAL AIDS AND STD CONTROL PROGRAMME (NACP)

- Union Cabinet has **approved continuation of NACP, a Central sector scheme, for a period of five years** (April 1, 2021- March 31, 2026) by **approving phase-V of the programme**.
  - **NACP was launched in 1992** and four phases have been successfully completed since.
  - **NACP Phase-V will enable India's AIDS response towards attainment of UN's SDG 3.3** of ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030.
- NACP is being implemented as a **comprehensive programme for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in India**.
  - Over time, **focus has shifted from raising awareness to behavior change**, from a national response to a more decentralized response and to increasing involvement of NGOs and networks of PLHIV (People Living with HIV).
- **NACP is considered as an extremely successful programme highlighted by facts such as**
  - **Annual new HIV infections** in India have **declined by 48%** (baseline year of 2010).
  - Annual **AIDS-related deaths** have **declined by 82%** (baseline year of 2010).
  - HIV prevalence in India **continues to be low** with an adult HIV **prevalence of 0.22%**.

### About HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDS

- HIV is a **virus that attacks the body's immune system**. If **not treated, it can lead to AIDS** (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).
- It **targets the immune system and weakens people's defence against many infections** and some types of cancer that people with healthy immune systems can fight off.
- Spread by contact with certain **bodily fluids of a person with HIV** like blood, semen, pre-seminal fluid, rectal fluids etc.

## GOVERNMENT OFFERS CLARITY ON CRYPTO TAX PROVISIONS

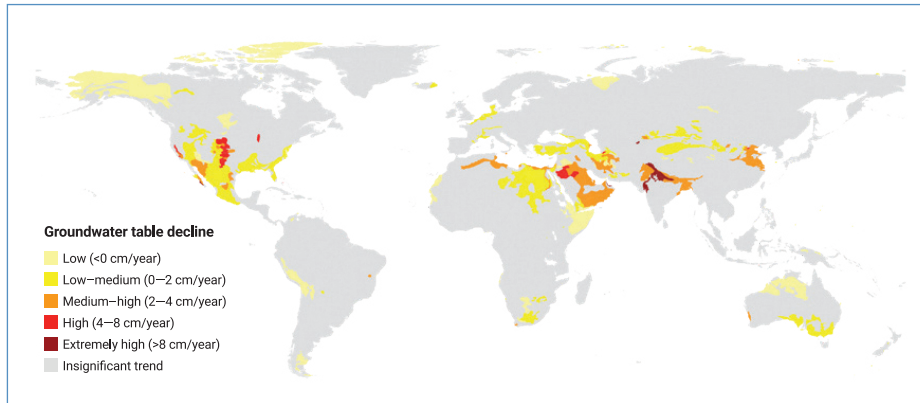
- Ministry of Finance clarified that **loss arising from transfer of a virtual digital asset (VDA) will not be allowed to be set off** against the income arising from another VDA.
  - VDA has been defined to mean **any information or code or number or token generated through cryptographic means** or otherwise. And which **can be transferred, stored or traded electronically**.
  - VDA also **specifically includes non-fungible token (NFT)**, or any other token of similar nature.
- It also said that the cost of **mining will not be treated as cost of acquisition** in case of VDA.
  - Mining is the process of **generating crypto tokens**.
- Also, government is working on **classification of cryptocurrency as goods or services under the GST law**, so that tax can be levied on the entire value of transactions.
  - Currently, 18 per cent GST is levied only on service provided by crypto exchanges and it is **categorised as financial services**.
- Budget 2022-23 **brought cryptocurrencies under the tax net** through announcements like any income from VDA (including crypto) is taxable at 30 per cent, **1% Tax Deduction at Source (TDS)** on payments towards virtual currencies beyond a certain amount etc.

- Cryptocurrencies (Bitcoins, Ethereum, Ripple etc) are **digital or virtual currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate generation of units and verify transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank**.
- Control of each cryptocurrency **works through distributed ledger technology called blockchain**.
  - Blockchain is a **shared, immutable ledger that facilitates process of recording transactions** and tracking assets in a business network.

## UNITED NATIONS WORLD WATER DEVELOPMENT REPORT (UN WWDR 2022) RELEASED

- Report titled 'Groundwater: Making the invisible visible' describes the **challenges and opportunities associated with development, management and governance of groundwater**.
  - Report is **released by UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water**, which coordinates efforts of UN entities and international organizations working on water and sanitation issues.

### Groundwater table decline in the world's major aquifers



Note: Groundwater table decline indicates the average yearly decline of the groundwater table over the study period (1990–2014).

- Key findings**
  - Groundwater presently **provides half of the volume of water withdrawn for domestic use** by global population and **around 25% of all water used for irrigation**.
  - An estimated four billion people live in areas that suffer from severe physical water scarcity** for at least one month per year.
  - Development of groundwater could act as a catalyst for economic growth** by increasing extent of irrigated areas and therefore improving agricultural yields and crop diversity.
  - India is **largest groundwater-user globally** followed by China and Pakistan.
  - China, India, Iran, Pakistan and US account for about **70% of unsustainable water footprint**.
- Recommendations**
  - Collecting groundwater data** for monitoring.
  - Strengthening environmental regulations** for groundwater pollution.
  - Reinforcing human, material and financial resources** by way of increasing groundwater professionals among the staff of institutions as well as local and national government.
  - Financing and supporting groundwater departments/agencies**.

## UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC) MAKES COMMON ENTRANCE TEST MANDATORY FOR ALL CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES

- During a virtual interaction with media, **UGC Chairman stated that:**
  - Central universities will have to conduct admissions** to all undergraduate courses solely **on the basis of Common University Entrance Test (CUET)** from the upcoming academic year (2022-23).
  - No weightage will be given to Class 12 scores** for undergraduate admissions to any central university.
  - CUET, which is **envisaged in National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, will be conducted for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses **by National Test Agency (NTA)**.
    - Unlike undergraduate studies, conducting **admissions to postgraduate programmes through CUET is not compulsory** for central universities.
    - NTA is an **autonomous premier testing organization** established under **Societies Registration Act (1860)** for conducting tests for admissions to premier higher education institutions.
  - CUET, a computerized exam, **will test a candidate on a language of her choice, domain-specific knowledge and general test** (with questions on general knowledge, current affairs etc).
  - CUET will be conducted in 13 languages:** English, Hindi, Gujarati, Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.
- Move to replace multiple entrance tests with a single one is aimed **to reduce the burden on higher education aspirants**.

# MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (MEITY) CHIP SECTOR PLAN: TRAINING HUBS FOR 6K SCHOLARS, 2.5L WORKERS

- It is being reported that **MeitY is in talks with selected government funded higher education institutions** to develop training and education programmes for creating talent **for the semiconductor companies through a three-layer plan**:
  - Research scholars** for process and design elements of manufacturing and fabrication.
  - Engineers for Very large-scale integration (VLSI) plant** manufacturing capacity.
  - Skilled people** for plant and shop floor, manufacturing and testing.
- India is trying to facilitate Semiconductor manufacturing** to reduce dependency on global supply chains, strategic requirement (for essential infrastructure like defence and power), lucrative market, reducing import bill etc.
- Challenges faced in manufacturing**: Highly complex process of chip manufacturing, massive investment requirement, lack of skilled workforce, requirement of very specific raw material etc.
- Initiatives taken**
  - Comprehensive program for development of sustainable semiconductor and display ecosystem** which includes India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), Scheme for Setting up of Semiconductor Fabs and Display Fabs etc.
  - Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme** to promote the domestic manufacturing of semiconductors and allied devices.
  - Empowered committee** on setting up semiconductor wafer fabrication manufacturing facilities in the country.

## ALSO IN NEWS



Reasonable Accommodation

- It has been argued that recent Karnataka verdict on wearing the hijab **overlooked the principle of reasonable accommodation**.
- About Reasonable accommodation**:
  - It is a principle that **promotes equality, enables the grant of positive rights and prevents discrimination** based on disability, health condition or personal belief.
  - The general principle is that reasonable accommodation should be provided, **unless some undue hardship** is caused by such accommodation.
  - Its use is primarily in the **disability rights sector**.
    - In India, the **Rights of People with Disabilities Act, 2016**, defines 'reasonable accommodation'.



Padma Awards 2022

- Padma Awards, instituted in 1954, are **one of the highest civilian honours of India** announced annually on the eve of Republic Day.
- These are given in **three categories**:
  - Padma Vibhushan** (for exceptional and distinguished service).
  - Padma Bhushan** (distinguished service of higher order).
  - Padma Shri** (distinguished service).
- Total number of awards to be given in a year** (excluding posthumous awards and to NRI/foreigners/OCIs) **should not be more than 120**.
- Awardees are presented a Sanad** (certificate) signed by the President and a medallion. There is **no cash prize**.



AquaMAP


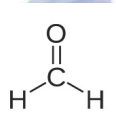






- It is a **new water management and policy centre** that was inaugurated recently at IIT Madras.
  - IIT Madras is collaborating with IIT Dharwad around the **broad theme of 'Data Science for Water Security and Agriculture Sustenance'**.
- AquaMAP aims at providing solutions for complex and challenging water problems** by designing smart and optimal water management practices and **implementing them in the field** (in villages and towns).
- Other Key activities of AquaMAP include**:
  - Identify grand challenges in water/wastewater management.
  - Set up of a state-of-the-art Hydro-Informatics Laboratory.



GI tag in news

- Kala Namak Rice**
  - Deriving its **name from the black husk (kala)** and a **mild salty (namak) taste**, it is considered as one of the finest rice varieties.
  - It is a **non-basmati scented rice variety** grown primarily in **tarai region of Uttar Pradesh**.
  - It is **highly resistant to rice diseases** such as panicle blast, stem rot and brown spot.
  - Water requirement is also low** compared to Basmati.
  - It is also known as **'Buddha ka Mahaprasad'** (an offering to Lord Buddha).
  - It has been rebranded as **Buddha Rice in order to promote it in Buddhist countries**.



 <p><b>ExoMars</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Space Agency's ExoMars 2022 mission <b>won't be launched in September as planned</b> after the agency <b>suspended all cooperation with Russia's space program Roscosmos</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ExoMars mission aims to address the question <b>whether life has ever existed on Mars</b>.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>It has two parts:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first part launched <b>an orbiter and a lander</b> in 2016, but the lander crashed.</li> <li>September 2022 launch would have <b>delivered a Mars rover</b> to the planet.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Formaldehyde</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A <b>UK artist has produced</b> some controversial artworks, like <b>series of formaldehyde sculptures with dead animals</b>.</li> <li><b>About formaldehyde:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a <b>colorless, flammable</b> gas at room temperature and has a <b>strong odor</b>.</li> <li><b>Found in:</b> <b>Resins</b> used in the manufacture of composite wood products, <b>Building materials</b> and insulation, <b>Household products</b> such as paints, <b>Fertilizers and pesticides</b>, Emissions from fuel burning appliances (like gas stoves), <b>Cigarette smoke etc</b>.</li> <li><b>Adverse health effects:</b> Can cause irritation of the skin, eyes, nose, and throat.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Kinzhalt</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Russia has claimed to have used <b>Kinzhalt missiles for the first time in Ukraine</b>.</li> <li>Kinzhalt, which means dagger, is <b>an air-launched hypersonic missile with a reported range of 1,500-2,000km</b>. It can carry nuclear payload of 480 kg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hypersonic describes any <b>speed faster than five times that of sound</b>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Hypersonic weapons are normally defined <b>as fast, low-flying, and highly maneuverable weapons</b> designed to be too quick and agile for traditional missile defence systems to detect in time.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Santals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the first time, <b>Indian Constitution is translated into Santali script 'Ol Chiki'</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>92nd Constitutional Amendment Act 2003 added Santali to Schedule VIII</b> along with the Bodo, Dogri and Maithili languages.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>About Santals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Santals community is <b>concentrated in several states</b> including <b>Assam, Tripura, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand</b>.</li> <li>They speak <b>Santali language</b> which belongs to the <b>Munda group</b> of Austro-Asiatic sub-family of languages.</li> <li>Santals are <b>well known for their housing architecture with colourfully painted walls, floors and artistically carved doors</b>.</li> <li>Primary occupation is <b>settled agriculture</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Navroz</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PM greeted people</b> on the occasion of Navroz.</li> <li>Navroz or Parsi New Year is <b>popularly referred as Pateti</b>. It stands for - <b>New Day</b> and marks the beginning of spring.</li> <li>It is <b>also known as Jamshedi Navroz</b> after the King of Persia Jamshed who started the Parsi calendar.</li> <li><b>In India, people celebrate it twice a year</b>. First according to the Iranian calendar, and the second according to the Shahen Shahi calendar.</li> <li>It was added to the List of <b>UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage</b> in 2016.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Mariupol</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ukraine has <b>rejected Russian calls to surrender</b> the port city of Mariupol.</li> <li><b>Strategic importance of Mariupol:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is the <b>biggest Ukrainian port on the Azov Sea</b>.</li> <li>It is considered a <b>key strategic target</b> for Russia because it would create a bridge <b>between Crimea</b> and areas of <b>eastern Ukraine</b> held by <b>Russia-backed separatists</b>, making it easier to <b>move people and supplies</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> 
 <p><b>LAMITIYE-2022</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a <b>Joint Military Exercise between the Indian Army and Seychelles Defence Forces</b>.</li> </ul>