

# NEWS TODAY

## INDIA APPEALS AGAINST WTO DISPUTE PANEL RULING ON SUGAR EXPORT SUBSIDIES

- Earlier, ruling in favour of Brazil, Australia and Guatemala, WTO panel stated that support measures provided by India are inconsistent with its obligations under Agreement on Agriculture (AoA).
  - These countries had complained that **domestic support provided by India to sugarcane producers was in excess of limit** allowed by WTO and India also provides prohibited export subsidies to sugar mills.
  - India is world's second largest sugar producer after Brazil.
- India has **challenged the ruling in WTO's Appellate Body**, final authority on such trade disputes.
- AoA provides **specific commitments to reduce support** in areas of domestic support, export subsidies and market access.
  - Domestic support** to sugarcane producers is provided through measures like Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP), State-Advised Prices (SAPs) etc.
    - AoA states that **Domestic Support shall not exceed De minimis level**.
    - De minimis levels are up to **5% of value of production for developed countries and 10% for developing countries**.
  - India's export subsidy includes **Production Assistance Scheme, Buffer Stock Scheme and Marketing and Transportation Scheme**.
    - Under AoA and Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, **export subsidies from WTO members are prohibited on a number of agricultural products**.



## INDIA VOTES IN FAVOUR OF UNSC RESOLUTION TO RENEW MANDATE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE (CTED)

- India, which **will chair the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) in 2022**, voted in favour of a resolution to renew CTED's mandate until December 31, 2025.
  - As CTC chair, India will make determined efforts to **further enhance the role of CTC in strengthening multilateral response to counter terrorism**.
  - India will also ensure that global response to **threat of terrorism remains unambiguous, undivided and effective**.
- CTED was established** by UNSC Resolution 1535 in 2004 as an expert body to support CTC.
  - CTED conducts **country visits on the Counter-Terrorism Committee's behalf** to assess Member States' counter-terrorism efforts, including progress made, remaining shortfalls, priority areas for technical assistance needs etc.
- CTC was established by UNSC resolution 1373 (2001), to implement measures intended to enhance their legal and institutional ability to counter terrorist activities** at home, in their regions and around the world.
  - It was **established after the 9/11 terror attack** to bolster the ability of UN member states to prevent terrorist acts both within their borders and across regions.

India's other Counter terrorism measures at international level

### Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF)

- An action-oriented platform outside the UN framework to foster effective multilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism.

### Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF)

- To enhance coordination and coherence of counter-terrorism efforts of the UN system.

### UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

- Unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism.

## ₹8 LAKH INCOME REASONABLE CAP FOR ECONOMICAL WEAKER SECTIONS" (EWS) QUOTA, CENTRE TELLS SUPREME COURT (SC)

- Central Government, in an affidavit, has told SC that it **has decided to accept recommendation made by an expert committee.**
  - Affidavit was filed in response to a writ petition **challenging Centre's decision to introduce EWS/OBC reservation in All India Quota for NEET.**
  - SC had earlier doubted reasonableness of Rs 8 lakhs income criteria** for EWS, following which Centre agreed to revisit the same after formulating an expert committee.
  - Centre also **put on hold the NEET-PG counselling process** in view of the case pending before SC.
- EWS reservation, instituted in 2019 through **103rd Constitutional Amendment**, provides **economic reservation in jobs and education** by inserting clause (6) in Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution.
- Key recommendations of Expert Committee**
  - Current gross annual family income limits of '₹8 lakh' or less may be retained.
  - EWS may exclude, irrespective of income, **a person whose family has 5 acres (and above) of agriculture land.**
  - Residential assets criteria** may be removed

### PRESENT CRITERIA FOR EWS QUOTA

Your annual household income is below **RS 8 LAKHS**



You own agricultural land below **5 ACRES**

Your house is below **1,000 SQUARE FEET**



Own residential land not exceeding

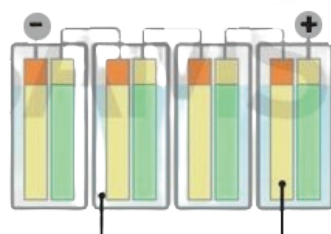
⊗ **100 yards**  
IN MUNICIPAL AREA

⊗ **200 yards**  
IN NON-MUNICIPAL AREA

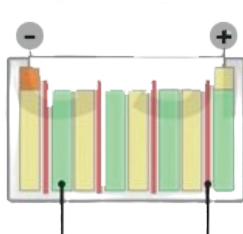
## BREAKTHROUGH IN BATTERY TECHNOLOGY WITH SOLID STATE LITHIUM-METAL BATTERY (SSLMB)

- Volkswagen (in partnership with QuantumScape) is aiming for **production of solid-state batteries by 2025.**
- A solid-state battery **replaces polymer separator** used in conventional lithium-ion batteries **with a solid-state separator.**
  - Lithium-ion batteries use aqueous electrolyte solutions** to keep anode (negative electrode generally made of graphite) and cathode (positive electrode made of lithium) apart.
  - On the other hand, **solid-state battery uses solid electrolyte** that plays the role of a separator as well.

Li-ion Battery



Solid State Battery



Liquid electrolyte solution

Anode

Cathode

Solid electrolyte

- Replacement of the separator **enables carbon or silicon anode used in conventional lithium-ion batteries to be replaced with a lithium-metal anode.**
  - Lithium metal anode is more energy dense** than conventional anodes, allowing battery to store a greater amount of energy in the same volume.
- Advantages of SSLMB**
  - Higher cell energy density** (by eliminating the carbon anode);
  - Lower charging time** and Ability to undertake more charging cycles and thereby a longer life;
  - Improved safety**
- India's efforts in battery technology**
  - Proposal for **Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery storage** manufacturing.
  - Project for grid-scale battery storage system** to balance vagaries of renewable generation.
  - Reliance Industries plans to set up an **Energy Storage Giga factory.**

## CENSUS FIRST PHASE, NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER (NPR) DATA COLLECTION PUT OFF TILL SEPTEMBER 2022

- Exercise was scheduled to be held from April-September, 2020 but **was postponed indefinitely due to pandemic.**
  - Census involves a detailed questionnaire eliciting particulars** of every person, including age, sex, birthplace, mother tongue, religion etc.
  - NPR collects basic demographic data** and biometric particulars.
- NPR is a Register of all usual residents** of the country regardless of whether they are citizens or non-citizens of India.
  - A "usual resident of the country" is one who has been **residing in a local area for at least last 6 months** or intends to stay in a particular location for next 6 months.
- It is prepared at local (village/ward of town), sub-district, district, state and national levels under **provisions of Citizenship Act 1955 and Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.**
- Data collected under NPR is shared with States and used by Central government **for various welfare schemes at individual level.**
- According to Citizenship Rules (2003), NPR is first step towards **compilation of National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) or NRC.**
  - NRC is a register containing names of **all genuine Indian citizens.** At present, **only Assam** has such a register.

## ALSO IN NEWS



Hate Speech

- There is **no specific legal definition** of 'hate speech'.
- As per Law Commission's 267th Report **Hate speech generally is an incitement to hatred primarily against a group of persons** defined in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and the like.
- **Sections 153A and 505 of Indian Penal Code (IPC)** deal with inflammatory speeches and expressions that seek to punish 'hate speech'.
- Law Commission has proposed that **separate offences be added to IPC to criminalise hate speech** quite specifically.
- Similar proposals have been made by **M.P. Bezbaruah Committee and T.K. Viswanathan Committee**.
- **Presently, Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws** is also examining issue of hate speech.



Padhe Bharat

- **Launched by:** Department of School Education & Literacy
- It is a **100 days reading campaign** (starting from 1st January) to support and encourage students to read for joyful learning experience.
  - It will focus on **children studying in Balvatika to Grade 8**.
  - It aims to have **participation of all stakeholders** including children, teachers, parents, community, educational administrators etc.
- Campaign **will also focus on Indian languages** including mother tongue/local/regional languages.
  - Also, 21st February which is celebrated as **International Mother Tongue Day**, has been integrated with this campaign.



FCRA licences of NGOs extended by three months

- Ministry of Home Affairs has extended the validity of Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registered NGOs whose licenses were not renewed by December 31, 2021 **by another 3 months in "public interest."**
- Registration under FCRA is **mandatory for any NGO or association to receive foreign funds** and it is renewed every five years.
- **Note:** For further details on Regulation of NGO's in India, kindly refer **dated News Today of 28th Dec, 2021**.



Export promotion schemes

- Government extended **last date for submitting applications for various export promotion schemes**, under the Foreign Trade Policy, including:
  - **Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)** : Provides incentives to exporters in form of duty credit scrips to refund losses on paid duties.
    - **Scheme for Remission of Duties & Taxes on Export Product** will replace MEIS as MEIS is not WTO compliant.
  - **Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS)**: Service providers of notified services are eligible for freely transferable duty credit scrip @ 5% of net foreign exchange earned.
  - **Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) Scheme**: An export Incentive scheme introduced for those who export Apparels and made-ups from India.



Draft National Air Sports Policy (NASP 2022)

- **Ministry of Civil Aviation released** draft NASP with an aim **to make the sport safe, affordable, accessible, enjoyable and sustainable**.
- **Key features of the draft Policy:**
  - Covers sports like **aerobatics, aeromodelling**, amateur-built and experimental aircraft, ballooning, **drones, gliding, hang gliding and paragliding**; microlighting and paramotoring; skydiving and vintage aircraft.
  - An **Air Sports Federation of India (ASFI)** will be established as the apex governing body.
  - Domestic design, development and **manufacturing of air sports equipment in line with Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.








Quito Adjustment

- **Adjustment to the Montreal Protocol** agreed in 2018 in Quito (13th Meeting of the Parties) called for:
  - **Strengthening enforcement mechanisms of the Protocol in response to an unexpected rise in global emissions** of the banned chemical **trichlorofluoromethane (CFC-11)**,
  - **Arrangements for the implementation of the Kigali Amendment** (to cut projected production and consumption of climate change-inducing hydrofluorocarbons/HFCs).
- 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer **regulates production and consumption of ozone depleting substances**.



Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE)

- IXPE observatory is a **joint effort of NASA and the Italian Space Agency**.
- Mission **will study the most extreme and mysterious objects in the universe** – supernova remnants, supermassive black holes, and dozens of other high-energy objects.
- Mission's primary length is two years and the **observatory will be at 600 kilometers altitude, orbiting around Earth's equator**.
- It will help in answering questions like **How do black holes spin, How do pulsars shine so brightly etc.**

 <p><b>Dark genome</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scientists investigating the DNA outside our genes (the 'dark genome') have <b>discovered recently evolved regions that code for proteins</b> associated with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.</li> <li>Dark genome refers to '<b>DNA outside of the regions conventionally defined as genes</b>' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; They are <b>genes/proteins for which there is minimal knowledge</b> on biological function and, allied to this, <b>limited tools for their analysis (such as antibodies)</b>.</li> <li>&gt; Thus, it <b>adversely affects the precision medicine initiative</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Web3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web3 refers to <b>a decentralized online ecosystem based on the blockchain</b>.</li> <li>Platforms and apps built on Web3 <b>won't be owned by a central gatekeeper, but rather by users</b>, who will earn their ownership stake by helping to develop and maintain those services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Web 1.0 was the era of decentralized, open protocols</b>, in which most online activity involved navigating to individual static web pages.</li> <li>&gt; <b>Web 2.0 is the era of centralization</b>, in which a huge share of communication and commerce takes place on closed platforms owned by a handful of super-powerful corporations (Google, Facebook, Amazon etc).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>2 approaches to tackle Multi-drug resistant bacteria</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indian Institute of Science (IISc) is working on <b>2 approaches to tackle the problem of Multi-drug resistant bacteria</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Bacteriophages, or 'phages'</b>: It will be used to kill bacteria. It is a type of virus that infects bacteria and it destroy bacteria's host cells.</li> <li>&gt; <b>Block the transporters</b>: Transporters help move nutrients from the environment into cells and remove toxic metabolites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Multi-drug resistant pathogens have evolved transporters</b> that are capable of moving out (or 'effluxing') antibacterial compounds from bacterial cells and membranes, <b>thereby protecting pathogens (bacteria)</b>.</li> <li>➤ Researchers are <b>developing certain type of antibody that could inhibit the transporters in bacteria</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Magnetic field on an Exoplanet</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researchers have identified the <b>first signature of a magnetic field surrounding an Exoplanet HAT-P-11b</b> (123 light-years from Earth). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; An exoplanet is <b>any planet beyond our solar system</b>.</li> <li>&gt; <b>Most orbit other stars</b>, but free-floating exoplanets, called <b>rogue planets</b>, <b>orbit galactic center and are untethered to any star</b>.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Earth's magnetic field acts as a shield against energetic particles from the sun</b> known as the solar wind. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Magnetic fields <b>could play similar roles on other planets</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Highest motorable road in the world</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several <b>projects built by Border Roads Organisation, including a bridge on world's highest motorable road</b>, were inaugurated recently.</li> <li>Road is in south Ladakh, <b>connecting Chisumle and Demchok. It passes through Umling La pass</b>, which is at a height of over 19,000 feet. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; It <b>bettters previous record of a road in Bolivia</b>, which connects volcano Uturuncu.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Demchok has been an India-China flashpoint</b>. New road will make it easier to mobilise troops and equipment.</li> <li><b>It was built under Project Himank</b>, a project to keep lines of communication open throughout the year (in Ladakh/Siachin sector).</li> </ul>



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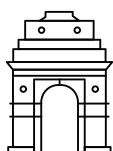
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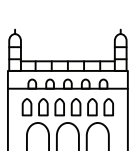
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LUCKNOW



JAIPUR



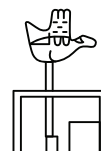
HYDERABAD



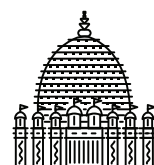
PUNE



AHMEDABAD



CHANDIGARH



GUWAHATI