

International Relations

Crossroad of Peace Initiative

Why in the news?

During the recent trilateral consultations between India-Iran-Armenia, the Armenian side informed about its connectivity initiative, "Crossroads of Peace".

About Crossroad of Peace Initiative

- ❖ The proposal aims to connect Armenia with neighboring countries Azerbaijan, Iran, and Georgia by developing key infrastructure, including roads, railways, pipelines, cables, and electricity lines.
- ❖ Its objectives are to revitalize regional connectivity and facilitate the flow of goods, energy, and people.
- ❖ It also seeks to link the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea through efficient transport networks.

Moldova joins International Solar Alliance

Why in the news?

Moldova has joined the International Solar Alliance, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson.

- ❖ The agreement was signed between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister Mihai Popsoi.
- ❖ The International Solar Alliance (ISA), a treaty-based intergovernmental organization headquartered in India, aims to mobilize over USD 1000 billion by 2030 to scale up solar energy deployment globally.
- ❖ Armenia recently became the 104th full member of the ISA, as announced by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- ❖ India, under its ISA presidency, is leading efforts to address barriers in technology, finance, and capacity building, particularly benefiting the Global South.
- ❖ Main projects include solarizing Malawi's parliamentary building, solar-powered healthcare centers in Fiji, cold storage in Seychelles, and rooftop solar systems in Kiribati.



Visa-free entry for Indians

Why in the news?

Indian tourists travel to Russia without a visa next year. Since August 2023, Indian travellers have already been eligible for e-visas to Russia, which are typically processed within four days.

- ❖ Currently, Indian passport holders enjoy visa-free travel to 62 countries. Russia can be added to the list as early as spring 2025.
- ❖ Russia granted 9,500 e-visas to Indian visitors in 2023, which was a total of 6 percent of the total e-visas issued by Moscow. This puts India among the top five countries that were granted easy travel access by Russia.
- ❖ According to Evgeny Kozlov, Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee, 28,500 Indian travellers visited Moscow in the first half of 2024, marking a 1.5-fold increase compared to the same period last year.
- ❖ "In 2023, India ranked high in terms of travellers coming to Moscow among non-CIS countries, with over 60,000 visitors, a 26 percent rise compared to 2022.



Environment And Geography

11 districts at very high risk of flood, drought

Why in the news?

A new report released by the Department of Science and Technology shows that 91 of India's 91 districts face high risks of drought, 51 are at high flood risks, and 11 face "very high" risks of both.

- ❖ The report, 'District-Level Climate Risk Assessment for India: Mapping Flood and Drought Risks Using IPCC Framework,' maps India's districts to assess climate vulnerability.
- ❖ The report was released by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Guwahati and Mandi, in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), Bengaluru.

Study highlights significant flood and drought risks in several Indian states

Flood Risk

- ❖ About 85% of districts in Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha, and Jammu & Kashmir fall under the "very high" flood risk category.
- ❖ 51 districts face "very high" flood risk, and 118 districts face "high" flood risk.

Drought Risk

- ❖ Over 85% of districts in Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, and Haryana fall in the "very high" drought risk category.
- ❖ 91 districts face "very high" drought risk, and 188 districts face "high" drought risk, primarily in Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Odisha, and Maharashtra.

Both Flood and Drought Risk:

11 districts face both "very high" flood and drought risks

- ❖ Bihar: Patna
- ❖ Kerala: Alappuzha
- ❖ Assam: Charaideo, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, South Salmara-Mankachar, Golaghat

- ❖ Odisha: Kendrapara
- ❖ West Bengal: Murshidabad, Nadia, Uttar Dinajpur.



Gympie-Gympie

Why in the news?

Gympie-Gympie is an unassuming green plant that can "spark suicidal thoughts." It is covered with tiny hair-like needles full of poison that can reportedly drive a person to take their own life.

- ❖ According to a report by Firstpost in 2022, it is officially called Dendrocnide Moroides but is commonly known as the Australian stinging tree.
- ❖ The plant has hair-like needles all over its body, filled with powerful neurotoxin.
- ❖ The plant is primarily found in rainforest areas of Australasia, the Moluccas, and Indonesia.



Sports

Women's Junior Asia Cup 2024

Why in the news?

Indian women's hockey team beat China 3-2 in a penalty shootout in the final of the Women's Junior Asia Cup.

- ❖ **Venue and Dates:** Held in Muscat, Oman, from December 7 to December 15, 2024.



About the Women's Junior Asia Cup

- ❖ **Organizing Body:** Asian Hockey Federation (AHF).
- ❖ **First Edition:** Held in 1992 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- ❖ **Most Successful Team:** South Korea (4 titles).
- ❖ **India's Titles:** Two wins (2023 and 2024 editions)

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy 2024

Why in the news?



Mumbai has clinched the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy 2024 title, securing victory over Madhya Pradesh by five wickets at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, on December 15, 2024.

- ❖ This triumph marks **Mumbai's second title win** since they last lifted the trophy in the 2022-23 season.
- ❖ Mumbai is now the fourth team to get hands on the SMAT title two times; Tamil Nadu has won the tournament thrice.

Teams to win the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy more than once:

- ❖ Tamil Nadu - 3: 2006/07, 2020/21, 2021/22
- ❖ Mumbai - 2: 2022/23, 2024/25
- ❖ Baroda - 2: 2011/12, 2013/14
- ❖ Gujarat - 2: 2012/13, 2014/15
- ❖ Karnataka - 2: 2018/19, 2019/20

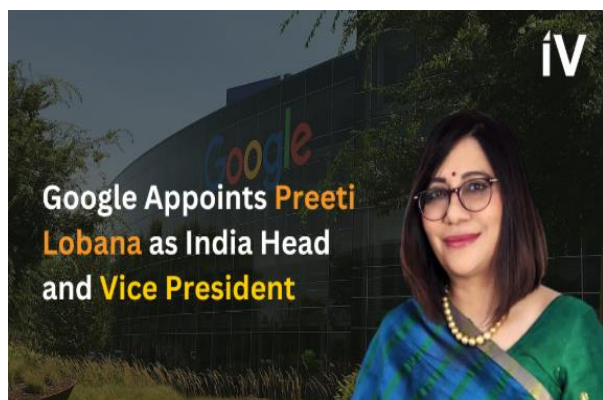
Persons In News

Preeti Lobana

Why in the news?

Recently Tech giant Google announced the appointment of Preeti Lobana as its India head and vice president.

- ❖ She will replace Sanjay Gupta, who was recently promoted to the post of President of the Asia Pacific region at Google.



Important Days/ Dates

National Pensioners Day

Why in the news?

17th December is observed as Pensioners Day in India to remember, with gratefulness, the late D.S Nakara, who fought for years to bring dignity and grace to the community, through the judgment.

History of the Day:

- ❖ It was on this day in 1982 that the Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment guaranteeing dignity and decency to retired officials and pensioners. The day is observed in the backdrop of the historic verdict of the Supreme Court on pension on December 17, 1982. D. S. Nakara, who retired from the Department of Defense, approached the court after being denied pension benefits.

- ❖ The liberal pension system implemented by the Centre in 1979 was relatively beneficial for pensioners. However, it was limited to those who retired after March 31, 1979. D. S. Nakara approached the court against this discrimination.



Obituary

Tulsi Gowda

Why in the news?

Tulsi Gowda, the renowned environmentalist and Padma Shri awardee known as the "Vruksha Maate" (Mother of Trees), passed away.

- ❖ Hailing from the Halakki tribal community, Tulsi Gowda dedicated over six decades of her life to environmental conservation, planting and nurturing thousands of trees in Ankola and its surroundings.



- ❖ Her unparalleled knowledge of plants earned her the title "Encyclopaedia of Plants."
- ❖ She was credited with growing lakhs of saplings and was celebrated for her unique approach to nurturing them, ensuring their survival and growth.

Awards and Recognition:

- ❖ In 2021, Tulsi Gowda was honored with the prestigious Padma Shri.
- ❖ Dharwad Agricultural University conferred upon her an honorary doctorate for her knowledge and contributions to the environment.
- ❖ She also received the Indira Priyadarshini Vriksha Mitra Award.

Defence And Security

SLINEX 2024 (Sri Lanka-India Exercise)

Why in the news?

The bilateral naval exercise **SLINEX 2024** (Sri Lanka-India Exercise) will be conducted from 17 to 20 Dec 24 at Visakhapatnam under the aegis of the Eastern Naval Command.



The exercise will be held in two phases - the Harbour Phase from 17 to 18 December and the Sea Phase from 19 to 20 December.

About SLINEX

- ❖ Initiated in 2005, **SLINEX** is a significant series of bilateral naval exercises that have strengthened maritime cooperation between India and Sri Lanka over the years.

Participating Units:

- ❖ **From India:** Indian Naval Ship **INS Sumitra**, a Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel of the Eastern Fleet, along with a Special Forces team.
- ❖ **From Sri Lanka:** **SLNS Sayura**, an Offshore Patrol Vessel, with an embarked Special Forces team.

News in Short

- ❖ According to Chief Information Commissioner **Hiralal Samariya**, Kerala has been recognised as a leading state in transparency, public accountability and information dissemination. At the National RTI Awards ceremony, Kerala State Information Commissioner **A.A. Hakim** received the award for the state's exemplary performance in efficiently resolving RTI petitions, with Kerala being praised as a model state.

- ❖ Maharashtra's young shooter Riya Shirish Thate won the women's 25m pistol event in the 67th National Shooting Championship (NSCC).
- ❖ Arnab Kumar of Buxar won the gold medal in the 62nd National Roller Skating Championship held in Bengaluru.
- ❖ Jharkhand's Birhor tribe has joined the movement against child marriage for the first time.
- ❖ Under the guidance of the Ministry of Coal, Singrauli-based Coal India arm Northern Coalfields Limited has launched the 'CHARAK' CSR initiative. It is aimed at providing free treatment for patients suffering from identified Life-Threatening disease belonging to Economically Weaker Sections of Singrauli region.

- ❖ Cyclone Chido has made landfall in Pemba, the capital of Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, and in the French overseas territory of Mayotte.
- ❖ The Italian government has granted Argentine President Javier Milei citizenship in recognition of his Italian heritage.



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