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BLUE FLAG CERTIFICATION



Kerala's famed Kappad beach in Kozhikode and Chal beach in Kannur have been bestowed with the coveted Blue Flag certification by Denmark-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

- It is a globally recognized **eco-label** accorded by the **Foundation for Environment Education in Denmark** (FEE).
- The Blue Flag programme was started in France in 1985 and in areas out of Europe in 2001.
- It is one of the world's most recognised **voluntary awards** for **beaches, marinas, and sustainable tourism boats**.
- It promotes sustainable development in freshwater and marine areas through **four main criteria**: water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety.
- The mission of Blue Flag is to **promote sustainability in the tourism sector**, through environmental education, environmental protection and other sustainable development practices.
- The other Indian beaches in the blue list are Shivrajpur-Gujarat, Ghoghla-Diu, Kasarkod and Padubidri-Karnataka, Kappad-Kerala, Rushikonda- Andhra Pradesh, Golden-Odisha, Radhanagar- Andaman and Nicobar, Kovalam in Tamil Nadu and Eden in Puducherry beaches, Minicoy Thundi Beach, Lakshadweep, Kadmat Beach, Lakshadweep.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE TRANSPLANT ORGANISATION (NOTTO)



Central government employees who donate organs will receive 42 days of special casual leave, the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) announced recently

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- NOTTO is a national-level organization set up under the **Directorate General of Health Services**, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- It is an **apex organization for implementing the National Organ Transplant Program (NOTP)** and to carry out activities as per the **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA) 1994**.
- NOTTO provides an efficient and **organized system of organ procurement and distribution** in the country and **maintains the national registry of donors and recipients** of organs and tissues.
- It has the **following two divisions**:
 - **National Human Organ and Tissue Removal and Storage Network**:
 - It would function as apex centre for all India activities of coordination and networking for the procurement and distribution of organs and tissues, and registry of organ and tissue donation and transplantation in the country.
 - It has been mandated as per the Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Act 2011.
 - **National Biomaterial Centre (National Tissue Bank)**:
 - The Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Act 2011 has included the component of tissue donation and registration of tissue banks.
 - The main thrust and objective of establishing the centre is to fill up the gap between ‘Demand’ and ‘Supply’ as well as ‘Quality Assurance’ in the availability of various tissues.

WHAT IS THE SILVER NOTICE?



Recently, the **International Criminal Police Organisation**, or **Interpol**, has introduced its first ‘Silver Notice’.

- It is the latest addition to **Interpol’s suite of colour-coded alerts**, designed to help countries track and retrieve criminally obtained assets.



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- This notice allows participating nations to request information on assets linked to criminal activities such as **fraud, corruption, drug trafficking, and environmental crimes**.
 - It aimed at tracing assets laundered across international borders.
 - This initiative, part of a pilot **project involving 52 countries**, including India, was launched **following a request from Italy** to locate the assets of a senior mafia member.
 - The project will run until at **least November 2025**, with 500 notices available for distribution among the participating countries.
 - **How does it work?**
 - Countries can use the Silver Notice to request information on various assets, including properties, vehicles, financial accounts, and businesses connected to criminal activities.
 - The notice facilitates the **identification and location of these assets**, enabling further legal action, such as seizure or confiscation, subject to national laws.
 - **India's role in this**
 - India is a participant in this pilot project and stands to benefit significantly.
 - With numerous fugitive economic offenders and a substantial amount of unaccounted black money transferred offshore, the Silver Notice could be instrumental in tracing and recovering these assets.
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UN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON BIG DATA AND DATA SCIENCE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS



- It was created in 2014, with Australia as its first Chair, to **investigate the benefits and challenges of Big Data**, including the potential for monitoring and reporting on sustainable development goals.

Governance:

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- **Advisory Board:** It is the management body of the UN-CEBD. It is scheduled to meet about 4 times per year to review the work of the UN-CEBD and give strategic direction.
 - **UN Bureau:** The Bureau takes care of the ongoing operations of the UN-CEBD.
 - **Mandate:**
 - To provide a strategic vision, direction and coordination for a global programme on **big data for official statistics, including** for indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
 - To promote practical use of big data sources, including cross-border data, while building on existing precedents and finding solutions for the many existing challenges,
 - To also promote capacity-building, training and sharing of experience;
 - To foster communication and advocacy of the use of big data for policy applications, especially for the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
 - To build public trust in the use of big data for official statistics.
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INS VAGHSHEER



Mumbai based Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) marked a key milestone in India's defence capabilities with the delivery of the sixth and final Scorpene-class submarine, INS Vaghsheer, to the Indian Navy.

- It is the sixth submarine of the first batch of six **Kalvari-class submarines** for the Indian Navy.
- It is named after the **sand fish**, a deadly deep-sea predator of the Indian Ocean.
- It was **launched in April 2022** and underwent extensive trials, testing its endurance, stealth features, and combat efficiency.

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- Other five submarines of Kalvari class are **Kalvari, Khanderi, Karanj, Vela** and
 - **Features:**
 - It boasts **advanced stealth technologies**, including **reduced radiated noise levels** and sophisticated hydrodynamic design, making it one of the quietest submarines in the world.
 - Its combat capabilities include the use of **precision-guided weapons** such as **torpedoes and tube-launched anti-ship missiles**, further solidifying its role in both offensive and defensive naval operations.
 - It is designed for a wide range of missions, from **anti-submarine warfare to intelligence gathering**, and is fully capable of operating in **diverse maritime environments**.
 - It consists of indigenously developed systems like the **air-conditioning plant, internal communication network**, and the **Ku-Band SATCOM system**.
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REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON DRUG TRAFFICKING AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Fight against drug menace – India’s regulatory framework

- **Article 47 of the Indian Constitution**
 - The National Policy on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances is based on the Directive Principles, contained in Article 47 of the Indian Constitution.
 - The Article directs the State to endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drugs injurious to health.
- **Signatory to international conventions**
 - India is a signatory to:
 - the single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Conventions on Psychotropic Substances, 1971 and
 - the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.

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- **Existing Laws**
 - The broad legislative policy is contained in the three Central Acts:
 - Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940,
 - The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, and
 - The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988.
- **Institutions involved**
 - The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** was created in 1986 as a nodal agency to fight against this menace.
 - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) are involved with alcohol and drug demand reduction policies and drug de-addiction programme.
 - In order to prevent misuse of dual-use drugs, a **permanent inter-ministerial committee** has been formed with the ministry of health and family welfare and the ministry of chemicals.
- **Technological intervention**
 - The NCORD portal has been launched as an effective mechanism for information exchange between various institutions/agencies.
 - A toll-free helpline called **MANAS (Madak Padarth Nishedh Asuchna Kendra)** with the number 1933 has been launched.
- **Other measures**
 - The government aims to achieve **drug-free India by 2047** through a 3 points strategy - strengthening of institutional structure, coordination among all narco agencies and extensive public awareness campaign.
 - As part of this strategy a number of steps have been taken which includes:
 - Establishment of a dedicated Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) in each state/UTs.
 - High priority to Drug Disposal drive.



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- **Launch of NIDAAN Portal** for Narco offenders.
- Creation of canine squads for drug detection.
- Strengthening the forensic capabilities.
- Establishment of Special NDPS Courts and Fast Track Courts.
- **Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA)** for generating Awareness against drug Abuse.

ARE LITHIUM BATTERIES ON FLIGHT DANGEROUS?

Why Are Lithium Batteries a Concern?

- Lithium-ion batteries, while efficient, can catch fire under certain physical or environmental stresses.
- Fires are caused by short circuits within the battery, which lead to continuous production of heat, oxygen, and electric current. Factors contributing to these risks include:
 - **Mechanical Abuse:** Deformation of internal structures.
 - **Electrical Abuse:** Degraded performance due to improper usage or charging.
 - **Thermal Abuse:** Heat accumulation leading to a "thermal runaway."
- For example, after Hurricane Helene in 2024, 48 lithium-ion batteries caught fire due to prolonged exposure to salt water, underscoring the risks associated with improper battery ratings for extreme conditions like flooding.

Position Papers by IFALPA:

- The IFALPA's position papers (POS01, POS02, and POS03) address various aspects of lithium battery safety:
 - **POS01 - Safe Transport of Batteries:**
 - Focuses on UN regulations **3480** and **3481** for air transport of lithium-ion batteries.
 - Calls for extending the **30% state-of-charge (SOC) limit** to equipment with built-in batteries (UN3481) to reduce fire risks during transportation.
 - **POS02 - Fire Safety Protocols:**

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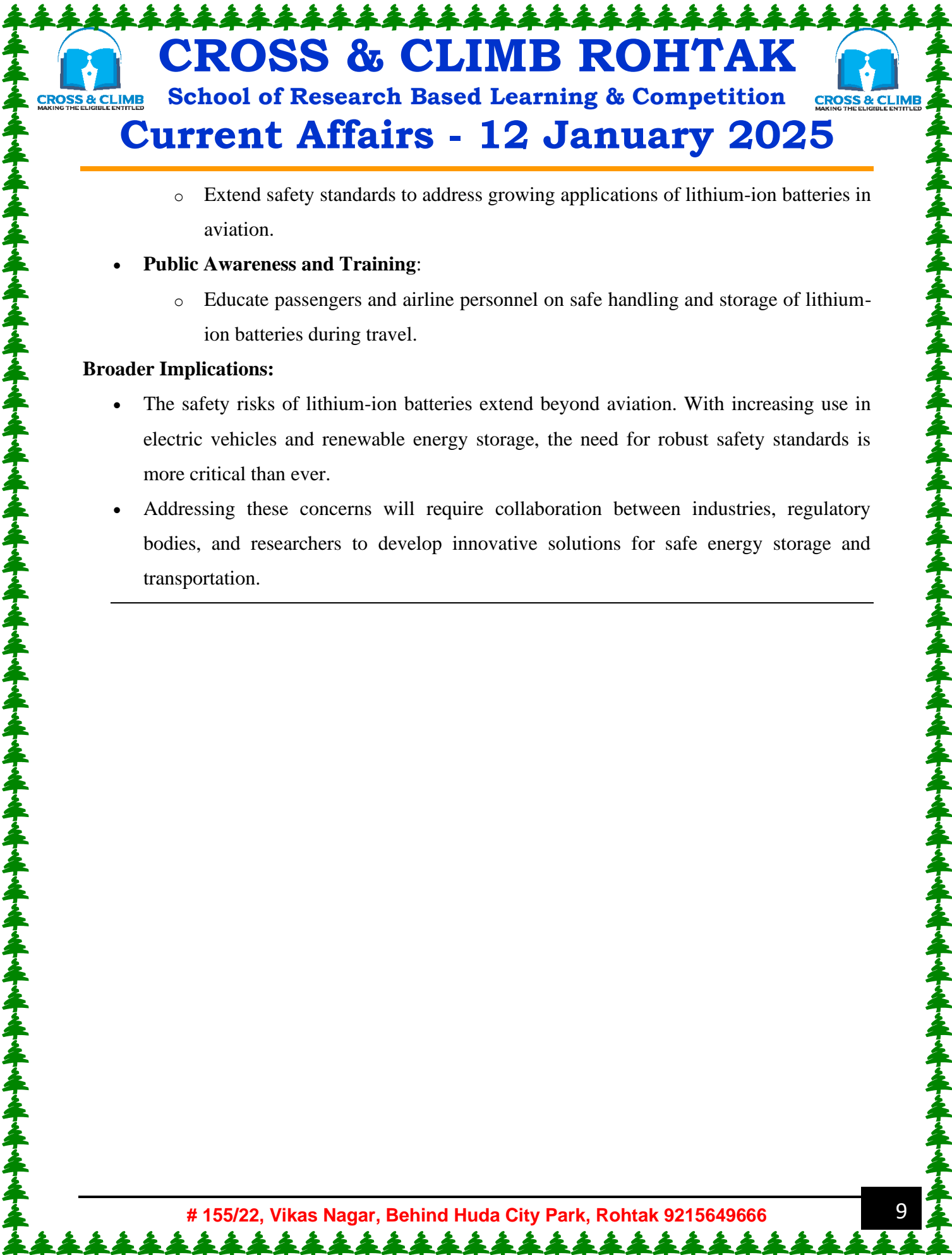
- Highlights that fires caused by lithium-ion batteries differ from traditional fires.
- Calls for airports and ground services to develop specialized fire-safety equipment and protocols to handle these incidents effectively.
- **POS03 - Risks in Flight Decks:**
 - Raises concerns about batteries in critical aircraft components.
 - Cites studies by the **U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)** and **European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)** showing that existing fire kits are inadequate for high-energy lithium-ion battery fires.

Case Studies and Data:

- **Energy Density Concerns:** Modern lithium-ion batteries have become more energy-dense, increasing their potential for catastrophic fires. This poses challenges for firefighting and containment.
- **Toxic Fumes:** When these batteries burn, they release hazardous fumes, requiring specialized safety measures.
- **Inadequate Fire Kits:** Research indicates that current firefighting kits fail to address battery fires effectively, particularly those with an energy rating exceeding 100 Wh.

Proposed Mitigation Strategies:

- **Enhanced Packaging and Labelling:**
 - Adherence to strict UN regulations for bulk and equipment-contained batteries.
 - Implementation of SOC limits across all battery types.
- **Development of Specialized Equipment:**
 - Airports and rescue services should invest in purpose-built fire-safety kits designed for lithium-ion battery fires.
- **Regulatory Updates:**



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- Extend safety standards to address growing applications of lithium-ion batteries in aviation.
- **Public Awareness and Training:**
 - Educate passengers and airline personnel on safe handling and storage of lithium-ion batteries during travel.

Broader Implications:

- The safety risks of lithium-ion batteries extend beyond aviation. With increasing use in electric vehicles and renewable energy storage, the need for robust safety standards is more critical than ever.
 - Addressing these concerns will require collaboration between industries, regulatory bodies, and researchers to develop innovative solutions for safe energy storage and transportation.
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