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Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF BLINKIT'S 10-MINUTE AMBULANCE SERVICE

- A day after Blinkit, a Zomato-owned quick commerce platform, announced the launch of a 10-minute ambulance service, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal emphasized the need for the initiative to adhere to India's legal framework.
- The announcement has sparked discussions about regulatory compliance, healthcare accessibility, and the state's accountability in providing basic services.

Government's Caution and Legal Obligations:

- **Compliance with laws:** Union Minister Piyush Goyal underscored that Blinkit must meet legal requirements under Indian law, including guidelines outlined in **the Central Motor Vehicle Rules and Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) 125**.
- **State-level variations:** For ambulances supported by the National Health Mission (NHM), compliance depends on agreements between operators and state governments.
- **Concerns raised:** Experts have highlighted regulatory gaps and the pressing issue of ambulance shortages in India.

Blinkit's Ambulance Service Details:

- **Service launch:** The initiative will start with five ambulances in Gurugram, with plans to expand to all major cities within two years.
- **Features and pricing:**
 - Each ambulance is equipped with essential life-saving equipment like oxygen cylinders, AEDs, monitors, and emergency medicines, staffed by a paramedic, an assistant, and a trained driver.
 - The service is priced at a flat Rs 2,000 fee.
- **Non-profit motive:** Blinkit CEO Albinder Dhindsa emphasized that the service aims to address critical healthcare gaps rather than generate profit.

Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

India's Need for Ambulance Services:

- **Pandemic lessons:** The COVID-19 pandemic exposed severe shortages in ambulance services, particularly during emergencies.
- **Current landscape:**
 - India has 17,495 operational Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances and only 3,441 Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances.
 - Regional disparities persist, with northeastern states particularly underserved.
- **Importance of ALS ambulances:** These are crucial for trauma-related emergencies during the “golden hour” and are better equipped for critical care.

Government and Market Dynamics:

- **National Ambulance Services (NAS):**
 - The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare supports one ALS ambulance per 5 lakh population and one BLS ambulance per 1 lakh population.
 - States can request additional ambulances to address regional needs.
- **Market growth:** The Indian ambulance market, valued at \$1,502.8 million in 2022, is projected to grow at a 5.12% CAGR from 2024 to 2028.
- **Registration trends:** Ambulance registrations peaked in 2021 but have since declined, indicating reduced focus on healthcare post-pandemic.

Conclusion:

- Blinkit's 10-minute ambulance service initiative has the potential to address critical gaps in India's healthcare infrastructure.
 - However, ensuring regulatory compliance, addressing regional disparities, and increasing the number of ALS ambulances remain key challenges.
 - As private players like Blinkit step in, the government must simultaneously strengthen its healthcare delivery systems to meet the growing demands of the population.
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Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

QUADRANTID METEOR



The world is all set to witness the first meteor shower of the year i.e Quadrantid Meteor in this month.

- It occurs **every year in early January**. It is among one of the most intense annual meteor displays, and has a brief peak lasting only a few hours.
- The name Quadrantids comes from the now obsolete **constellation Quadrans Muralis**, which was named in 1752 by French astronomer JJ Lalande.
- The meteor shower was observed for **the first time in the 1830s** by Belgian astronomer Adolphe Quetelet.

Origin: It branches from the northeast corner of **the Boötes constellation**.

- The Quadrantids reportedly **emerged from asteroid 2003 EH1**, which is believed to be a fragment of an extinct comet that broke down in 1490-91.
- In its peak activity, observers can spot **60 to 120 meteors per hour**. However, the visibility depends mainly on location and timing.
- This year the viewing conditions will largely favour North America, especially for those in Mississippi. Apart from the US, Canada, certain regions in Northern Europe, and Russia, China, Japan, and Korea are likely to witness the shower.

EXPORT INSPECTION COUNCIL



- It was set up by the Government of India under Section 3 of the **Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963**.
- It ensures sound development of export trade of India through quality control and inspection and matters connected therewith.

Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

- It is the **official export–certification body of India**, which ensures quality and safety of products exported from India.
- It is headed by a Chairperson. The Executive Head of the Council is the **Director of Inspection & Quality Control** who is responsible for day to day functioning of the Council.

Function:

- The role of EIC is to ensure that products notified under the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act 1963 are meeting the requirements of the importing **countries in respect of their quality and safety**.
- EIC provides mandatory **certification for** various Food items namely fish & fishery products, dairy product, honey, egg products, meat and meat products, poultry meat products, animal casing, Gelatine, Ossein and crushed bones and feed additive and pre-mixtures while other food and non-food products are certified on voluntary basis.
- The Export Inspection Agencies (EIAs) located at Mumbai, Kolkata, Kochi, Delhi and Chennai with a network of 30 sub offices backed by the state of art, NABL accredited laboratories at various places.
- **Headquarter:** Delhi
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry

WHAT IS NANOPORE TECHNOLOGY?



- Nanopore technology refers to **nano-scale holes** embedded in a **thin membrane structure** to **detect the potential change** when charged **biological molecules** smaller than nanopores **pass through the hole**.
- It has the **potential to sense and analyze** single-molecule **amino acids, DNA, RNA, etc.**
- It is a cutting-edge method for **sequencing DNA and RNA** by **detecting changes in electrical conductivity** as molecules pass through a nanopore.

Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

- In contrast to other sequencing technologies, nanopore-based sequencing is **cheaper**, very **easy to use**, **does not require much computational and lab infrastructure**, and only **needs a small amount of DNA in a test sample**.
 - It is the **only sequencing technology that offers real-time analysis in fully scalable formats**, from pocket to population scale, that can analyze native DNA or RNA and sequence any length of fragment to achieve short to ultra-long read lengths.
 - It can also **undertake targeted sequencing** with a focus on specific genes/regions.
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KEY FACTS ABOUT EUROPA



- It is the **smallest and second nearest of the four large moons (Galilean satellites) discovered around Jupiter** by the Italian astronomer **Galileo** in 1610.
 - It is a **rocky object covered with an extremely smooth, elaborately patterned surface of ice**.
 - It has a diameter of 3,130 km, which makes it a **little smaller than Earth's Moon**.
 - It may be one of the **most promising places** in our solar system to find present-day environments suitable **for some form of life beyond Earth**.
 - Scientists believe a **saltwater ocean** lies beneath its icy shell, holding twice as much water as Earth's global ocean.
 - It also may have the chemical elements that are key ingredients to life.
 - Europa was first observed at close range in 1979 by the Voyager 1 and 2 spacecraft and then by the Galileo orbiter beginning in the mid-1990s.
 - **NASA launched Europa Clipper on Oct. 14, 2024**, to determine whether there are places below Europa's surface that could support life.
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Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

SAINT NARAHARI TIRTHA



In a remarkable discovery, a member of the Team of Research on Culture and Heritage (TORCH) has hit upon a three-foot idol of the 13th Century saint, Narahari Tirtha recently.

- Narahari Tirtha (c. 13th century) was a prominent **Dvaita Vedanta philosopher**, scholar, and saint in the Madhva tradition.
- He was a **disciple of Madhvacharya**, the **founder of Dvaita philosophy**, and played a **key role in spreading the doctrine in eastern India**, particularly in the **Kalinga region** (modern Odisha and Andhra Pradesh).
- Believed to have hailed from Chikakolu town (present Srikakulam), Tirtha's **ancestors were aristocrats in the Gajapati empire** in what is now the Odisha state.
- Available epigraphical evidence suggests that **kings of Eastern Ganga dynasty were assisted by the saint** for three decades.
 - He **ensured that the king followed Sanatana Dharma** and took care of its adherents by **formulating a proper executive system to oversee the temple administration**.
 - His contributions on this front are well documented in **inscriptions available in the Simhachalam and Srikurmam (Srikakulam) temples**.
- Some honorific prefixes being used along with the name of this saint are: 'Loka Surakṣaṇa Ati Nipuṇaḥ', 'Yo Avati Kalinga Bhu Sambhavān'.
- As saint Ramanuja had introduced Vaiṣṇavism in the region, it was **Narahari Tirtha's prolonged presence that resulted in Acharya's Vaiṣṇavism getting a firm following** in this region, but in a completely non-interfering and secular manner.
- Shri Narahari **wrote fifteen books**, but only two of his works, **Gita Bhasya and Bhavaprakasika** are existing today.
- He was the **first one to have composed Devaranamas in Kannada**.



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Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

RABBIT FEVER



Rabbit Fever is also commonly known as TULAREMIA.

- It is a **rare** and sometimes deadly infectious disease is seen in **children between the 5-9 years age group, older men**, and American Indians or Alaska Natives.
- It is caused by the **Francisella tularensis** a bacterium, that can infect animals and people. Rabbits, hares and rodents are more likely to get the disease, hence the name.

Symptoms:

- The signs and symptoms of tularemia can depend on how the bacteria has entered the body.
- The illness can be mild or severe and high grade **fever** is a common symptom in all kinds of illnesses.
- **Skin ulcers** (observed after a tick or deer fly bite), **Irritation and inflammation in eyes, Difficulty in breathing, Sore throat, mouth ulcer**, etc. are other symptoms.

Transmission:

- People can also become infected in many ways, **including tick and deer fly bites**, and contact with infected animals like rabbits, rodents, and hares.
- The infection can also spread by **drinking contaminated water** and inhaling contaminated aerosols or agricultural and landscaping dust, and laboratory exposure,

Treatment: Vaccination for tularemia is not yet available in the U.S. It can be treated with antibiotics.

Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT (NSA)

National Security Act, 1980

- **Historical Background**
 - **Colonial Era Laws:**
 - **Bengal Regulation III (1818):** Empowered the arrest of individuals for criminal intent.
 - **Rowlatt Acts (1919):** Allowed imprisonment without trial.
- **Post-Independence Evolution:**
 - **Preventive Detention Act (1950):** Expired in 1969.
 - **Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA, 1971):** Introduced by Indira Gandhi, repealed in 1977 by the Janata Party.
 - **NSA (1980):** Brought back by Indira Gandhi after her return to power, drawing parallels with MISA.
- **About**
 - The National Security Act (NSA), promulgated on September 23, 1980, is a preventive detention law enacted by the Indian Parliament.
 - It empowers the central or state government to detain individuals to prevent activities jeopardizing national security or disrupting public order.
- **Constitutional Basis**
 - **Article 22(3):** Allows preventive detention for state security and public order.
 - **Article 22(4):** Restricts detention beyond three months unless approved by an advisory board comprising High Court judges.
 - **44th Amendment Act (1978):** Reduced the detention period without advisory board approval to two months, though this provision is not yet enforced.
- **Key Provisions of NSA**
 - Detention can extend up to 12 months, subject to fresh evidence for further extension.



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Current Affairs - 05 January 2025

- No formal charges are necessary during the detention period.
 - Detention is permissible to:
 - Prevent disruptions to public order.
 - Ensure supplies and services essential to the community.
 - **Grounds for Detention**
 - Under Section 3 of the NSA, the Central/State Government has the power to order any person's detention and detain them if it thinks it is necessary to prevent them from harming:
 - national defence;
 - relationship with foreign countries;
 - national security;
 - public order;
 - essential supplies and services.
 - **Period of Confinement**
 - **Maximum detention period:** 12 months (extendable with fresh evidence).
 - Detainees can be held for 10 days without being informed of charges.
 - **Legal Process:** The detainee can appeal to the advisory board but is denied legal representation during the trial.
 - **Criticism of the NSA**
 - Authorities have been accused of using NSA as an extra-judicial power.
 - Detainees are often held without formal charges, leading to concerns about human rights violations.
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