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Current Affairs - 16 October 2024

WHAT IS THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION (FAO)?

World Food Day is celebrated annually on October 16 across the globe to honour the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- It is the oldest permanent specialized agency of the UN, established in October 1945.
- Mandate: To improve nutrition, increase agricultural productivity, raise the standard of living in rural populations, and contribute to global economic growth.
- The FAO coordinates the efforts of governments and technical agencies in programs for developing agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and land and water resources.

Other Functions:

- Carries out research;
- Provides technical assistance on projects in individual countries;
- Operates educational programs through seminars and training centres;
- Maintains information and support services, including keeping statistics on world production, trade, and consumption of agricultural commodities;
- Publishes a number of periodicals, yearbooks, and research bulletins.

Headquarters: Rome, Italy.

Members: It currently has 194 Member States plus the European Union (member organization).

Funding: FAO receives 100 percent of its funding from its member countries.

In case of scarcity or conflict, the FAO usually does not intervene directly with food relief operations. Within the UN system, these activities are generally entrusted to the World Food Program.



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WHO ARE THE HIBAKUSHA?



Nihon Hidankyo, the organisation that worked for the welfare of the survivors of the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—called the hibakusha—has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2024.

- Hibakusha is the Japanese word for survivors of the 1945 atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped the Little Boy atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.
- Three days later, the US dropped a second atomic bomb, known as Fat Man, on Nagasaki, Japan.
- By the end of 1945, more than 200,000 people died as a direct result of these bombings.
- Many thousands of people survived with injuries from the attacks. They came to be known as hibakusha, which translates to bomb-affected people.
- Niju hibakusha, double survivors, applies to more than 160 people who were present at both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Currently, the combined number of ‘hibakusha’ who are alive is officially 1,06,825, according to Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. Their average age is 85.6 years.

- Hibakusha receives support from the Japanese government, including a medical allowance.
 - However, in Japan there continues to be discrimination against both the hibakusha and their children, and even grandchildren, based on the common belief that they may be physically or psychologically weakened and that radiation effects are hereditary or contagious.
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WHAT IS OSSIFICATION TEST?



- An ossification test is a medical procedure that analyses bones in order to determine age.
- This test involves taking X-rays of certain bones in the body, such as the clavicle, sternum, and pelvis, to determine the degree of growth in our bones.
- Because certain bones harden and fuse with each other at certain ages according to a human's developmental stage, the bones can be a way of marking age.
- These bones are chosen because they tend to undergo the most dramatic changes in their form as a person ages.
 - Example: The clavicle, for instance, is a long bone connecting the shoulder blade to the sternum. It undergoes a gradual fusion of growth plates as a person matures.
- In children and adolescents, ossification reflects the progression of bone development, with certain bones hardening at specific ages.

Application of Ossification test

- This test is commonly used in forensic science and legal contexts to accurately determine an individual's age when needed.
- It is also used in some medical settings, such as to assess skeletal maturity in children with growth disorders.

E-MIGRATE PORTAL

Recently, the Union External Affairs Minister and Labour and Employment Minister **launched the updated e-Migrate portal and mobile app.**



- It is an online platform launched by the Government of India to facilitate and manage the migration of Indian workers seeking employment abroad.

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- It aims to provide a safe and transparent framework for migrant workers by offering various services, including information access, documentation, helpline support, integration with services and awareness campaigns
- It promotes safe and legal mobility channels for Indian migrants.
- The enhanced e-Migrate portal aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 10, promoting orderly and responsible migration.

Features

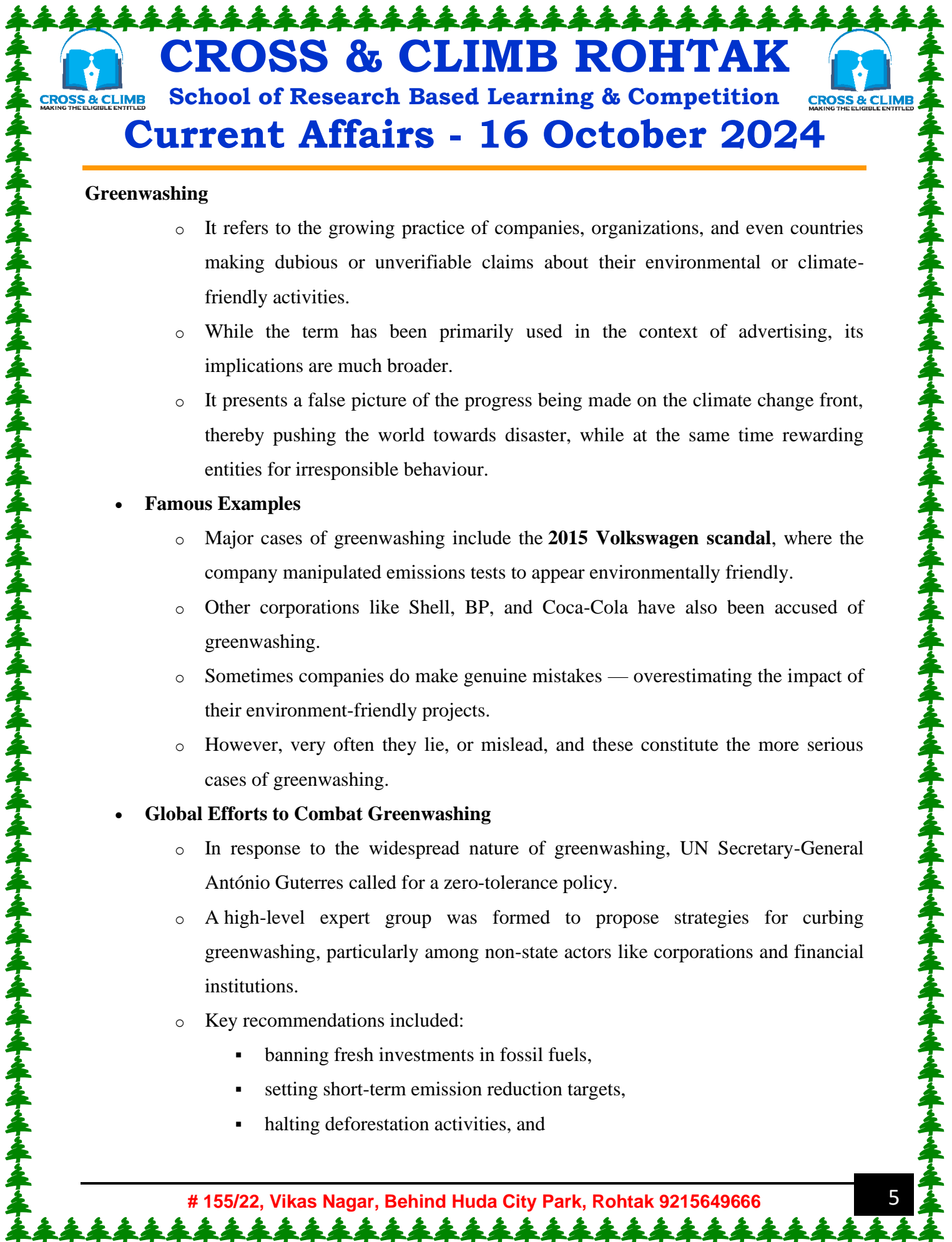
- The upgraded platform offers 24/7 multilingual helpline support and a feature for feedback, ensuring timely redressal of issues faced by workers abroad, especially in the Gulf region.
 - The revamped system integrates with Digilocker, enabling secure, paperless document submission.
 - Additionally, a partnership with Common Service Centres (CSCs) will expand immigration services to rural areas in local languages, enhancing accessibility.
 - The platform also supports job-seekers by offering a one-stop marketplace for overseas employment opportunities.
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GREENWASHING GUIDELINES

The Centre has introduced new guidelines to prevent companies from making false or misleading claims about their products' environmental benefits.

These rules, issued by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), require companies to provide scientific evidence to support their claims.

The guidelines are part of a broader effort to crack down on misleading advertisements. These norms would complement the existing **Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsement for Misleading Advertisements 2022**, which deal with false or exaggerated claims in advertisements in general.



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Greenwashing

- It refers to the growing practice of companies, organizations, and even countries making dubious or unverifiable claims about their environmental or climate-friendly activities.
- While the term has been primarily used in the context of advertising, its implications are much broader.
- It presents a false picture of the progress being made on the climate change front, thereby pushing the world towards disaster, while at the same time rewarding entities for irresponsible behaviour.
- **Famous Examples**
 - Major cases of greenwashing include the **2015 Volkswagen scandal**, where the company manipulated emissions tests to appear environmentally friendly.
 - Other corporations like Shell, BP, and Coca-Cola have also been accused of greenwashing.
 - Sometimes companies do make genuine mistakes — overestimating the impact of their environment-friendly projects.
 - However, very often they lie, or mislead, and these constitute the more serious cases of greenwashing.
- **Global Efforts to Combat Greenwashing**
 - In response to the widespread nature of greenwashing, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for a zero-tolerance policy.
 - A high-level expert group was formed to propose strategies for curbing greenwashing, particularly among non-state actors like corporations and financial institutions.
 - Key recommendations included:
 - banning fresh investments in fossil fuels,
 - setting short-term emission reduction targets,
 - halting deforestation activities, and

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- **Why greenwashing is fairly widespread?**
 - The processes and products that can potentially cut emissions are so many that it is practically impossible to monitor and verify all.
 - There is lack of regulation and standardisation in most of these spaces.
 - The processes, methodologies and institutions to measure, report, create standards, verify claims and grant certifications are still being set up.
 - Also, large number of organisations have sprung up claiming expertise in these areas and offering their services for a fee.
 - Many of these organisations lack integrity and robustness, but their services are still availed by corporations because it makes them look good.
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THE NEED FOR MORE CONTAINERS TO BOOST INDIA'S TRADE

- **Containers** are essential to modern trade. These standardized, box-like structures allow for goods to be efficiently transported via **rail, road, and sea**.
- Containerization revolutionized global trade by reducing transportation time, minimizing port delays, and enabling the seamless movement of cargo. The key advantages of containers include:

Efficiency: Once goods are sealed inside containers, they can be transported over long distances without disturbance.

Global Standardization: Containers come in **standardized sizes** (such as the 20-foot equivalent unit, or TEU), making them compatible with transport systems across the world.

India's Current Container Production Scenario:

- Currently, India manufactures **10,000 to 30,000 containers** annually, which is a small fraction of what is required to support the projected growth in trade. In contrast, **China** produces **2.5 to 3 million containers** per year, dominating the global container manufacturing market.
- India's production costs are also higher, with container manufacturing costing between **\$3,500 and \$4,800** per unit, compared to **\$2,500 to \$3,500** in China.

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- As a result, India has to **lease containers**, mostly from China, further increasing the cost and limiting India's ability to fully utilize its ports.

Govt. Initiatives & Solutions:

- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):**
 - Collaboration between the **Container Corporation of India** and private sector players to ramp up container manufacturing.
- **Subsidies and Incentives:**
 - The government is exploring **direct subsidies** and **viability gap funding** to support container manufacturers.
- **Production Linked Incentives (PLI)** are being considered, but they have yet to be implemented.
- **Incentives for Raw Materials:**
 - **GST relaxation** for raw materials used in container production would reduce input costs, making domestic production more competitive.
- **Tracking and Management:**
 - The government is working on a **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)** and a **Logistics Data Bank** to track and trace containers more efficiently, thereby reducing the turnaround time for export containers and easing shortages.

Long-Term Benefits of Boosting Container Production:

- **Lower Freight Costs:** With more locally produced containers, the reliance on leased containers from China will decrease, lowering freight costs for Indian shippers.
 - **Improved Port Utilization:** Indian ports could handle more **mother ships** (large ocean vessels), which would enhance India's position as a **global trade hub**.
 - **Job Creation:** Expanding the container manufacturing sector would create jobs and stimulate **economic growth** within India.
 - **Resilience in Global Trade:** By developing a strong domestic supply of containers, India would be less vulnerable to global disruptions and fluctuations in freight rates.
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INDIA MOBILE CONGRESS (IMC)

- IMC is one of the largest telecom, media, and technology forums in Asia, organized annually.
- It serves as a platform for industry leaders, policymakers, innovators, and stakeholders to come together and discuss the future of **digital communications** and **telecommunications** in India and across the globe.
- The event focuses on advancements in areas like **5G technology**, **artificial intelligence (AI)**, **internet of things (IoT)**, **cybersecurity**, and **digital infrastructure**.

Key Objectives of IMC:

- **Showcase Technological Advancements:**

IMC highlights the latest innovations in the telecom and digital sectors, offering a platform for startups, companies, and innovators to showcase their solutions.

- **Global Collaboration:**

The event encourages collaboration between global and Indian telecom players, creating opportunities for cross-border partnerships in the technology and communications sector.

- **Policy Discussions:**

IMC serves as a space for discussions between **government officials**, **industry leaders**, and **policymakers** on **telecommunication regulations**, digital governance, and infrastructure development.

- **Enabling Digital India:**

IMC aligns with the **Digital India** vision by promoting advancements in digital communication and laying the foundation for future technologies like **6G**, **AI**, and **cloud computing**.



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WHAT IS MECHAZILLA?



Recently, SpaceX has achieved a significant milestone in space exploration by landing its Starship rocket using an innovative structure called "Mechazilla."

It is the nickname for the large 400-ft rocket-catching structure at SpaceX's Starbase.

It features two enormous mechanical arms, often referred to as "chopsticks." These arms are designed to catch the Super Heavy booster in midair as it returns to Earth.

Working of Mechazilla

- **Launch and Ascent:** The SpaceX Starship rocket, along with its Super Heavy booster, launches from the ground.
- **Booster Separation:** After reaching a certain altitude, the booster separates from the upper stage of the rocket.
- **Controlled Descent:** The booster begins descending back to Earth, using precision thrusters to control its path.
- **Catching the Booster:** As the booster nears the landing site, Mechazilla's giant arms move into position. The booster hovers briefly before the arms catch it, ensuring a safe and controlled landing.

Significance:

- **Re-useable:** This new method of rocket recovery is far more efficient and reusable compared to traditional landing techniques.
 - **Cost effective:** By catching the booster in midair, SpaceX can quickly refurbish and reuse it, significantly reducing launch costs and increasing the sustainability of space missions.
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