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Current Affairs - 09 November 2024

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) said in its non-public documents that food delivery giants in India are in breach of the antitrust and competition laws of India, with their business practices favouring select restaurants listed on their platforms.



COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

- It is a **statutory body** which was established in March 2009 under the **Competition Act, 2002**.
- The goal of CCI is to create and sustain fair competition in the economy that will provide a 'level playing field' to the producers and make the markets work for the welfare of consumers.
- The priority of the Commission is to **eliminate practices having adverse effects on competition**, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers, and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- **Mandate:** To implement provisions of The Competition Act, 2002 which –
 - **prohibits anti-competitive agreements** and abuse of dominant position by enterprises;
 - **regulates mergers and acquisitions (M&A)** which can have an adverse effect on competition within India. Thus, deals beyond a certain threshold are required to get clearance from CCI.
- It oversees the operations of big enterprises to ensure they are not abusing their 'dominant position' or power by controlling supply, setting up high purchase prices, or adopting practices that are unethical and may harm budding enterprises.
- **Composition:**
 - It has the composition of a quasi-judicial body, with one chairperson and six additional members.
 - All members of the CCI are **appointed by the Central Government**.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.

Current Affairs - 09 November 2024

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA)

- ISA is a treaty based inter-governmental organization.
 - ISA was conceived as a **coalition of solar-resource-rich countries** (which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn) to address their special energy needs.
 - It was launched jointly by **India and France** at the side-lines of COP 21 (held in Paris) in 2015. The Paris Declaration had established the ISA.
- It is working to create a global market system to tap the benefits of solar power and promote clean energy applications.
- **HQ** - Gurugram
- **Objective**
 - The objective of ISA is to collectively address key common challenges to the scaling up of solar energy in line with their needs.
 - To meet this objective, it aims to pave the way for future solar generation, storage and technologies for Member countries' needs by mobilising over USD 1000 billion by 2030.

Performance of ISA

- ISA was designed to be a facilitator rather than a direct developer of solar projects.
- It aimed to help countries address financial, technological, and regulatory barriers to boost solar energy deployment, especially in regions with low energy access.
- However, nearly nine years after its inception, the ISA has seen limited impact, with no operational projects yet.
- The first ISA-supported project, a 60 MW plant in Cuba, is still in development stages, with other countries in Africa and Latin America preparing for similar projects.



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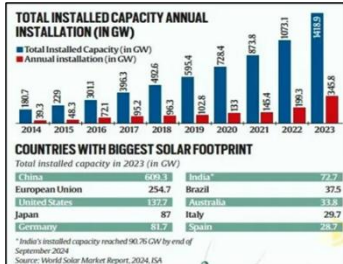
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Current Affairs - 09 November 2024



ISA's Efforts to Overcome Barriers to Solar Deployment in Developing Countries

- ISA has focused on addressing significant entry barriers in smaller developing nations, especially in Africa, where large-scale solar project experience and local developers are lacking.
- Foreign investments require stable policies and regulatory frameworks, which ISA is helping to establish by working with governments and local institutions.
- Key initiatives include creating regulatory structures, drafting power purchase agreements, and establishing STAR (Solar Technology and Applications Resource) centers to build local expertise.
- ISA aims to deploy 1,000 GW of solar power and attract \$1 trillion in investment by 2030.

India's leadership role

- ISA was established not just to promote solar energy but as a strategic initiative for India's outreach to the Global South, with a particular focus on Africa.
- Though an intergovernmental organization, ISA is widely seen as an Indian initiative due to its New Delhi headquarters, Indian funding, and Indian leadership of its general assembly, which will continue until at least 2026.
- PM Modi has highlighted ISA's role as a symbol of India's leadership for the Global South.
- However, ISA's impact has been limited by underfunding, staffing shortages, and challenges in generating interest in solar energy among energy-deprived nations.
- Its underutilization affects India's ambitions to lead and advocate for these countries on the global stage.

Current Affairs - 09 November 2024

BIBEK DEBROY COMMITTEE ON REFORMS IN INDIAN RAILWAYS

- The Bibek Debroy Committee, formed in 2014, aimed at **suggesting comprehensive reforms for the Indian Railways** to improve operational efficiency, financial viability, and competitiveness.
- Chaired by renowned economist **Bibek Debroy**, the committee published its landmark report in **2015**, proposing extensive changes to transform Indian Railways.
- The report highlighted issues across decision-making structures, financial management, human resources, and the need for liberalization within Indian Railways.

Key Recommendations of the Bibek Debroy Committee:

- **Empowerment of Railway Officers:**
 - The committee emphasized empowering field officers, including General Managers (GMs) and Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs), by **granting them greater decision-making authority**.
 - The government has partially implemented this by empowering GMs and DRMs to make independent decisions, handle various tenders, and manage divisions as business units.
- **Establishment of an Independent Regulator:**
 - A major recommendation was to set up an independent regulatory body to ensure fair competition and regulate pricing.
 - The **Rail Development Authority (RDA)** was approved in 2017, intended to provide expert advice on service pricing, enhance non-fare revenue, and foster competition.
- **Liberalization of Indian Railways:**
 - The committee recommended "liberalization," allowing private operators to participate in rail services to increase competitiveness and improve services.

Current Affairs - 09 November 2024

- It clarified that liberalization does not imply "privatization" but aims at creating a competitive environment.
- However, **due to opposition from railway unions and political parties, the government has not fully implemented this recommendation.**
- **Safety Measures and Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK):**
 - In response to the committee's recommendations on safety, the Ministry of Railways created the **Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK)** in 2017 with a **fund of ₹1 lakh crore for replacing, renewing, and upgrading critical safety assets.**
 - In 2022-23, the government extended RRSK with an **additional ₹45,000 crore in budgetary support.**
- **Integration of Advanced Technology:**
 - The committee recommended integrating advanced technology to modernize railway operations, including the adoption of high-speed trains like Vande Bharat and safety systems like KAVACH.
 - The establishment of **Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya** for skill development and capacity building in rail technology aligns with this goal, focusing on empowering the workforce with modern skills.

Implementation Status:

- Out of the 40 recommendations made by the committee:
 - **19 were fully accepted**, including the redesignation of the Railway Board Chairman as CEO, accounting reforms, and setting up RRSK.
 - **7 were partially accepted**, such as empowering DRMs and implementing decentralization at the division level.
 - **14 recommendations were rejected**, mainly due to opposition from unions or political considerations, especially regarding liberalization and private sector entry in passenger services.
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PYPIM PLATFORM



Israeli researchers have developed PyPIM that enables computers to process data directly in memory, bypassing the need for the Central Processing Unit (CPU).

- It combines the Python programming language with digital processing-in-memory (PIM) technology.
- It uses new instructions to enable operations to be performed directly in memory.
- The platform allows developers to write software for PIM computers using familiar programming languages like Python.
- The researchers aim to tackle the “**memory wall**” problem, where increases in processor speeds and memory capacity outpace data transfer rates.
- This innovation addresses the **energy- and time-intensive data transfers** between memory and the CPU, which have increasingly become bottlenecks in modern computing.
- By performing some computations in memory, this approach reduces dependence on the CPU, leading to significant time and energy savings.
- Traditional computer programs rely on separate hardware components for memory and processing, requiring data to be transferred from memory to the CPU for computation.
- To support in-memory computing, the researchers developed a platform called PyPIM.

EXERCISE AUSTRAHIND



The 3rd edition of joint military Exercise AUSTRAHIND commenced at the Foreign Training Node, Pune in Maharashtra. The exercise will be conducted from 8th to 21st November 2024.

- It is a **joint military exercise** held between **India and Australia**.
- It is an annual event conducted **alternatively in India and Australia**. The last edition of the same exercise was conducted in Australia in December 2023.



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Current Affairs - 09 November 2024

- The Indian contingent comprising 140 personnel will be represented mainly by a **battalion of the DOGRA Regiment** and 14 personnel from the **Indian Air Force**.
- Exercise AUSTRAHIND aims to promote military cooperation between India and Australia through the enhancement of interoperability in the conduct of **joint sub-conventional operations in semi-urban environments in semi-desert terrain** under Chapter VII of the UN mandate.
- The exercise will be conducted in two phases – **combat conditioning and tactical training phase and validation phase**.
- Drills/ aspects to be rehearsed during the exercise will include response to a terrorist action of capturing a defined territory; establishment of a Joint Operations Centre; conduct of **joint counter-terrorism operations** like Raid and Search and Destroy Missions; securing of a helipad; employment of drones and counter-drone measures and Special Heli Borne Operations, among others.
- **Significance:** It will enable the two sides to share their best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting tactical operations.

INS VIKRANT



It is **India's first indigenously designed** and manufactured aircraft carrier.

- The ship has been designed in-house by the Indian Navy's **Warship Design Bureau** and constructed by M/s Cochin Shipyard Limited.
- It strengthens the country's standing as a 'Blue Water Navy' — a maritime force with global reach and capability to operate over deep seas.
- With it, India also joined the elite group of nations – the **US, Russia, France, the UK and China** – who are capable of designing and constructing aircraft carriers.

Features:



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Current Affairs - 09 November 2024

- Its full-load displacement is 43,000 tonnes.
 - **Endurance:** 8,600 miles (13,890 kilometres)
 - **Aircraft capacity:** It can accommodate up to 30 fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, and rotary-wing aircraft, such as anti-submarine warfare helicopters and utility helicopters.
 - It can operate an air wing of 30 aircraft comprising MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31, and MH-60R multi-role helicopters, in addition to indigenous Advanced Light Helicopters and Light Combat Aircraft (Navy).
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SAGARMALA PARIKRAMA



- Sagarmala Parikrama's journey was virtually flagged off by the Union Defence minister on October 29 during the Swavlamban event.
- It is supported by the Indian Navy's Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIO), **Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC)**, and the **Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)**.
- The Sagarmala Parikrama aligns with **global advancements in autonomous surface** and underwater systems, offering transformative applications in both military and civilian sectors.
- This first-of-its-kind journey highlights India's growing expertise in autonomous maritime technology and establishes a significant milestone in developing cutting-edge, unmanned systems for national security.

Applications: It paves the way for future deployment of autonomous vessels in critical sea lanes, **coastal surveillance**, and **anti-piracy operations**, expanding the Indian Navy's operational reach.



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Current Affairs - 09 November 2024

DIGITAL POPULATION CLOCK



Recently, Bengaluru's first digital population clock was inaugurated at the Institute for Social Economic Change (ISEC).

- It will access real-time estimates of **Karnataka's and population of India**.
- The project was jointly taken up by ISEC, and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- It would update the figures of the **state's population every 1.10 minutes** (one minute 10 seconds) and the country's population **every two seconds**.
- It aims to **increase awareness of population dynamics** and provide accurate data for research.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) is installing similar clocks in 18 Population Research Centres across India.
- The clock has been **equipped with a satellite connection** for precise timekeeping. It operates autonomously with all necessary components integrated into the system.
- It is also equipped with **state-of-the-art software** and tools to facilitate detailed demographic studies.

Significance: The clock will play a pivotal role in advancing our understanding of population trends.

- The new census data research workstation would further strengthen academic research, policy analysis, and capacity building in population studies.
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