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## Current Affairs - 20 December 2024

### EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR (EMC)



- The **Chennai-Vladivostok Sea Route**, also known as the EMC, connects South India with Russia's Far East region.
- The corridor significantly reduces cargo **transit time by up to 16 days** and cuts **distance by up to 40%**, making it a highly efficient trade route.
- The traditional Mumbai-to-St. Petersburg route spans **8,675 nautical miles (16,066 km)** and takes over **40 days** for cargo transportation. In contrast, the Chennai-Vladivostok route is only **5,647 nautical miles (10,458 km)** and takes **24 days**, saving approximately **5,608 km** in distance.
- The EMC passes through key waterways, including the **Sea of Japan, East China Sea, South China Sea, Malacca Straits, Andaman Sea, and the Bay of Bengal**.
- Ports along the route include **Dalian, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Ho Chi Minh City, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Dhaka, Colombo, and Chennai**.

### Other Maritime Corridors for India:

- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** A **7,200 km multimodal transit route** connecting the **Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf** to the **Caspian Sea** via Iran, and further to Europe via Russia.
  - Includes **13 member countries** and offers three routes: Central, Western, and Eastern.
  - In 2024, Russia sent two coal-laden trains to India via the INSTC for the first time.
- **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):** Announced at the **G20 Summit 2023**, this project connects **India, the Middle East, and Europe** via rail, road, and maritime links.
  - Includes two corridors: **East Corridor** (India to the Arabian Gulf) and **Northern Corridor** (Gulf to Europe).



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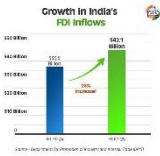
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- Features **electricity cables, hydrogen pipelines, and high-speed data cables** for greater regional integration.

**Northern Sea Route (NSR):** This **5,600 km** maritime route in the Arctic Ocean connects the Pacific and Atlantic oceans through the Arctic, is piquing the interest of numerous nations—India, Russia, and China, in particular.

- It links the Barents and Kara Seas to the Bering Strait.
- Offers transit times up to **50% shorter** than traditional routes like the Suez Canal.
- Gains importance for India due to increased imports of **Russian crude oil and coal**.

### FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI)



- FDI refers to an investment made by a company or individual from one country into a business or establishment in another country. It involves not only the transfer of capital but also **expertise, technology, and skills** that contribute to the host country's economic development.
- **Types of FDI:**
  - **Greenfield Investment:** Establishing new facilities from scratch, providing high control and customisation.
  - **Brownfield Investment:** Expanding operations through mergers, acquisitions, or joint ventures, leveraging existing infrastructure.
- **Governance:** FDI in India is governed by the **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999**, and is administered by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Entry routes:**
  - **Automatic Route:** Investment does not require prior government approval.

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- **Government Route:** Investment requires approval from the relevant ministry or department.
  - **Sectoral Policies on FDI:**
    - **Sectors under the automatic route:** These include **Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, E-commerce, Biotechnology, Renewable Energy**, and others.
    - **Sectors under the Government route:** These include **Banking, Broadcasting, Food Retail, and Satellite Operations**.
    - **Prohibited sectors:** FDI is prohibited in **atomic energy, gambling, lotteries, chit funds, real estate, and the tobacco industry**.
  - **India's Top FDI Sources (2023–2024):** India received the highest FDI inflows from **Singapore**, followed by **Mauritius, the United States, the Netherlands, and Japan**.
  - **FDI trends over the last decade (2014–2024):** Between April 2014 and September 2024, India received **\$709.84 billion in FDI**, accounting for **68.69% of total FDI inflows since 2000**. Key initiatives like **Make in India, liberalised sectoral policies**, and the implementation of GST have strengthened investor confidence.
  - A significant **26% rise in FDI inflows to \$42.1 billion** in the first half of the current fiscal year underscores India's growing **appeal as a global investment destination**.
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### LOKAYUKTA

**Lokayukta** is **State-level anti-corruption body** tasked with investigating complaints of corruption and maladministration against public officials.

- It is inspired by the **Ombudsman system** in Scandinavian countries.
- It was recommended by the **first Administrative Reforms Commission, 1966** chaired by Morarji Desai.
- The first Lokayukta was established in **Maharashtra in 1971**.

### Legal Framework:

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- **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013:**
  - Mandates the establishment of **Lokpal** at the **Union level** and **Lokayukta** in states.
  - Requires that at least **50% of members** belong to **SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, or women**.
  - Lokayukta is a **statutory body** without constitutional status.
- **Lokayukta Selection and Removal:**
  - Typically, a **former Chief Justice of a High Court** or **former Supreme Court judge**.
  - Selected by a panel comprising the **CM, Chief Justice of the HC, and leaders of both legislative houses, among others**.
  - Removal requires **impeachment by the state assembly**.

### Work and Functions:

- Investigates **corruption and maladministration** complaints.
- Ensures **speedy redressal of public grievances**.
- Can recommend action but lacks binding enforcement powers unless provided by state-specific legislation.

### Current issue

- The **Karnataka High Court (HC)** has stayed the **Lokayukta investigation** into the alleged **MUDA (Mysore Urban Development Authority) land allotment scam** involving the Chief Minister's family, following a plea for a **CBI probe**.
- The case revolves around the **allocation of 14 housing sites** worth **₹56 crores** to CM's wife under a controversial **50:50 land compensation scheme**.



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### [NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL \(NGT\)](#)

- NGT was established under the **National Green Tribunal Act,**

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- The principal bench is located in **New Delhi**, with additional benches in **Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai**.

### Composition of NGT:

- The Tribunal comprises:
  - **Chairperson:** A retired Supreme Court judge.
  - **Judicial members:** Retired High Court judges.
  - **Expert members:** Professionals with at least **15 years of experience** in fields related to environment or forest conservation.
- **Structure of benches:** Each bench includes **at least one judicial member and one expert member** to ensure balanced decision-making.

### Powers and Jurisdiction of NGT:

- **Scope:** NGT handles **civil cases** related to environmental issues and laws listed in **Schedule I of the NGT Act**:
    - **The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.**
    - **The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977.**
    - **The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.**
    - **The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**
    - **The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.**
    - **The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991.**
    - **The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.**
  - **Special powers:**
    - Acts as an **appellate authority** for environmental cases.
    - Operates on principles of **natural justice**, not bound by the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.
    - Mandated to resolve cases within **six months** of filing.
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### WHAT IS A DARK COMET?



- They are celestial bodies which **lack the glowing tails** (a typical feature of comets) and resemble asteroids.
- They are often **small, just a few meters** to a few hundred meters wide.
- They have less surface area for material to escape and form into the beautiful tails we see on typical comets.
- But they are not asteroids due to their sudden accelerations.
- They often **spin quite rapidly** and disperse escaping gas and dust in all directions, making them less visible.
- They follow **elongated, elliptical paths** that bring them close to the Sun before sweeping back out to the farthest reaches of the Solar System.
- The first indication of **dark comets came in 2016**, when asteroid 2003 RM exhibited unusual orbital deviations.
- Since then, astronomers have confirmed the existence of dark comets, with a new study published which revealed 14 such objects.
- These comets fall into two main categories: “**outer dark comets**,” which have eccentric orbits and are larger, and “**inner dark comets**,” which are smaller and closer to the Sun, with nearly circular orbits.

### NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR MINORITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



- It was established by the **National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) Act 2004**.
- It is a **quasi judicial body** and has been endowed with the **powers of a Civil Court** for the purpose of discharging its functions under the Act.

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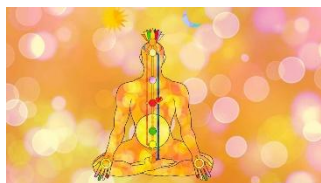
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- It aims to safeguard the educational rights of the minorities enshrined in **Article 30(1)** of the Constitution.
- The Commission has three main roles namely **adjudicatory, advisory and recommendatory**.

### Powers of the Commission:

- It decides **all questions relating** to the status of any institution as a **Minority Educational Institution (MEI)**.
  - It serves as an appellate authority in respect of disputes pertaining to Minority Status/No Objection Certificate (NOC).
  - Educational institutions aggrieved by the order of refusal to grant Minority Status Certificate/No Objection Certificate by the competent authority of State/UT, can appeal to the Commission against such orders.
  - The Commission has the power to **cancel the minority status** of an educational institution granted by an Authority or Commission, on grounds laid down in the Act.
  - It also has powers to call for information while enquiring into the complaints of violation or deprivation of the educational rights of the minorities.
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### VARMAM THERAPY



Recently, the National Institute of Siddha (NIS) has set a Guinness World Record for providing Varmam therapy to 567 individuals simultaneously.

Varmam Therapy is a unique and **traditional healing modality** within the **Siddha system of medicine**, has long been revered for its effectiveness in treating various health conditions.

- It is a **drugless, non-invasive, simple therapy** used in pain management.

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- Varmam is considered the vital life energy points, located in human body. It has been identified as 108 points by the Siddhars.
- The therapy is particularly renowned for its ability to provide rapid relief for **musculoskeletal pain, injuries, and neurological disorders**.
- It is a scientifically grounded therapeutic practice used to treat acute and chronic diseases, including stroke, arthritis, and trauma-related injuries.
- **Significance of the achievement:** It serves as a testament to the growing global recognition of Siddha medicine and its healing potential.

### Siddha Medicine:

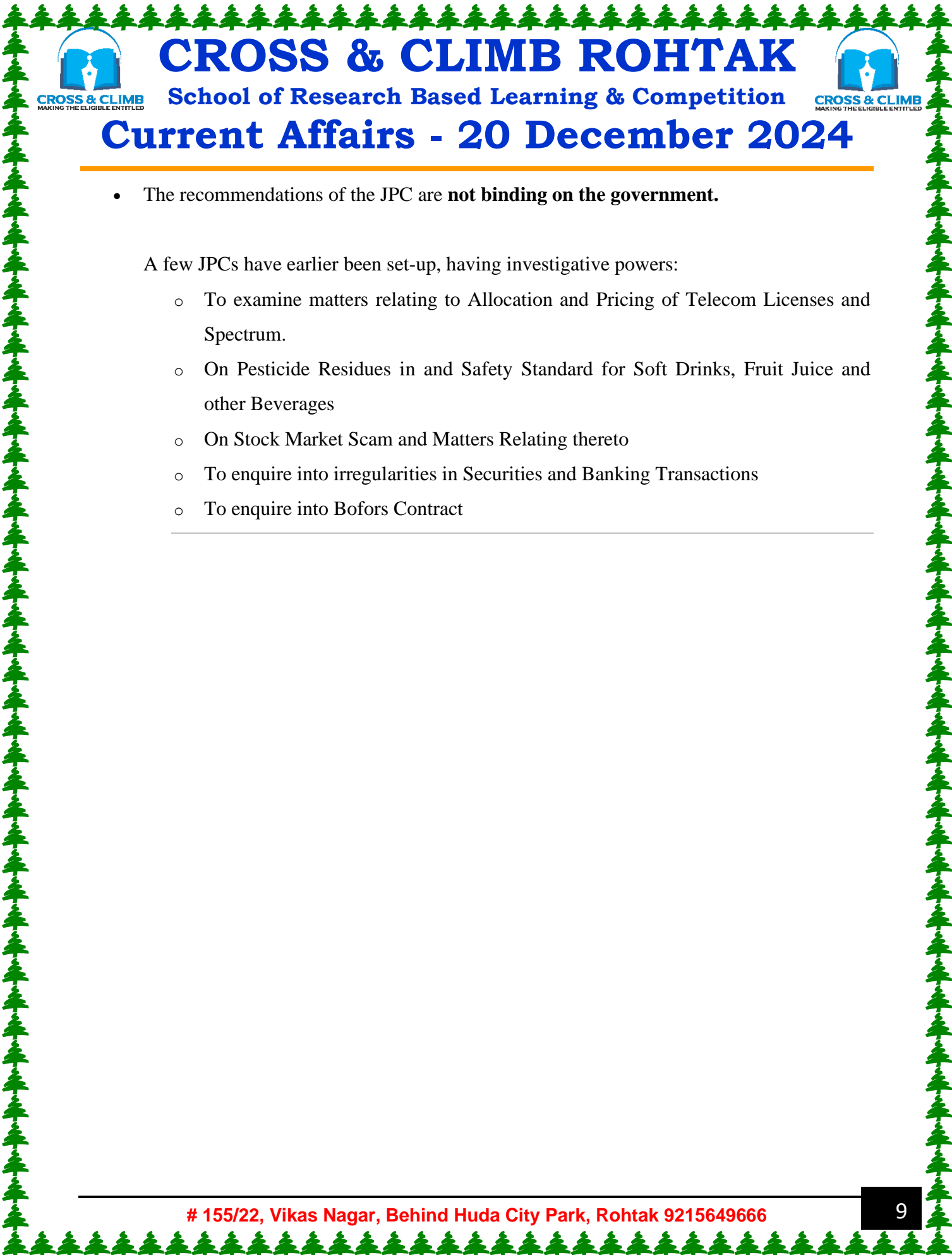
- It is a traditional system of **healing that originated in South India** and is considered to be one of India's oldest systems of medicine.
  - Literary evidences of the Sangam Era state the origin of this system to around 10,000 BC.
  - The system was **built on the work of Siddhars**, who were mostly from Tamil Nadu. It is called the Siddha medical system because of this.
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### JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE (JPC)



- It is an **ad-hoc body**, which acts as a mini-Parliament to carry out detailed scrutiny of a specific matter within a specific time frame. It is dissolved after its term ends or its task has been completed.
- It is set up by the **Parliament for a special purpose**, like the detailed scrutiny of a subject or Bill.
- It has members from both the Houses and from the ruling parties and the opposition.
- It is set up after **one House of Parliament has passed a Motion** and the other has agreed to it.
- The members of the JPC are decided by the Parliament.
- The mandate of a JPC depends on the **Motion constituting it**.





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- The recommendations of the JPC are **not binding on the government.**

A few JPCs have earlier been set-up, having investigative powers:

- To examine matters relating to Allocation and Pricing of Telecom Licenses and Spectrum.
  - On Pesticide Residues in and Safety Standard for Soft Drinks, Fruit Juice and other Beverages
  - On Stock Market Scam and Matters Relating thereto
  - To enquire into irregularities in Securities and Banking Transactions
  - To enquire into Bofors Contract
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