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Current Affairs - 03 December 2024

GLOBAL ONE-STOP CENTRES



- These centres aim to provide comprehensive **assistance to women in vulnerable situations**, addressing their immediate needs and offering critical support.
- Out of the nine proposed OSCs, seven will include shelter homes and will be set up in **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia** (with centres in both Jeddah and Riyadh).
- The remaining two centres, located in **Toronto and Singapore**, will operate without shelter home facilities.
- To facilitate the rollout of these initiatives, the Ministry of External Affairs has opened a dedicated budget line for these missions.

The **Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)** will play a vital role in extending welfare measures to distressed Indian nationals, particularly women.

- The ICWF has significantly expanded its scope to address a wide range of issues faced by overseas Indians.
- The fund now **covers emergency assistance** such as boarding and lodging, air travel for those stranded, legal aid, medical care, and the repatriation of mortal remains.

The ICWF guidelines include specific provisions for **legal assistance and counselling for women** abandoned by their overseas Indian or foreign spouses.

- Legal panels have also been established in countries with large Indian diasporas to provide timely and efficient support.
- In cases involving minor legal infractions, the fund allows for the payment of fines to secure the release of Indian nationals.



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NAZCA LINES



Recently, artificial intelligence was used by the researchers to discover more mysterious Nazca geoglyphs in Peru.

- Nazca Lines are a **group of geoglyphs**, or large designs made on the ground by creators using elements of the landscape such as stones, gravel, dirt or lumber.
- These are located in the **arid Peruvian coastal plain**, some 400 km south of Lima.
- The Nazca Lines were discovered by hikers in the mid 1920s and later on Peruvian archaeologist **Toribio Mejia Xesspe** studied them systematically in 1926.
- These are believed to be the greatest known **archaeological enigma**, owing to their size, continuity, nature and quality.
- They depict creatures from both the **natural world and the human imagination**.
 - They include animals such as the spider, hummingbird, monkey, lizard, pelican and even a killer whale. Ancient artisans also depicted plants, trees, flowers and oddly shaped fantastic figures, as **well as geometric motifs**, such as wavy lines, triangles, spirals and rectangles.

The vast majority of the **lines date from 200 B.C. to A.D. 500**, to a time when a people referred to as the Nazca inhabited the region.

- The earliest lines, created with piled up stones, date as far back as 500 B.C.

The Lines were declared a **World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1994**.

What are Geoglyphs?

- Geoglyphs are **motifs created on the ground** by manipulating surface stones, soil, or gravel.
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HIGH RISK FOOD



Recently, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has decided to treat the packaged drinking and mineral water segment as a “High Risk Food Category”.

- Food products that come under the “High Risk” category are **subjected to mandatory risk-based inspections.**
- They include dairy, meat, fish egg, and food items intended for nutritional use, prepared food, Indian sweets and nutrients, and related preparations such as fortified rice kernel.
- In its order, the FSSAI has made amendments in its **Risk-Based Inspection Policy** to include the packaged **drinking water and mineral water categories.**
- This means that these products will now be subject to mandatory inspections and **third-party audits.**
- All centrally licensed manufacturers under high-risk food categories shall get their businesses **audited annually.**
- This **aims to improve the safety and quality standards** of these products for consumers.
- Previously, the packaged drinking water industry had called for simplified regulations, requesting the removal of dual certification requirements from both BIS and FSSAI.

Key Facts about the FSSAI

- It is an autonomous body established under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.**
 - The FSSAI has been established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
 - It is responsible for **protecting and promoting public health** through the regulation and supervision of food safety.
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EXERCISE HARIMAU SHAKTI



The 4th edition of Exercise HARIMAU SHAKTI commenced at Bentong camp, Pahang district, Malaysia.

- It is a joint **military exercise** conducted **between India and Malaysia**.
- Indian contingent comprising personnel is being represented by a Battalion of MAHAR Regiment.
- It is an annual training event conducted **alternatively in India and Malaysia**. Last edition was conducted in November 2023 at Umroi Cantonment in Meghalaya, India.
- Aim of the Joint Exercise is to **enhance joint military capability** of both sides to undertake **counter insurgency operations** in jungle terrain under Chapter VII of the **United Nations Mandate**. The exercise will focus on operations in the jungle environment.

The 2024 exercise will be conducted in **two phases**.

- The first phase will be focused on cross training between both the Armies including **lectures, demonstrations**, and practices of various drills in jungle terrain.
- In the final phase both the Armies will take active part in a simulated exercise, wherein **troops will execute various drills** including Anti-MT Ambush, Occupation of Harbour, Carrying out Recce Patrol, Ambush and an Attack on area taken over by the terrorists.

Significance: It will enable both sides to **share best practices in Tactics**, Techniques and Procedures of conducting joint operations. It will facilitate developing interoperability, bonhomie and camaraderie between the two armies.



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WHAT IS NATIONAL HOUSING BANK (NHB)?



Aviom India Housing Finance has informed its creditors about an ongoing audit by the National Housing Bank (NHB) following the discovery of fraudulent transactions during a recent onsite supervisory inspection.

- It is an **apex agency** established to **promote housing finance companies (HFCs)** in India.
- It is an **All-India Financial Institution (AIFI)** wholly owned by the **Government of India (GoI)**.
- It **supervises HFCs**, while **regulation of HFCs is with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.

Formation:

- The National Housing Policy, 1988, envisaged the setting up of NHB as the apex-level institution for housing.
- In pursuance of the above, NHB was **set up on July 9, 1988, under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987**.
- **RBI contributed the entire paid-up capital.**
- The **broad functions** of NHB as a part of its objective of building a strong, healthy, cost-effective, and viable Housing Finance System include:
- **Supervision and grievance redressal** regarding HFCs

Financing

- **Promotion and Development.**
- **NHB RESIDEX:** It is the **country's first official housing price index (HPI)**. It captures movements in the prices of residential real estate prices.



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Current Affairs - 03 December 2024

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 2024



- IDPD, observed annually on **December 3**, celebrates the resilience, contributions, and leadership of persons with disabilities (PwDs) worldwide.
- This day serves as a reminder of the global commitment to fostering inclusivity, advocating for the rights of PwDs, and creating equitable opportunities for all.
- This year's theme is **“Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future”**.
- The IDPD was **proclaimed in 1992 by United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3**.
- It aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development and increase awareness of their situation in every aspect of political, social, economic, and cultural life.
- Building on many decades of UN work in the field of disability, the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006**, has further advanced the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international development frameworks.

Initiatives by the Indian Government:

- India has made significant strides in promoting the rights and inclusion of Divyangjan through various policies and campaigns. A few of these initiatives are listed below:
 - Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
 - **Accessible India Campaign**
 - **Deendayal Divyangjan Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)**
 - District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRC)

Current Affairs - 03 December 2024

ELECTRONIC TRACKING OF UNDERTRIALS ON BAIL

- Electronic monitoring (EM) of prisoners is a program that uses electronic devices to track the location and behavior of offenders.
- EM is used to monitor offenders in a variety of situations, including:
 - **House arrest:** EM can be used to monitor offenders who are ordered to house arrest as a pre-trial condition.
 - **Parole:** EM can be used to monitor offenders who are released on parole.
 - **Community sentences:** EM can be used as part of a community sentence or suspended sentence order.
 - **Early release:** EM can be used to allow for the early release of prisoners.

Benefits of Electronic Tracking of Prisoners

- **Overcrowding in Indian Prisons**
 - According to the NCRB, Indian prisons had an occupancy rate of 131.4% as of December 2022, with 5,73,220 inmates housed in facilities with a capacity of only 4,36,266.
 - Notably, 75.8% of the prisoners were undertrials.
- **Cost-Effective Solution**
 - The Prisons in India report highlights electronic monitoring as a cost-effective method to reduce prison overcrowding.
 - It cites Odisha's data, where the government spends Rs 1 lakh annually per undertrial prisoner, compared to Rs 10,000–15,000 for an electronic tracker.
- **Mental health benefits:** Improves family contact and reduces stress from isolation.

Conclusion - Balancing Privacy and Monitoring

The discourse underscores the need for stringent safeguards, limited application, and respect for fundamental rights to ensure electronic tracking aligns with constitutional principles.

Current Affairs - 03 December 2024

WHY COUNTRIES ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE TRYING TO REPLACE US DOLLAR?

- **Weaponization of the Dollar:**
 - The US has increasingly used its financial dominance as a geopolitical tool by imposing sanctions and cutting off countries like Iran and Russia from systems like SWIFT.
 - Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) is key to international financial transactions.
 - **Reducing Dependence on the US**
 - The US dollar remains the dominant global currency, accounting for 88% of global forex turnover (BIS 2022).
 - Relying on the US dollar makes countries vulnerable to US monetary policies, which are primarily designed for the American economy but can have global repercussions.
 - **Trade Efficiency:**
 - Regional and bilateral trade agreements often promote settling trade in local currencies or alternatives like China's yuan or regional payment mechanisms, bypassing the dollar altogether.
 - **Rise of Multipolarity:**
 - With the global balance of power shifting, emerging economies like China, India, and Brazil are advocating for a more decentralized financial order that reflects the multipolar nature of the modern world.
 - **Avoiding Transaction Costs**
 - Conducting trade in the US dollar often involves high transaction and conversion costs. Using local currencies or regional alternatives can reduce these expenses.
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JIM CORBETT NATIONAL PARK



- It is located at the **foothills of the Himalayas** in the **Nainital district of Uttarakhand**.

- It is the **first national park of India**, established in **1936**.

It was named **Hailey National Park** then.

- In **1957**, the park was **rechristened Corbett National Park** in memory of the late **Jim Corbett**, a great naturalist and eminent conservationist.
- Known for housing the endangered Bengal tiger, Corbett National Park is **part of the larger Corbett Tiger Reserve**.
- It was the **first place where Project Tiger** was launched in **1973**.
- The park is spread over an area of more than **500 sq.km**.
- The park encompasses the **Patli Dun valley** formed by the **Ramganga river**.
- The terrain is undulating with several valleys. The rivers **Ramganga, Pallaen, and Sonanadi** flow through the valleys.

Flora:

- In general, the vegetation comprises **sal and mixed forests**, interspersed with **grasslands and riparian vegetation**.
- The **grasslands** are **locally known as 'Chaur'**, which are an outcome of abandoned settlements or past clearings.
- Evergreen Sal and its combined trees, the **Sheesham** and the **Kanju**, are found extensively on the ridges.
- **One plant**, (actually a weed), which is a **major irritant** to the reserve authorities and is **widespread in the jungle**, is the

Fauna: **Tigers** and **elephants** are the charismatic mammals, besides a large array of co-predators (**leopards**, small carnivores), ungulates (**sambar, hog deer**, spotted deer), birds, reptiles (**gharials, crocodiles**), and fishes.
