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Current Affairs - 24 September 2024

PM MODI ADDRESS AT THE SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

- It was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations and is headquartered in New York City.
- It is one of the six principal organs of the UN and serves as the main policy-making organ of the Organization.
- It provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations.
- Each Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.

79th UN General Assembly

- The UNGA 79, held from 10th to 30th September 2024 focuses on accelerating progress toward achieving the 17 SDGs.
- During this, global leaders will address interconnected challenges and adopt the Pact for the Future, which includes a Global Digital Compact highlighting gender equality.
- The 79th session is being chaired by Cameroonian President Philemon Yong.
- **Theme** – “Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations”

Summit of the Future

- On 22-23 September 2024, Heads of State and Government met at the UN Headquarters in New York to address global governance challenges revealed by recent crises.
- The Summit aims to reaffirm commitments to the SDGs and the UN Charter, strengthen cooperation, and lay the groundwork for an improved multilateral system.
- The summit emphasized the importance of international cooperation to tackle critical global challenges such as climate change, poverty, inequality, ongoing conflicts, and health crises.

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- **Theme** - "Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow"
- The expected outcome of the Summit includes a Pact for the Future, alongside documents like the Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.

Key highlights of the speech delivered by PM Modi at Summit of the Future

- **Emphasis on Collective Strength for Global Peace and Development**
 - PM Modi emphasized that "the success of humanity lies in our collective strength, not in the battlefield." He highlighted the need for reforms in global institutions to achieve lasting global peace and sustainable development, advocating for a human-centric approach in tackling global challenges.
 - **New Theatres of Conflict: Cyber, Maritime, and Space**
 - PM Modi underscored the emergence of cyber, maritime, and space as new conflict arenas, alongside traditional threats like terrorism. He called for global digital governance to ensure the protection of national sovereignty and integrity.
 - **India's Commitment to Sustainable Development and Global South**
 - Reflecting on India's success in lifting 250 million people out of poverty, PM Modi highlighted the country's achievements in sustainable development and expressed readiness to share this experience with the Global South.
 - **India's Role in Global Governance Reforms**
 - Modi emphasized the importance of reforming international institutions like the UN Security Council, aligning with India's aspiration for permanent membership.
 - He cited the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 under India's presidency as an example of such reforms.
 - **Digital Infrastructure for Global Good**
 - PM Modi advocated for digital public infrastructure to serve as a bridge for global good, offering India's digital infrastructure to the world. He stressed that global action must match global ambition in areas such as cyber, maritime, and space security.
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WHAT IS THE ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ACT (AFSPA), 1958?



- It is a law enacted by the Parliament in 1958 which gives the **armed forces special powers** and immunity to **maintain public order** in “**disturbed areas**”.
- **When is it applied?** It can be applied only after an area has been declared “**disturbed**” under section 2 of the Act.
- **What is a Disturbed area?**
 - An area can be considered to be disturbed due to differences or **disputes among different religious, racial, language, or regional groups** or castes or communities.
- **Who declares an area as disturbed?**
 - The **Central Government, or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory**, can **declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory** as a disturbed area.
 - It can be invoked in places where “the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary”.
- The ‘**special powers**’ of **armed forces** under AFSPA are:
 - They have the authority to **prohibit a gathering of five or more persons** in an area, **can use force or even open fire after giving due warning** if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.
 - If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also **arrest a person without a warrant, enter or search a premises without a warrant**, and **ban the possession of firearms**.
 - **Any person arrested** or taken into custody **may be handed over to** the officer in charge of the **nearest police station**, along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.



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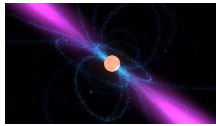


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- These armed forces are immune from prosecution unless the Union Government provides sanction to the prosecuting agencies.
- Where is AFSPA in force now?
 - Apart from Nagaland, the AFSPA is currently in force in Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Manipur except Imphal, and Arunachal Pradesh.

WHAT IS A PULSAR?



- Pulsars are **rapidly rotating neutron stars** that **blast out pulses of radiation at regular intervals** ranging from seconds to milliseconds.
- Pulsars have **very strong magnetic fields**, which **funnel jets of particles out** along the two magnetic poles. These **accelerated particles produce very powerful beams of light**.
- Often, the **magnetic field is not aligned with the spin axis**, so those **beams of particles and light are swept around as the star rotates**.
- The **periodicity** of pulsars is **caused by these beams of light crossing the line of sight on Earth**, with the pulsar appearing to 'switch off' at points when the light is facing away from us. The time between these pulses is the 'period' of the pulsar.
- Pulsars have been **primarily observed at radio wavelengths**.
- Pulsar masses range between 1.18 and 1.97 times that of the Sun, but most pulsars have a mass 1.35 times that of the Sun.

What is a Neutron Star?

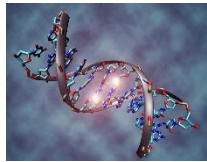
- Neutron stars are **highly dense remnants of massive stars** that have collapsed, composed mainly of neutrons and other elementary particles.
- Neutron stars are **formed when a massive star runs out of fuel and collapses**.
- The very central region of the star – **the core – collapses, crushing together every proton and electron into a neutron**.
- If the core of the collapsing star is between about 1 and 3 solar masses, these newly-created neutrons can stop the collapse, leaving behind a neutron star.

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What is the Green Bank Telescope (GBT)?

- With a $100\text{ m} \times 110\text{ m}$ off-axis paraboloid dish, the GBT is the **largest fully steerable radio telescope on Earth.**
 - It is located at Green Bank Observatory in the National Radio Quiet Zone in Green Bank, West Virginia, U.S.
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WHAT IS EPIGENETICS?



- Epigenetics is the **study of how cells control gene activity without changing the DNA sequence.**
- "Epi-" means on or above in Greek, and "epigenetic" describes factors beyond the genetic code.
- **Epigenetic changes are modifications to DNA that regulate whether genes are turned on or off.**
- These **Epigenetic modifications** are attached to DNA and **do not change the sequence of DNA** building blocks.
- Within the complete set of DNA in a cell (the genome), **all of the modifications that regulate the activity (expression) of the genes is known as the epigenome.**
- Because epigenetic changes help determine whether genes are turned on or off, they **influence the production of proteins in cells.**
 - This regulation helps **ensure that each cell produces only proteins that are necessary** for its function. For example, proteins that promote bone growth are not produced in muscle cells.
- **Patterns of epigenetic modification vary among individuals**, in different tissues within an individual, and even in different cells within a tissue.
- **Environmental influences**, such as a person's diet and exposure to pollutants, can **impact the epigenome.**



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- **Epigenetic modifications can be maintained from cell to cell as cells divide and, in some cases, can be inherited** through the generations.
 - **Errors in the epigenetic process**, such as modification of the wrong gene or failure to add a chemical group to a particular gene or histone, **can lead to abnormal gene activity or inactivity.**
 - **Altered gene activity**, including that caused by epigenetic errors, is a **common cause of genetic disorders.**
 - Conditions such as **cancers, metabolic disorders, and degenerative disorders** have been **found to be related to epigenetic errors.**
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NATIONAL CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION



NCDRC
NATIONAL CONSUMER
DISPUTES REDRESSAL
COMMISSION

- It is a **quasi-judicial commission** set up in 1988 under the **Consumer Protection Act of 1986.**
 - **Mandate:** To provide inexpensive, speedy, and summary redressal of consumer disputes.
 - It is headed by a **sitting or a retired Judge of the SC** or a **sitting or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court.**
 - NCDRC shall have jurisdiction to entertain a complaint valued more than two crore and also have appellate and revisional jurisdiction from the orders of State Commissions or the District fora as the case may be.
 - The provisions of this act cover 'goods' as well as 'services'.
 - **Who Can File a Complaint:** A complaint may be filed by the following:
 - A consumer
 - Any **voluntary consumer association** registered under the Companies Act 1956
 - The Central Government or any State Government
 - One or more consumers where there are numerous consumers.
 - **Appeal:** Any person aggrieved by an order of NCDRC, may prefer an appeal against such an order to SC within a **period of 30 days.**
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SPICED SCHEME



- It is aimed at significantly **enhancing the export of spices** and value-added spice products as well as improving the productivity of cardamoms and upgrading the post-harvest quality of spices across **India for export**.
- It is implemented during the remaining term of the 15th Finance Commission, **up to 2025-26**.
- **Key highlights of the Scheme**
 - It is expected to facilitate value addition and to drive innovation and sustainability in the spice sector by introducing new sub-components/programs **like the Mission Value Addition, Mission Clean and Safe Spices, promotion of GI spices**, support for entrepreneurship through Spice Incubation Centres, etc.
 - The scheme gives thrust on farmers groups / FPOS / Farmers Clusters identified under ODOP and DEH, SC/ST community, Exporters from NE region, and SMEs.
 - While exporters with a valid **Certificate of Registration as Exporter of Spices (CRES)** are eligible for assistance under these programs, preference will be given to first-time applicants, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), etc.
 - The programs under the components such as Improving the productivity of cardamom and Post-harvest quality upgradation of spices are specifically designed to empower farmer groups, including Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in key spice-growing regions.
 - These groups will be prioritized for **post-harvest improvement of spices**, with targeted assistance provided to enhance creation of an exportable surplus of spices, in compliance with the applicable food safety and quality standards.

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SC STRENGTHENING LAW AGAINST CHILD PORNOGRAPHY IN INDIA

Marking a significant move in the fight against child exploitation, the Supreme Court of India emphasised that the consumption of sexually explicit content involving minors is a severe criminal offence under the **POCSO Act**.

The top court **overruled a controversial judgement by the Madras HC**, which held that passive consumption of child pornography did not constitute an offence under the POCSO Act or the Information Technology (IT) Act.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act:

- It is the **first comprehensive law** in the country enacted in **2012** for dealing specifically with sexual abuse of children.
- Administered by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, the law is **intended to**
 - **Protect children from sexual assault**, sexual harassment and pornographic violations.
 - Establish Special Courts for such trials.
- In **2019**, the Act was amended to strengthen the penalties for specified offences in order to deter abusers and promote a dignified upbringing.

Examining the SC's Decision to Tighten the Law on Child Pornography:

- **The provision of the POCSO Act in question:** The Bench (led by the CJI) expanded the interpretation of **Section 15** of the POCSO Act, which deals with the “**Punishment for storage of pornographic material involving child**”.
- **Section 15 of the POCSO Act:**
 - It punishes any person, who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child,
 - With an intention to share or transmit child pornography;
 - For commercial purposes, etc.
 - With a three-to-five-year jail sentence.



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SC's Recommendations to the Centre to Address the Issue of Child Pornography:

- **Amend the POCSO Act:** To replace the term “child pornography” with “child sexual exploitative and abuse material” (CSEAM) to better reflect the nature of the crime.
 - **Help victims to heal and reintegrate into society:** By providing psychological counselling, therapeutic interventions and educational support to victims.
 - **Introducing cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) programmes:** To help address the cognitive distortions that fuel such behaviour among offenders.
 - **Promoting coordinated effort:** Among educators, health care providers, law enforcement and child welfare services to identify individuals with problematic sexual behaviours early and implement intervention strategies.
 - **Raising awareness:** Public campaigns should aim to de-stigmatise reporting and encourage vigilance within the community.
 - **Formation of an expert committee:**
 - To devise comprehensive programmes for health and **sex education** and increasing awareness of POCSO among children from an early age, and
 - To give effect to above suggestions.
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