

INDIA'S FIRST PRIVATE ROCKET SIGNALS A FORAY INTO A FIELD DOMINATED BY GOVERNMENTS

Context

- India's first privately developed rocket, named as Vikram-S was recently launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) from its spaceport in Sriharikota.
- This launch marked the beginning of private launch activity in Indian space program, which had previously been government-controlled and funded.
- It is also a significant step forward for India, which **aspires to be a leading space power**.

About the recent developments

- **Mission Prarambh:** It is a mission in which ISRO will launch **Vikram-S**, India's first privately manufactured launch vehicle developed by Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace.
- **About Vikram-S:** It is a single-stage, solid fuelled, **suborbital rocket**, named after Vikram Sarabhai, the father of the India's space programme.
 - In a sub-orbital flight, the vehicle travels **slower than the orbital velocity**, which means it is fast enough to reach outer space, but not fast enough to stay in an orbit around the Earth.
 - The launch vehicle's engine, **Kalam-80**, is named after former President A P J Abdul Kalam.
 - It will carry **3 customer payloads** (2 Indian and 1 foreign), including one by SpaceKidz India called **FunSat**, parts of which were developed by school students.
 - The Vikram-S is a **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)**, which will carry between 290 kg and 560 kg payloads into sun-synchronous polar orbits. India's workhorse PSLV can carry up to 1,750 kg to such an orbit.
 - It is developed over two years by incorporating advanced technologies including carbon composite structures and 3D-printed components.
 - It reached a peak altitude of 89.5km higher than the targeted altitude of 80km in a six-minute mission with three payloads weighing a total of 83kg.
- **About Skyroot Aerospace:** It is based in Hyderabad and founded by former engineers in ISRO. It was the first company to sign an agreement with the country's space program to launch rockets.

- Skyroot is also preparing to launch at least two rockets a month by the end of 2025 while also developing reusable booster stages for its ‘Vikram’ series of rockets.
- **Reusable booster stage of a rocket** is the engine that helps it achieve ‘escape velocity’, following which the booster detaches from the main rocket, re-enters Earth, and uses small motors to land.
- The engine or the booster, thus can be reused for future missions, saving costs for a rocket launch services firm. Elon Musk’s SpaceX is the only firm to have managed this feat.
- **IN-SPACE:** The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE) has been operating as a single-window, autonomous nodal agency of Department of Space (DOS) to boost the private space sector economy in India.

Significance of the launch

- **Boost global image:** It will give global investors and clients confidence in India’s space sector, since only a handful of companies globally have managed to cross 80km into space, that too in the first attempt.
- **Technology-demonstration:** The Vikram-S, Kalam-80 and 3D printed parts (thrusters) will be used to test and certify technology in the Vikram series space launch vehicles.
- **Boost to PPP model:** The public-private partnership model in space sector could see ISRO license specific missions for homegrown space firms to conduct. The model would be similar to the US where NASA regularly sanctions projects to private space firms.
- **Will motivate future private sector missions:** For example, Agnikul Cosmos, whose semi-cryogenic Agnilet engine was test-fired recently at ISRO’s vertical testing facility at Thumba, Thiruvananthapuram, will get a push from the success of Vikram-S.

[CENTRE UNVEILS NORMS TO CURB FAKE REVIEWS ON E-COMMERCE SITES](#)

- The Central government recently unveiled the new standard - Indian Standard (IS) 19000:2022 on “Online Consumer Reviews” and ratings, which has been prepared by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

- To combat the threat of fraudulent and deceptive product and service reviews, all e-commerce players, travel and ticketing portals and online food delivery platforms will soon be required to voluntarily reveal all paid or sponsored reviews.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS):

- It is the National Standards Body of India under Department of Consumer affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India.
- Initially established as a society, the BIS was made a **statutory body** under the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016, with its headquarters in New Delhi.
- It has 25 members drawn from Central or State Governments, industry, scientific and research institutions and consumer organisations.
 - It also works as a **WTO-TBT** enquiry point for India.
 - The Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO-TBT) Agreement, is an international treaty (binding on all WTO members) administered by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
- **The activities of BIS:**
 - Standards formulation
 - International activities
 - Product Certification
 - Hallmarking
 - Laboratory services
 - Training services - National Institute of Training for Standardisation
 - Consumer Affairs and Publicity
- **Standard formulation:**
 - **BIS** formulates Indian Standards in line with the national priorities for various sectors that have been grouped under 15 Departments.
 - Corresponding to these Departments 15 Division Councils exist.
 - The standards cover important segments of the economy and help the industry in upgrading the quality of their goods and services.

News Summary:

- Online reviews have greater influence on consumers mainly in three sectors - tour and travel, restaurant and eateries, and consumer durables.
- With the notification of the standard, **India will be the first country** in the world to have such a norm for Online Consumer Reviews.
- As per the new standard, the BIS has defined reviews as **solicited and unsolicited**.
- The person responsible for handling the review in any organisation will be called the **review administrator**.
- The new standard gives an option for the reviewers to **withdraw their reviews**
- The new standard will be applicable even for **independent third-party** entities that post such reviews on any online platform.
- There are websites in countries like Turkey and Moldova where there is a business of fake reviews and companies **pay money and get reviews**.
- The focus of the new standard is adequate disclosure, as the online platforms have to specify the period when the reviews were collected so that consumers are not misled.
- Representatives from all major players, including Google and Meta, were part of the committee that developed the final standard, thus high compliance is to be expected, as fake reviews also harm the industry.
- Failure to comply with the BIS standard is unfair trade practice, and such entities may face legal action under the Consumer Protection Act.
- The BIS will come up with a conformity assessment scheme to certify the websites hosting such reviews. The websites will display such certification for consumers information.

INDIA GETS CITES RULES EASED FOR EXPORT OF SHISHAM ITEMS

In News:

- India got rules for export of timber-based products made of Shisham or North India Rosewood eased under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (CITES).

- The 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES is being held in **Panama** from 14th to 25th of November 2022.

CITES

Background

- CITES, which stands for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, is a global agreement among governments to regulate or ban international trade in species under threat.
- In the mid-20th century, governments were beginning to recognize that trade in some wild animals and plants had a devastating impact on those species.
- These species were being driven toward extinction through unsustainable use for food, fuel, medicine, and other purposes.
- And while individual governments could control what happened within their borders, they did not have a way to address the impacts of international trade in these species.
- In **1973**, 21 countries addressed this issue by signing the CITES agreement.

About the Agreement:

- CITES remains one of the cornerstones of international conservation.
- There are 184-member Parties and trade is regulated in more than 38,000 species.
- Representatives of CITES nations meet every two to three years at a Conference of the Parties (or COP) to review progress and adjust the lists of protected species.

Background:

- Shisham (*Dalbergia sissoo*) is included in **Appendix II** of the convention, thereby requiring to follow CITES regulations for the trade of the species.
- As of now **every consignment of weight above 10 kg requires CITES permit.**
- Due to this restriction exports of furniture and handicrafts made of *Dalbergia sissoo* from India has been continuously falling from an estimated Rs 1000 crore per annum before the listing, to Rs 500-600 crore per annum after the listing.

- The decrease in exports of Dalbergia sissoo products has affected the livelihoods of around 50,000 artisans who work with the species.

Changes approved:

- On India's initiative a proposal to clarify the quantity of Shisham (Dalbergia sissoo) items such as furniture and artefacts was considered in the current meeting.
- After sustained deliberations by Indian representatives, it was agreed upon that any number of Dalbergia sissoo timber-based items can be exported as a single consignment in a shipment without CITES permits if the weight of each individual item of this consignment is less than 10 kg.
- Further, it was agreed that for net weight of each item only timber will be considered and any other item used in the product like metal etc. will be ignored.
- This is a **great relief for the Indian artisans and furniture industry.**

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recently announced a National Suicide Prevention Strategy.



About:

- It is the first of its kind in the country, with **time-bound action plans and multi-sectoral collaborations to achieve reduction in suicide mortality by 10% by 2030.**
- The strategy broadly seeks to establish effective surveillance mechanisms for suicide within the next three years.
- It aims to establish **psychiatric outpatient departments** that will provide suicide prevention services through the **District Mental Health Programme in all districts** within the next **five years.**
- It also seeks to integrate a **mental well-being curriculum** in all educational institutions within the next eight years.

- It envisages developing guidelines for **responsible media reporting of suicides**, and restricting access to means of suicide.
- The stress is on developing **community resilience and societal support** for suicide prevention.
- While the strategy is in line with the **WHO's South East-Asia Region Strategy for suicide prevention**, it says it will remain true to India's cultural and social milieu.

Suicides in India:

- In India, **more than one lakh lives are lost every year** to suicide, and it is the top killer in the 15-29 years category.
- In the past three years, **the suicide rate has increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000 population.**
- The most common reasons for suicide include family problems and illnesses, which account for 34% and 18% of all suicide-related deaths.

NAHARGARH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

The Rajasthan forest department lodged an FIR against another state government body, the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC), for allowing a party after sunset inside Nahargarh Wildlife Sanctuary (NWLS).



About:

- It is located about 12 km from **Jaipur**.
- The sanctuary has been named Nahar, because it falls under Nahar Village (Nahad village).
- It encompasses a large area of 720 hectares and is situated under the Aravalli range.
- It is home to 285 species of birds, Asiatic lions, Bengal tigers, sloth bear, hyenas, panthers, deer, crocodiles etc.
- Nahargarh Biological Park (NBP) is famous for the lion safaris.
- It has now become a convenient breeding centre of lions.

Nahargarh Fort:

- Nahargarh Fort was made by **Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II** as a defence mechanism for the Jaipur city.
 - It is a magnificent fort offering panoramic views of the Pink City.
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ELECTION COMMISSIONER (EC) OF INDIA

Retired Punjab cadre IAS officer Arun Goel recently assumed the office of Election Commissioner (EC), two days after President Droupadi Murmu appointed him to the post.



About:

Appointment of Election Commissioners:

- **View of Constitution:**

- The power to appoint the CEC and the ECs lies with the President of India under **Article 324(2) of the Constitution**, which states that “the President shall fix the number of ECs in a manner he sees fit, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament”.
 - Thus, **Article 324(2)** left it open for the Parliament to legislate on the issue.
 - **Procedure:**
 - But, in the absence of any Parliamentary law governing the appointment issue, the ECs are appointed by the government of the day, without pursuing any consultation process.
 - There is no concept of collegium and no involvement of the opposition.
 - **Tenure:** The Commissioners are appointed for a **6-year period, or up to the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.
 - **Qualification:** There are no prescribed qualifications for their appointment, although convention dictates that only senior (serving or retired) civil servants, of the rank of the Cabinet Secretary or Secretary to the GoI or an equivalent rank, will be appointed.
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WORLD FISHERIES DAY

The Department of Fisheries under Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India and National Fisheries Development Board, celebrated the ‘World Fisheries Day’ in Daman.



About:

- World Fisheries Day is celebrated on 21st November every year to demonstrate solidarity with all fisher folk, fish farmers and concerned stakeholders throughout the world.
- It started in 1997 where “World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers” met at New Delhi leading to formation of “World Fisheries Forum” with representatives from 18 countries and signed a declaration advocating for a global mandate of sustainable fishing practices and policies.
- The event aims to draw attention to overfishing, habitat destruction and other serious threats to the sustainability of our marine and freshwater resources.
- The celebrations serve to focus on changing the way the world manages global fisheries to ensure sustainable stocks and healthy ecosystems.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojna (PMMSY):

- It is a flagship scheme focused on the development of the fisheries sector and doubling the incomes of fishers and fish farmers.
- It is announced as a part of the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan in May 2020**.
- The scheme is an Umbrella scheme for various other government initiatives and projects by the Government in the fisheries sector.
- The scheme aims for the **adoption of ‘Cluster or Area-based Approaches’** and ultimately creating fisheries clusters through backward and forward linkages.
- The scheme targets enhancement in fish production by an additional 70 lakh tonne and increase fisheries export earnings **to 1,00,000 crore by 2024-25**.

- The scheme also envisioned **generating employment opportunities** through seaweed and ornamental fish cultivation and to bring new interventions such as fishing vessel insurance, support for upgradation of fishing vessels/boats, integrated aqua parks, e-trading/marketing, etc.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR WEIGHT AND MEASURES (CIPM)

Prof. Venu Gopal Achanta Director, CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), New Delhi, has been elected as a member of the International Committee for Weights and Measures (CIPM).



About:

- The CIPM is a supreme international committee which functions under the authority of General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM).

General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM):

- CGPM is a highest intergovernmental international organisation created as diplomatic treaty called **Meter Convention signed on 20th May 1875 in Paris.**
- It is responsible for development and implementation of International Systems of Unites, universally abbreviated as SI, its wide dissemination; make necessary modifications time to time for the advancement of science and technology.
- This year CGPM has adopted **7 important resolutions** including new SI prefixes ronna (10^{27}), quetta (10^{30}), ronto (10^{-27}) and quecto (10^{-30}).
- With this nomenclature, **mass of the electron (1 quectogram) and weight of earth (1 ronnagram) can be expressed easily in SI units.**

Members:

- At present, CGPM is represented by **64 member countries and meets every 4th year** at International Bureau of Weight and Measure (BIPM), France.

Functions:

- The CIPM advises and recommends the amendments, changes, alterations to the SI to the CGPM for formal adoption.

- It can also pass resolutions and recommendations about the basic units of measurements, if needed, at its own authority.
- The primary objective of the CIPM, **comprised of 18 members from 18 member states** (nations), is to promote international harmonization of SI, meets annually, deliberate reports sent by its 18 Consultative Committees (CCs), among other matters brought to its notice as per mandate.
- Each member of the CIPM takes the **responsibility of Chairmanship of one CC.**

India's Standards of Weights and Measures Act:

- The Government of India enacted the “**Standards of Weights and Measures Act**” for the first time in **1956** to ensure that every citizen has access to uniform standards of weights and measures those are traceable to the SI units.
 - **During the year 1957, India became member of the CGPM.**
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