

RAPID INNOVATION AND STARTUP EXPANSION (RISE)



Recently, AIM, NITI Aayog launched a new accelerator called Rapid Innovation and Startup Expansion (RISE) to support Australian and Indian circular economy startups.

About Rapid Innovation and Startup Expansion (RISE):

- The India Australia RISE Accelerator is delivered in **partnership between CSIRO**, Australia's national science agency, and **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**, the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- This initiative focuses on **startups and small to mid-sized enterprises (SMEs)** in India and Australia working on **circular economy technologies** and solutions.
- **Focus Themes:** With a focus on Environment and Climate Technology, the program will be tailored to accelerate start-ups working on a range of areas:
 - Climate Smart Agriculture
 - Clean Energy
 - Circular Economy and Waste Management
 - Climate Smart Mobility
- Over **the nine months**, the RISE Accelerator program will help startups navigate early steps in a new region, fast-track connections to the right partners, customers, and talent, and build credibility to succeed in international markets.
- The accelerator, in its **first round**, will focus on supporting **startups and SMEs working** on technologies and solutions for the **waste and circular economy**
- Participating startups may also be eligible for up to **INR 40,00,000 in non-equity grants**.
- The future rounds of the accelerator will focus on **climate-smart agriculture, clean energy and climate-smart mobility**.

What is the circular economy?

- A circular economy **means products are designed** in such a way that they **can be used again, or even multiple times**, to maximise their value
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INDIA-US SECURITY COOPERATION: US WARNED INDIA OVER ALLEGED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT OF ANOTHER KHALISTAN LEADER

Why in News?

- The US government foiled a conspiracy to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, leader of Khalistani separatist organisation Sikhs for Justice (SFG), on American soil and issued a warning to India's government over concerns it was involved in the plot.
- The alleged plot against Pannun comes after Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh separatist based in Canada was gunned down in June this year.

Events Preceding and Following US's Warning:

- Earlier (in Sept 2023), Canadian PM said there were "**credible allegations**" linking the Indian government to Nijjar's killing, which triggered a **diplomatic stand-off between the two countries**.
- The US protest was issued after the **Indian PM made a high-profile state visit to Washington** (in June 2023).
- It remains unclear whether the US protest led the plotters to abandon their plan, or whether the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) intervened to foil a scheme already in motion.
- The US federal prosecutors have **filed a sealed indictment** against at least one alleged perpetrator of the plot in a New York district court.
- **India (in its response)** said that during the course of recent discussions on **India-US security cooperation**, the US side shared some inputs pertaining to nexus between organised criminals, gun runners, terrorists and others.
 - **The inputs are a cause of concern for both countries** and they decided to take necessary follow up action.

- On its part, India takes such inputs seriously since it **impinges on India's own national security interests** as well.

How has the Indian Government Reacted to Pannun and the SFJ?

- **Almost a dozen cases** have been registered against Pannun and SFJ in India, including 3 sedition cases in Punjab.
- In 2019, posts on social media by SFJ asserted that the Pulwama attack cannot be termed as an act of terrorism and **backed Kashmiri separatists**.
- **In 2021, during the farmers' agitation**, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) registered an FIR against Pannun and issued summons to various farmer leaders and activists to probe their source of funding.
- **After his most recent video threatening a repeat of Air India 1985**, the NIA booked Pannun under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 [UAPA].
- The agency and the GoI as a whole refer to him as a **"terrorist"**.
- The Home Ministry's notification banning the SFJ under the UAPA held that **SFJ is actually espousing secessionism and militant ideology in Punjab**.

The U.S.-India Defence and Security Relationship:

- **It has continued to deepen**, aided by robust political commitments in both countries and converging concern about growing Chinese assertiveness across the Indo-Pacific.
- **The US and India have expanded** their defence activities and consultations. **For example**, the so-called "foundational defence agreements" concluded in 2020 between the two includes -
 - General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA);
 - Logistic Support Agreement (LSA); Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and
 - Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence (BECA).
- This positive trajectory is, however, by no means guaranteed to continue apace. **There are rising concerns** in the US about India's fiscal limitations, its ties with Russia, etc.

WHAT IS NOVA?



Astronomers have recently performed photometric and spectroscopic observations of a recently discovered nova, known as AT 2023prq.

About Nova:

- Nova is any of a class of exploding stars whose luminosity temporarily increases from several thousand to as much as 100,000 times its normal level.
- A nova reaches maximum luminosity within hours after its outburst and may shine intensely for several days or occasionally for a few weeks, after which it slowly returns to its former level of luminosity.
- Stars that become novae are nearly always too faint before the eruption to be seen with the unaided eye.
- Their sudden increase in luminosity, however, is sometimes great enough to make them readily visible in the nighttime sky.
- To observers, such objects may appear to be new stars; hence the name nova, from the Latin word for “new.”
- Studying novae is crucial to advancing our knowledge about fundamental astrophysical processes, including stellar evolution.
- **How do Novas occur?**
 - Commonly, novae start as white dwarf stars that are part of a binary star system.
 - Binary stars are two stars that are close together in the distance and revolve around each other.
 - The white dwarf is small and dense, and it is essentially the insides of a star that lost its outer layers. These are older stars that have lost their shine and fuel.
 - The white dwarf is most likely paired with a red giant.

- The **white dwarf** begins to pull on its companion, the **red giant**, with **gravitational forces**.
 - The **white dwarf** takes **fuel and matter**, especially **hydrogen**, from its companion and **pulls it towards itself**. The matter is quickly hurled towards the surface of the white dwarf.
 - **Layers of material from the red giant gather on the surface of the white dwarf**. As the layers are created, the **material begins to grow hotter**.
 - **When the layers become compressed and hot enough**, the **material begins to combust and explodes** through thermonuclear reactions.
 - The **hydrogen material begins to react specifically with helium**. The **explosion** of the materials **causes the white dwarf to suddenly become bright** as it throws off some of the material.
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HUMANITARIAN PAUSE IN GAZA

Why in news?

- Israel and Hamas have agreed to a humanitarian pause in fighting in Gaza.
- This was agreed upon to allow for the release of 50 hostages held by the militant group in exchange for 150 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons and also to allow for more aid to enter the enclave.
- Facilitated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, the pause will last for four days, subject to extension.

What is humanitarian pause?

- **About**
 - The United Nations defines a "humanitarian pause" as a temporary stop to fighting for the sole purpose of humanitarian aid.
 - These pauses typically have a specific time frame and are limited to a particular area where aid activities are happening.
 - The humanitarian pause simply provides some relief amidst the relentless hostilities with an aim to help civilians in distress.

- **Pause in Gaza**

- The statement from Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not clear about the specific location of the pause but mentions it will last for four days.
- The duration may be extended if ongoing negotiations are successful.

What is ceasefire?

- **About**

- A ceasefire is more extensive than a humanitarian pause.
- According to the UN, a ceasefire is an agreement between conflicting parties to temporarily stop fighting.
- This pause is usually part of a political process, aiming to create an opportunity for dialogue and potentially reach a lasting political resolution.
- Simply put, unlike a humanitarian pause, a ceasefire is a longer-term arrangement to stop fighting in order to arrive at a political/diplomatic solution.

- **Israel and its allies in the West are strongly opposed to a ceasefire**

- This is because they feel it will allow Hamas to regroup, thus nullifying Israel's ongoing efforts.
- Recently, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the war against Hamas would resume after the truce expires.

Implementation of the deal

- The International Committee of the Red Cross will work in Gaza to facilitate the release of the hostages.
- The hostages are expected to be transported through Egypt, the only country apart from Israel to share a border with Gaza.
- During the truce, trucks loaded with aid and fuel are expected to cross into Gaza.

- In Gaza, 2.3 million people have been running out of food and many hospitals have shut down in part because they no longer have fuel for their generators.

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER COUNCIL



Recently, the 59th International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) concluded on November 17, 2023, with major decisions.

About the International Tropical Timber Council:

- It is the **governing body** of the **International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO)**.
- It meets at **least once a year** to discuss a wide-ranging agenda aimed at promoting sustainable tropical forest management and the trade of sustainably produced tropical timber.

Major decisions in 59th ITTC

- The countries agreed to endorse **eight projects** related to **sustainable forest management and related objectives**.
- The session also approved and **adopted a budget of \$7.1 million** for the coming **financial year 2024-25**.
- The council also approved a trial measure that will allow ineligible members to submit project proposals and concept notes.
- Members who have fallen behind on their financial contributions and are thus ineligible will be allowed to submit one project and concept note for every two years of arrears paid.

Key facts about the International Tropical Timber Organisation

- It is an **intergovernmental organisation** promoting the sustainable management and conservation of tropical forests and the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests.
- It was established under the **International Tropical Timber Agreement 1983 (ITTA 1983)**, negotiated under the auspices of the **UN Conference on Trade and Development**.
- It facilitates **funding for forestry projects** in tropical timber-producing countries.

- All projects are funded by **voluntary contributions from governments.**
 - **Members: 75 countries (including India)**
 - Its members manage about 80 percent of the world's tropical forests and are responsible for 90 percent of the global tropical timber trade.
 - **Headquarters:** Yokohama, Japan
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EXERCISE AUSTRAHIND-23

The Indian Armed Forces contingent, comprising 81 personnel, departed for Australia to take part in the second edition of Joint Military Exercise AUSTRAHIND-23.



About Exercise AUSTRAHIND-23:

- It was instituted in 2022, and the **first edition** was conducted in Mahajan, **Rajasthan.**
 - It is planned to be an annual training event to be conducted **alternatively in India and Australia.**
 - The aim of the exercise is to **foster collaborative partnerships** and share best practises between the two sides.
 - This year, the exercise will be conducted in Perth, Australia, from November 22nd to December 6th, 2023.
 - The Indian Army contingent, comprising 60 personnel from a battalion of the Gorkha Rifles will take part in this exercise.
 - The exercise will also promote inter-operability while undertaking multi-domain operations in urban and Semi-Urban terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations on peacekeeping operations.
 - The joint exercise will promote the exchange of ideas and jointly rehearse tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting tactical operations.
 - The exercise will also help in promoting understanding between the two militaries and further strengthening defence cooperation between the two friendly nations.
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KEY FACTS ABOUT THE BRAHMANI RIVER



The Odisha government has roped in IIT, Guwahati, for a physical and mathematical modelling study for the rejuvenation of the Brahmani River Delta.

- It is a **major inter-state east-flowing river amongst the peninsular rivers in India.**
- The river is **known as Dhamra in its lower reaches.**
- **Origin:**
 - It is **formed by the confluence of the Sankh and South Koel rivers** near the major industrial town of **Rourkela in Odisha.**
 - **Both the sources of the Brahmani River are on the Chota Nagpur Plateau.**
 - The **Sankh River has its origins near the Jharkhand- Chhattisgarh border**, along with the **South Koel River**, which also rises in **Jharkhand.**
- The Brahmani River **basin is bounded in the north by the Chhotanagpur plateau**, in the west and south by the **Mahanadi basin**, and in the east by the **Bay of Bengal.**
- It is **one of the few rivers that cut across the Eastern Ghats** and has formed a **minor gorge at Rengali in Odisha**, where a dam has been built.
- **Course:**
 - The basin **flows through Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa States**, draining a total area of **39,033 sq. before it outfalls into the Bay of Bengal.**
 - It **winds generally south-southeast** past **Bonaigarh and Talcher in Odisha** and then **turns east to join the northern branches of the Mahanadi River**, which then empties into the **Bay of Bengal at Palmyras Point.**
 - The **Brahmani delta that is formed at this point is the site of the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary**, famous for its estuarine crocodiles.
- **Length:** The total length of its run is **about 799 km**, of which **541 km** are in Odisha itself.
- **Tributaries:** The principal tributaries of this river are **Sankh, Tikra, and Karo.**