

26TH MEETING OF EASTERN ZONAL COUNCIL

Why in news?

- The Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah chaired the 26th meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council in Patna, Bihar.
- The Chief Minister of Bihar, and senior Ministers from Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand attended the meeting.

What are Zonal Councils?

- **Background:**
 - The idea of creation of Zonal Councils was mooted by the first PM Nehru in 1956.
 - This was suggested during the course of debate on the report of the States Re-organisation Commission
 - It was suggested that a high-level advisory forum should be set up:
 - to minimise the impact of linguistic hostilities prevailed at that time;
 - to create healthy inter-State and Centre-State environment.
- **About**
 - In the light of the idea promoted by the then PM Nehru, five Zonal Councils were set up under the States Re-organisation Act, 1956.
 - Zonal Councils are the statutory and not the constitutional bodies.
 - The five councils are:
 - The Northern Zonal Council; The Central Zonal Council; The Eastern Zonal Council; The Western Zonal Council; The Southern Zonal Council.
 - The North Eastern States are not included in the Zonal Councils.
 - Their special problems are looked after by the North Eastern Council, set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.
- **Objectives of Zonal Councils**
 - Bringing out national integration;

- Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguistic and particularistic tendencies;
- Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences;
- Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

What is the organisational structure of the zonal councils?

- **Chairman**
 - The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils.
- **Vice Chairman**
 - The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.
- **Members**
 - Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.
- **Advisers**
 - One person nominated by NITI Aayog for each of the Zonal Councils,
 - Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone
- Union Ministers are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.

WHY RURAL INDIA NEEDS WOMEN DRONE PILOTS

Context

- **Women's empowerment is the key to building a strong and developed nation. This is especially the case when women flourish economically and contribute to rural prosperity.**

- One such initiative, **NAMO Drone Didi**, was announced by the Prime Minister recently during interaction with beneficiaries of central government's schemes.

Key Features of NAMO Drone Didi Initiative

- **To Modernise Agriculture Practices**
 - The initiative aims to supply drones to 15,000 women Self Help Groups (SHGs) to rent to farmers for agriculture purposes.
 - It is an excellent example of harnessing technological innovation to empower rural women.
 - The NAMO Drone Didi initiative positions rural women at the forefront of the rural economy by integrating cutting-edge drone technology into agriculture.
 - Also, it addresses the need to modernise agricultural practices and boost productivity.
- **To Make Women as Pioneers of Agricultural Revolution**
 - By placing drone technology in the hands of women pilots from SHGs, the initiative seeks to make them pivotal in spearheading a new agricultural revolution, effectively utilising technology for rural empowerment.
 - The NAMO Drone Didi Scheme creates new employment opportunities for rural women as drone pilots, mechanics, and spare-part dealers, contributing to their empowerment and making them the backbone of the rural economy.
- **Opportunities for Start-ups:** The scheme not only empowers women but also opens avenues for dynamic start-ups in the field of drone aeronautics, tapping into significant untapped potential in this emerging sector.
- **An Effective Option as Fertigation System**
 - The emergence of innovative new liquid fertilisers like Nano Urea and Nano DAP with the foliar application has generated the need for the development of an efficient fertigation system.
 - Putting drone technology in the hands of women pilots from SHGs could be an excellent idea since these drones can become fertigation systems.

- **Equitable Agrarian Family Culture:** The initiative is expected to promote equity and strength in agrarian family culture, with **women drone pilots playing a vital role in enhancing agricultural productivity and efficiency.**
 - **Time and Labor Savings:** The application of pesticides and liquid fertilisers through drones **not only saves farmers from physical toil and hardships but also offers a quicker, more efficient method,** allowing time for more productive agricultural work.
-

WHEELER ISLAND

As per reports, India's premier agency for military R&D, the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO), will pause missile testing at Wheeler Island off Odisha coast during the mass nesting season of Olive Ridley sea turtles.



About Wheeler Island:

- **Abdul Kalam Island**, formerly known as Wheeler Island, is an island off the coast of Odisha.
- The island was **renamed to honour the late President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam** and also to encourage the youth to pursue a scientific temperament.
- It is the **only place in India that has an integrated test range** maintaining a **missile testing facility**, which is located on this island.
- **All indigenous missiles**, like Akash missile, Agni missile, Prithvi Missile etc. **are tested from here.**
- The island is **2 km long, having an area of 390 acres**, and is basically a soil formation **without rocks** in the Bay of Bengal.

Key Facts about Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO):

- It is the **R&D wing of the Ministry of Defence**, Govt of India, with a vision to empower India with cutting-edge defence technologies and a mission to achieve self-reliance in critical defence technologies and systems.
- It is **India's largest research organisation.**

- **Formation:** The organisation was formed in 1958 from the amalgamation of the then already functioning Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army and the Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP) with the Defence Science Organisation (DSO).
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- It has a network of laboratories engaged in developing defence technologies covering various fields, like aeronautics, armaments, electronics, land combat engineering, life sciences, materials, missiles, and naval systems.

PM VISHWAKARMA SCHEME

The PM Vishwakarma Scheme, launched by the Centre, has received over 21 lakh applications in two and a half months, data from the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) show.



About PM Vishwakarma Scheme:

- This is a central sector scheme launched by the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, which offers services like market linkage support, skill training, and incentives for digital transactions to artisans and craftspeople engaged in specified trades.
- **Time period:** Five years (FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28).
- **Aim:**
 - To strengthen and nurture the Guru-Shishya parampara, or family-based practice of traditional skills by artisans and craftspeople working with their hands and tools.
 - The scheme also aims at improving the quality as well as the reach of the products and services of artisans and craftspeople and to ensure that the Vishwakarmas are integrated with the domestic and global value chains.
- **Eligibility & coverage:**
 - It is available for rural and urban artisans and craftsmen across India.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- It covers **18 traditional crafts** such as **Boat Maker; Armourer; Blacksmith; Hammer and Tool Kit Maker**; etc.
- Five lakh families will be covered in the first year and **30 lakh families over five years**.

Benefits:

- Under this scheme, the artisans and craftspeople will be **provided recognition through a PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card**.
- They will receive **collateral-free credit support of up to ₹1 lakh** (first tranche) and **₹2 lakh** (second tranche) with a **concessional interest rate of 5%**.
- The scheme will **further provide** craftsmen with methods of **skill upgradation involving basic and advanced training**, a **toolkit incentive of ₹15,000** and **incentives for digital transactions, and marketing support**.
- Under the scheme, there will be **two types of skilling programmes -- Basic and Advanced** and a **stipend of Rs 500 per day** will also be provided to beneficiaries while undergoing skills training.

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX

In a significant stride towards sustainable practices, India has ascended to the 7th position in this year's Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI).



About Climate Change Performance Index:

- It is an instrument to enable transparency in national and international **climate politics**.
- It is published by **Germanwatch**, the New Climate Institute and the Climate Action Network **annually**.
- It was **first time** published in **2005**.

- The CCPI uses a standardized framework to compare the climate performance of 63 countries and the EU, which together account for over 90% of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- The climate protection performance is assessed in four categories: **GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy, Energy Use and Climate Policy.**

Key highlights

- Denmark retained the top spot with a score of 75.59 per cent. Estonia and the Philippines occupied the second and third ranks respectively, with 72.07 and 70.70.
- Saudi Arabia was at the bottom — 67th — in the performance list, while the host country United Arab Emirates occupied the 65th position.
- India receives a **high ranking in the GHG Emissions** and Energy Use categories, but a medium in Climate Policy and Renewable Energy, as in the previous year.
- India is **trying to meet** its **National Determined Contribution (NDC)**, with clear long-term policies in place that focus on promoting renewable energy and providing financial support for domestic manufacturing of renewable energy components.
- India has relatively **high taxes on petrol and diesel**, which are intended to act as carbon taxes.

YUVAI INITIATIVE

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and IT has said that the program- 'YUVAi- Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI' will be featured at the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit.



About YUVAi Initiative:

- It is a collaborative initiative of **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)**, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India and **Intel India.**

- This programme, designed to equip the **youth with essential Artificial Intelligence skills**, has garnered attention for its innovative approach and commitment to enabling a future-ready workforce.
- It is aimed to foster a deeper understanding of AI, to enable school **students from class 8 to 12 across the nation** with AI skills and empower them to become human-centric designers and users of AI.

Key Updates and Features of YUVAi Programme:

- Progressing in **three phases**, the YUVAi programme is being implemented in multiple cohorts to ensure that maximum students stand a chance to become future-ready. It introduces students to several social themes to direct their AI knowledge towards solving real-world problems.
- In the **first Cohort**, more than 8,500 students registered, post which, they attended online orientation sessions to learn fundamental concepts of AI. Teachers also enrolled into the program and underwent orientation sessions. Students then submitted innovative AI-based ideas under one of the eight core themes of the programme.
- In **phase 2**, Top 200 AI-based ideas were shortlisted. Shortlisted students attended **online deep dive AI training** and mentorship sessions with certified Intel AI coaches and experts – helping students enhance their solutions. Students then submitted their AI projects to be evaluated for Phase 3.
- In **Phase 3**, top 50 students were shortlisted and they were invited to attend a four-day **face-to-face rapid modeling workshop** – receiving one-on-one mentorship, apprenticeship and guidance from industry experts to fine-tune their projects and develop them into prototypes.
- An on-spot project presentation was conducted by a multiple jury panel to shortlist Top 10 students.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

- **Background**

- On 10 December 1948, the UN General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at a meeting in Paris.
- It laid one of the foundation stones of the international order that emerged following the horrors of World War II.
- It was a response to the atrocities of World War II and an effort to establish a common understanding of the basic rights and freedoms to which all people are entitled.

- **About**

- A relatively compact document, the declaration consists of a preamble and 30 articles setting out fundamental rights and freedoms.
- These 30 articles articulate a broad range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.
 - These rights are considered universal, meaning they apply to all people regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or any other status.
- It is not a **legally binding treaty**, but it has served as a source of inspiration for the development of international human rights law.

Achievements of UNDHR

- It is recognized as having inspired and paved the way for more than 70 human rights treaties at global and regional levels, according to the U.N.
- It inspired the decolonization movement, the anti-apartheid movement.
- It also inspired freedom fighters all around the world, be it on gender issues, be it on LGBTIQ+ issues, be it against racism.