

AGNI V

India has successfully conducted night trials of nuclear-capable ballistic missile Agni V.



About:

- **Type:** It is a surface-to-surface Nuclear Capable Ballistic missile.
- **Warhead:** It can carry both nuclear and traditional weapons.
- **Range:** Agni-V, with a range of over 5,000 km, is India's longest-range ballistic missile and can reach most parts of China, making it the mainstay of India's triad to deliver nuclear weapons.
- **Dimensions:** it is a 17-meter long missile with two-meter diameter.
- **Development:** It has been indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- **Technologies:** Agni-V is the most advanced missile in the Agni series featuring many new technologies, including the very high accuracy Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS) and Micro Navigation System (MINS) which improves the accuracy of the missile.
- With the Agni-V, India joins an elite club of countries like **US, Russia, the UK, France and China, which boast Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) capabilities.**

EXERCISE "SURYA KIRAN"

The 16th Edition of exercise "SURYA KIRAN" will be conducted at Nepal Army Battle School, Saljhandi, and continue up to 29 December 2022.



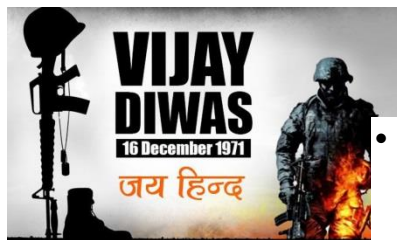
About:

- It is an Indo-Nepal joint army training exercise.
- It is conducted annually between India and Nepal with the aim to enhance inter-operability in jungle warfare and counter-terrorism operations in mountainous terrain and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) under UN mandate.

- Nepal Army soldiers of Shree Bhawani Baksh Battalion and Indian Army soldiers from the 5 GR are participating in the exercise.
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VIJAY DIWAS

The Nation is celebrating Vijay Diwas on December 16 to commemorate India's victory over Pakistan in 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war.



About Vijay Diwas:

- On December 16, 1971, the chief of the Pakistani forces, General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, along with 93 thousand troops, had surrendered unconditionally to the allied forces consisting of Indian Army and Mukti Bahini, led by Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora in Dhaka after their defeat in the Liberation war.
 - The war resulted in the **birth of Bangladesh**, which was then East Pakistan.
 - The day is also observed in Bangladesh as '**Bijoy Dibos**', marking the country's formal independence from Pakistan.
 - India had also held 93,000 prisoners-of-war by the end of war on December 16.
 - Eight months after the war, in August 1972, India and Pakistan settled the **Shimla agreement**.
 - Under the agreement, India agreed to release the 93,000 Pakistani prisoners-of-war.
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BHARAT (BH) SERIES

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has allowed the conversion of regular vehicle registrations into Bharat Series (BH) numbers as part of measures to widen



the scope of the BH series ecosystem.

About Bharat (BH) Series:

- The BH series registration mark vide General Statutory Rule

(GSR) 594(E) was introduced on August 26, 2021.

- This has come into force with effect from 15th September, 2021.
- It has been incorporated in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.
- The implementation of Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 is under the **purview of the State Governments/UT administration.**

Eligibility:

- **It has been introduced for citizens working in Government offices or in private organizations with offices in four or more States/UTs, on voluntary basis.**
- Applicants, working in Government offices, can avail BH Series facility on the basis of their official ID Card.
- Private Sector employees are required to submit a working certificate, certifying that their organization has offices in 4 or more States/UTs.
- Currently, only new vehicles are being registered under the BH Series.

Implementation:

- So far, 24 states and UTs have rolled out the new Bharat Series (BH-series) for vehicle registration and so far over 20,000 vehicles have been registered across the states.

SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX (SPI)

Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister (EAC-PM) will release the Social Progress Index (SPI) for states and districts of India on December 20, 2022.



About Social Progress Index (SPI):

- SPI is a comprehensive tool intended to be a holistic measure of the Social Progress made by the country at the national and sub-national levels.
- The report has been prepared by **Institute for Competitiveness**, headed by Dr Amit Kapoor and the **Social Progress Imperative**, headed by Michael Green.
- It was mandated by **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India.**

What is the objective of the SPI?

- The report aims to provide a systematic account of the social progress made at all levels in the country with state and district-wise rankings and scorecards.
- The report also sheds light on the achievements of the districts that have performed well on the index and the role of the states in achieving social progress.
- A special section of the report provides an analysis of the Aspirational Districts of India, leading to a broader understanding of the social progress at the grassroots level.
- The report will act as a critical enabler and tool for policymakers in the coming years for achieving sustained socio-economic growth.

Components:

- SPI assesses the performance of states and districts on three dimensions of social progress: **Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity**. Within each dimension, there are four components.
- The **dimension of Basic Human Needs** assesses the performance of states and districts in terms of Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Water and Sanitation, Personal Safety and Shelter.
- The **dimension of Foundations of Wellbeing** evaluates the progress made by the country across the components of Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communication, Health and Wellness, and Environmental Quality.
- The **dimension of Opportunity** focuses on aspects of Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, Inclusiveness, and Access to Advanced Education.

SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

Eco-tourism has been identified as one of the Niche Tourism areas for development in the country, including Odisha, by the Ministry of Tourism.



About:

- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of Tourism.
- **Type of Scheme:** Central Sector Scheme.
- **Launched in:** 2014-15.

- **Objective:**

- Developing critical tourism infrastructure to make India a world class tourist destination.
- This scheme is envisioned to synergise with other schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, the driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realise its potential.

- **Circuits:**

- Under the Scheme 15 circuits have been identified for development namely Himalayan Circuit, North East Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Buddhist Circuit and Coastal Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit and Sufi Circuit.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme 2.0

- It aims to evolve Swadesh Darshan Scheme as a holistic mission to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations covering tourism and allied infrastructure, tourism services, human capital development, destination management and promotion backed by policy and institutional reforms.

- **Major themes have been identified for tourism under the Scheme.**

- Culture and Heritage
- Adventure Tourism
- Eco-Tourism
- Wellness Tourism
- MICE Tourism
- Rural Tourism
- Beach Tourism
- Cruises – Ocean & Inland

CORRUPT BABU CAN BE CONVICTED EVEN IF PROOF CIRCUMSTANTIAL: SC

In News:

- Observing that courts should not show leniency towards corrupt public servants, the Supreme Court ruled that direct evidence of demand and acceptance of bribe is not necessary to prove guilt under the Prevention of Corruption Act and a person can be convicted on the basis of circumstantial evidence.

About Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:

- The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (henceforth referred to as PCA) came into force on 9th September, 1988.
- It was aimed at making anti-corruption laws more effective by widening their coverage and by strengthening the provisions to make the overall statute more effective.

Salient Features of the Act:

- It incorporates the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1952, and Sec. 161 to 165-A of the Indian Penal Code with certain tweaks in the original provisions.
- It has enlarged the scope of the definition such as **Public Duty** and **Public Servant**.
- It has **shifted the burden of proof from the prosecution as mentioned in the CrPC to the accused who is charged with the offense**.
- The provisions of the Act clearly state that the **investigation is to be made by an officer, not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police**.
- The Act covers corrupt acts as bribe, misappropriation, obtaining a pecuniary advantage, possessing assets disproportionate to income and the like.

Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018:

- As the PCA saw limited success, an amendment was enacted and brought into force on 26 July 2018.
- The Amendment Act attempted to **bring the PCA in line with United Nations Convention against Corruption 2005, which was ratified by India in 2011**.
- Highlights of the Amendment Act –
 - **Definition of ‘Undue Advantage’ –**

- The Amendment Act has defined ‘undue advantage’ to mean any gratification other than legal remuneration that a public servant is permitted to receive.
- **Persons liable for offering a bribe to public servants –**
- Previously, the PCA did not contain a separate provision for a person who gives or promises to give an undue advantage.
- However, the Amendment Act makes giving an undue advantage by a person to a public servant, a specific punishable offence.
- **Offering of bribes by commercial organisations –**
- It provides that if a commercial organisation commits any of the offences listed out in the PCA with the intention to obtain or retain business or obtain or retain an advantage in the conduct of its business, then such commercial organisation shall be punishable.
- **Prior sanction for investigation and prosecution –**
- The PCA required prior sanction of the appropriate government for prosecution of serving public officials.
- The Amendment Act extends this protection of requirement of prior approval to investigation prior to prosecution.
- **Attachment of Property –**
- The Amendment Act has provided for application of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 and Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance 1944 for attachment and administration of property procured by means of an offence under the PCA.
- **Enhancement of Punishment –**
- Punishment has been increased from a minimum imprisonment term of 6 (six) months to 3 (three) years, and from a maximum of 5 (five) years to 7 (seven) years.

News Summary:

- In 2019, a reference was made by a Division Bench to a larger Bench upon observing that insistence of direct proof or primary evidence for proving the demand may not be in consonance with the view taken in many judgements.
- There were instances wherein despite the absence of primary evidence of the complainant, the Supreme Court had sustained the conviction of the accused by relying on other evidence.

- The **5-judge Bench of the Supreme Court** had reserved the judgement on **November 23**.
- In an important ruling, the Supreme Court held that direct evidence of demand or acceptance of bribe is not necessary to convict a public servant under the Act and that such fact can be proved through circumstantial evidence.
- Referring the earlier verdicts of the Supreme Court, the bench said corruption among public servants has become a gigantic problem and no facet of public activity has been left unaffected by it.

Supreme Court's Judgement:

- Even if the direct evidence of the complainant is not available, owing to death or other reasons, there can be conviction of the public servant under the PCA, if the demand for illegal gratification is proved through circumstantial evidence.
- The Bench held that a court can convict a corrupt official for demanding and accepting bribe even in a case in which witnesses, including the complainant, turn hostile and backtrack from their earlier statements that bribe was demanded.
- The Bench said the court can rely on statement of other witnesses to prove guilt.

RAJYA SABHA PASSES BILL TO EXTEND ST STATUS TO GOND COMMUNITY IN FOUR DISTRICTS OF UP

In News:

- The Rajya Sabha recently passed the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (2nd Amendment) Bill-2022, which seeks to give the ST status to the Gond community in 4 districts (Sant Kabir Nagar, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Kushinagar and Chandauli) of UP.
- The demand for inclusion of the Gond community in the ST list was first raised in the 1980s.

Process of granting ST tag in India:

- **Constitutional provision:** Article 342 of the Indian Constitution -

- **The President** may with respect to any State/UT and where it is a State after consultation with the Governor, may notify the STs in relation to that State/UT.
- **The Parliament** may by law include or exclude from the list of STs specified in a notification issued.
- **The process:**
 - **It begins at the State or UT level**, with the concerned government seeking the addition or exclusion of a particular community from the SC/ST list.
 - Following this, the proposal is sent to the **Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, which sends it to the **Registrar General of India (RGI)**, after examination.
 - Once approved by the RGI, the proposal is sent to the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)**, following which the proposal is sent back to the Union government, which introduces it (after inter-ministerial deliberations) in the Cabinet for final approval.
 - **The final decision rests with the President's office** issuing a notification specifying the changes under powers vested in it from Articles 341 (for SC) and 342.
 - **The inclusion or exclusion** of any community in the ST/SC list come into effect **only after the President assents** to a Bill that amends the Constitution (STs) Order, 1950, after it is passed by both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
- **Criteria to begin the process:** To establish whether a community is a ST, the government looks at several criteria, including its -
 - Ethnological traits,
 - Traditional characteristics,
 - Distinctive culture,
 - Geographical isolation and
 - Backwardness
- **How many STs are there officially?**
 - According to the Census 2011, STs constitute **6%** (over 10 crore) of the population and there are 705 ethnic groups listed as STs under Article 342.

The Gondi/Gond/Koitur people:



- One of the largest tribal groups in India, Gonds are a Dravidian ethno-linguistic group.
- They are spread across many states of India – Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Odisha, Uttar

Pradesh.

- The Gond have formed many kingdoms of historical significance and are listed as a **ST** for the purpose of India's system of reservation.
- The 2011 Census of India recorded about 2.98 million Gondi (related to the Telugu) speakers.

BANGLADESH HAS REACHED OUT TO THE IMF FOR HELP: WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY?

In News:

- According to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) press release, Bangladesh will receive economic assistance worth \$4.5 billion from the institution.
 - Last month, Bangladesh reached out to the IMF seeking help.
- This is a significant reversal for an economy that overtook India's in terms of per capita income in 2020 on the back of robust economic growth for the better part of the last two decades, and especially since 2017.

Ailing economy of Bangladesh

- Unlike many countries including India that saw their GDP contract in 2020 following the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy of Bangladesh actually grew during this period.
 - Its GDP grew by 3.4% in 2020, by 6.9% in 2021, and it is expected to grow by 7.2% in 2022.
- However, Bangladesh's problems lie elsewhere. Bangladesh's robust economic recovery from the pandemic has been interrupted by Russia's war in Ukraine.
 - This led to a sharp widening of the current account deficit, rapid decline of foreign exchange reserves, rising inflation and slowing growth.

Ukraine war and impact on Bangladesh

- Inflation spiked to uncomfortable levels as all kinds of commodities such as crude oil became costlier.
 - The inflation rate in November was 8.85% as against 5.98% in November 2021.
- Bangladesh's current account balance has gone deep into a deficit — both in absolute terms as well as a percentage of the GDP.
 - The current account balance looks at the gap between the money coming into a country on account of earnings via the export of goods and services and the money going out of the country via the import of goods and services.
 - Bangladesh has typically been hugely dependent on its export earnings which got hit due to slowdown in western economies.
- Bangladesh's currency, the Taka, weakened partly under the pressure of the surge in the US dollar and partly on account of the worsening current account deficit.
 - A weaker Taka further aggravated the inflationary spiral because all imports become costlier still.
- The weakness in the external front also resulted in Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves getting depleted.
 - Last December, the forex reserves were valued at \$46,154 million.

Impact on India

- Hit by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the tightening monetary policy of the Federal Reserve, India's neighbouring economies, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, are now faced with soaring debt and high inflation.
- The weakening economy in these countries will have geopolitical consequences as well, given both India and China, as creditors and critical trade partners, would want to increase their strategic leverage.
- The weakened economies could soon become a battleground for the strong economies to settle their diplomatic scores and exercise their geopolitical might.