

FIRST MOON-LANDING BY PRIVATE COMPANY

Why in news?

- The Odysseus lunar lander has made the first United States landing on the moon in more than 50 years.
- This also marks the arrival of private space companies on the lunar surface.

Odysseus

- Odysseus, a spacecraft built by Intuitive Machines, used a Falcon 9 rocket of SpaceX to take off from Earth on February 15.
 - Intuitive Machines is a ten-year-old company based in Houston, USA.
- The spacecraft carried six NASA payloads to the Moon.
 - The lander module of Odysseus, called **Nova-C**, has become the second one, after Chandrayaan-3 last year, to land in the Moon's south pole region.
 - This is the third moon-landing event within a year, after Chandrayaan-3 and Japans' SLIM (Smart Lander for Investigating Moon).
- **Mission objectives**
 - The lunar lander is designed to evaluate the environment at the moon's south pole.
 - This is significant as NASA prepares to send a crewed mission in September 2026 with Artemis III.
 - Prior to deploying astronauts to this area, however, the agency wants to gather additional data.
 - This information will help evaluate factors such as the quantity of water present and the accessibility of this vital resource.

Significance of Odysseus

- **Towards ensuring long term human presence on Moon**

- The landing of Odysseus marks a new beginning in the exploration of the Moon aimed at creating infrastructure and technology ecosystem capable of supporting long-term human presence.
- **Different from the moon landings of the 1960s and 1970s by the US and the then Soviet Union**
 - The moon landings in the 1960s and 1970s, led by the US and the Soviet Union, were huge scientific accomplishments.
 - However, during that time, they did not have the technology to take advantage of the moon's resources.
 - So, while the moon landings were amazing events back then, they could not immediately lead to things like mining resources on the moon because the technology was not advanced enough at that time.
- **Supports US resolve to return to the Moon through the Artemis programme**
 - The latest landing is part of the US resolve to return to the Moon in a big way through the Artemis programme.
 - It is not just about landing spacecraft or human beings on the Moon, but about creating the infrastructure and the economy that will lead to more meaningful exploration of the Moon.
 - This could eventually enable countries to use the Moon as a stepping stone to explore even deeper into space.

WHAT IS THE VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK?

Recently, a 21-year-old from Gujarat allegedly sent five threatening emails to an industrialist after masking his IP address using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) and was arrested by the Mumbai police.



About Virtual Private Network:

- VPN stands for virtual private network, which establishes a **digital connection** between your computer and a **remote server owned by a VPN provider**.

- It creates a point-to-point tunnel that **encrypts personal data, masks your IP address,** and lets you sidestep website blocks and firewalls on the internet.
- This ensures online experiences are private, protected, and more secure.
- It is
 - **Virtual** because no physical cables are involved in the connection process.
 - **Private** because through this connection, no one else can see your data or browsing activity.
 - **Networked** because multiple devices—your computer and the VPN server—work together to maintain an established link.
- **Advantages of VPN**
 - **Secure your data:** A VPN connection scrambles your data into code and renders it unreadable to anyone without an encryption key. It hides your browsing activity so that no one else can see it.
 - **Bypass censorship and surveillance:** Some regions may not have access to certain sites or services due to government restrictions, censorship, or surveillance. Location spoofing gives these users the ability to circumvent firewalls, view blocked websites, and move freely online.
 - **Prevent ISP and third-party tracking:** Internet service providers (ISPs) log and track your browsing history through your device's unique IP address. By routing to a remote VPN server instead of your ISP's servers, a VPN masks your IP address, prevents ISP tracking, and keeps your personal data private.

SUB-NATIONAL CLIMATE FUND

A delegation from the World Bank has arrived in Goa for talks with the state govt to set up the first sub-national climate resilient green fund.



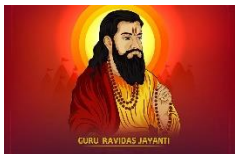
About Sub-national Climate Fund:

- It is a global blended finance initiative to **develop mid-size climate-resilient infrastructure & nature-based solutions.**

- **Mission:** To invest in **subnational climate-smart infrastructure** and nature-based solutions delivering measurable and certified climate and sustainable development **impact at the local level.**
- The model is designed to attract **public and private investment** and to deliver certified climate and Sustainable Development impacts and Nature-based Solutions.
- **Structure:**
 - **Fund Manager:** It is managed by **Pegasus Capital.**
 - **Technical assistance:** **The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** is responsible for the Technical Assistance component of SCF.
 - **Anchor Investor of Concessional Capital:** The Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- **Governance**
 - The governance of the Subnational Climate Fund (SCF) includes a **High-level Advisory Committee.**
 - The role of the committee is to advise the SCF Consortium on the best opportunities to invest in regard to the SCF mission, and more widely on the theory of change encompassed by SCF.
 - This Committee is composed of **well-known experts** in their field of expertise in climate science, finance/economies, sector/technical, biodiversity/nature-based solutions, and environmental/social management systems (ESMS).

WHO WAS GURU RAVIDAS?

To mark the 647th birth anniversary celebrations of Sant Guru Ravidas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a statue of Sant Ravidas at Varanasi.

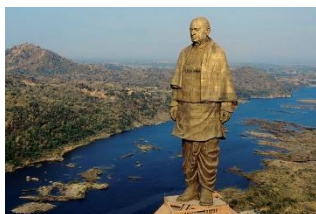


About Guru Ravidas:

- Guru Ravidas (1377-1528E.) was a renowned saint known for his **contributions to the Bhakti movement.**
- His **devotional songs and verses** made a lasting impact upon the Bhakti Movement.
- Guru Ravidas is also known as **Raidas, Rohidas, and Ruhidas.**

- He was **born in a small village** called Seer Govardhanpur in **Uttar Pradesh**.
 - His birthplace is now **known as Shri Guru Ravidas Janam Asthan**, and it is a major place of pilgrimage for the followers of Guru Ravidas.
- Even though he was **born into a poor family**, Ravidas became **well-known for his teachings about human rights and equality**.
- He was the **disciple of the revered Brahmin bhakti poet Ramananda**.
- He **abandoned the saguna** (with attributes, image) forms of supreme beings and **focussed on the nirguna** (without attributes, abstract) form of supreme beings.
- Guru Ravidas was a **social reformer**, and his teachings were based on **gender equality, the abolition of the caste system, social justice, and equality**.
- He also became a symbol of **opposition to untouchability** in society by the higher caste people for the lower caste people.
- He emphasised the **philosophy of spiritual freedom**.
- He was a **well-known poet**. 41 of his devotional songs and poems are **included in the Sikh Scriptures, Guru Granth Sahib**.
- **Meera Bai**, a revered figure in Hindu spiritualism, is said to have **considered Guru Ravidas as her spiritual Guru**.
- The Guru's teachings now form the basis of the Ravidassia sect. **Ravidassis believe that Guru Ravidas should be treated as a saint** just like the other gurus, **as he lived before the first Sikh Guru** and his teachings were **STUDIED** by the Sikh Gurus.
- **Guru Ravidas Jayanti** is a Hindu festival that celebrates the **birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas**.

THE STATUE OF UNITY



It was created as a **tribute to the ‘Iron Man of India’, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.

- **Location:** It is located in **Gujarat**, by the **banks of the River**

Narmada on the River Island of Sadhu Bet, overlooking the Narmada Dam.

- **Height:** The statue, **182-metre tall**, is described as the **world's tallest** as it exceeds the height of China's Spring Temple Buddha by 177 feet.
 - The height of 182 metres is kept as the **Gujarat state has 182 seats in the Gujarat Legislative Assembly.**
 - The statue was **built by Indian construction major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and designed by Padma Bhushan-winning sculptor Ram V Sutar.**
 - The **state government fully funded** the INR 3,050-crore project, covering an area of 20,000 square metres and is surrounded by a 12 square kilometre artificial lake.
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WHO ARE NIHANG SIKHS?



Amid the recent standoff between the protesting farmers and the government, Nihang Sikh warriors have joined the protest, extending support to farmers facing off with security forces.

About Nihang Sikhs:

- Nihangs, originally known as **Akalis or Akali Nihangs**, are a distinct **warrior order within the Sikh community**, known for their **martial traditions, unique attire**, and adherence to a **specific code of conduct.**
- They have a rich history **dating back to the times of Guru Gobind Singh**, the 10th Sikh Guru.
- They are easily **recognizable by their distinctive blue attire**, which includes blue robes, and high turbans adorned with steel quoits (chakrams), and they **often carry traditional weapons like swords, spears, and daggers.**
- They are **highly skilled in Gatka martial arts** and have historically **served as a dedicated and elite force to protect Sikh shrines and communities.**
- Nihangs had a **major role in defending the Sikh Panth** after the fall of the first Sikh rule (1710-15) when **Mughal governors were killing Sikhs** and during the **onslaught of Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Durrani** (1748-65).

- **Current Status:**
 - Nihangs are today divided into **several groups**, each with its own “**chhaoni**” (cantonment), but are **loosely organised into two “dals” (forces)**— **Buddha Dal and Taruna Dal**, names initially given to the two sections into which the ‘Khalsa’ army was divided in 1733.
 - The Buddha Dal has its headquarters at Talvandi Sabo, in Bathinda district, while the principal cantonment of the Taruna Dal Nihangs is at Baba Bakala in Amritsar district.
 - **Anandpur Sahib**, the birthplace of the Khalsa, **remains the main centre of Nihang gatherings**.
 - They **assemble there** in the thousands in **March every year to celebrate Hola Mahalla**, a Sikh festival introduced by Guru Gobind Singh.
 - On that occasion, they **hold tournaments of military skills**, including mock battles.
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TWO YEARS OF RUSSIA – UKRAINE WAR

Why in news?

- On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Two years later, an end to the biggest war in Europe since World War II is nowhere in sight.

What is the Background of Russia-Ukraine conflict?

- Tensions between Ukraine and Russia escalated in late 2013 over a landmark political and trade deal with the European Union.
 - After the pro-Russian then-President, Viktor Yanukovich, suspended the talks weeks of protests in Kyiv erupted into violence. Soon, the then pro-Russian President was ousted.
- Russia responded by invading Crimea, which was a part of Ukraine, and annexing it in March 2014.

- Russia invaded Crimea on the pretext that it was defending its interests and those of Russian-speaking citizens.
- Shortly afterwards, pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions declared their independence from Kyiv (capital of Ukraine).
 - They established their own autonomous state called Donetsk People's Republic in 2014.
 - Russia, in February 2022, recognised the independence of these two regions.
- Kyiv and Moscow signed a peace deal in Minsk in 2015. It was brokered by France and Germany. But it could not bring peace in the region.
- Later, in February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared war on Ukraine in a televised address.
 - He said the military action announced by Russia will seek to demilitarize Ukraine and came in response to threats from Ukraine.

Why Russia invaded Ukraine?

- **Russia wanted a guarantee Ukraine can never join NATO**
 - Russia's main demand was a commitment from NATO to end its further expansion into former Soviet republics — especially Ukraine.
- **Russia wants NATO arms out of Eastern Europe**
 - Russia wants NATO to stop deploying its weapons and forces in countries in Central and Eastern Europe that joined the alliance after 1997.
- **Russia wants a ban on NATO missiles within striking distance**
 - Russia has nervously watched as NATO has demonstrated it can deepen its involvement in Ukraine — providing weapons and training.
 - NATO missiles on Ukrainian soil might pose serious threat to Russia's security.
- **Russia wants autonomy for eastern Ukraine**
 - Russia says Ukraine must meet its obligations under 2015 agreements.

- The peace deal, known as the Minsk agreements, was signed to end the fighting between Ukraine's army and pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.
 - The Minsk agreements also provided additional autonomy to the separatist Russian-speaking territories in the Donbas.
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SPOTTED DEER

As many as 40 spotted deer have been translocated from Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens (Mysuru Zoo) to the Panasoli range of Kali Tiger Reserve (KTR) recently.



- The spotted deer, or **chital/ cheetal** is a deer species **native to the Indian subcontinent**.
 - It is the most **common deer species in Indian forests**.
 - **Distribution:** It is widely distributed in Asia, especially in **India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan**, and a small group in **Pakistan**.
 - **Habitat:** **Subtropical grasslands** and forests
 - **Features:**
 - With a **lifespan of about 20 to 30 years**, it stands at about 35 inches tall and weighs about 187 pounds.
 - It is a **slightly reddish brown** with **white spots** on its body.
 - **Only males have antlers**, and their **bodies are larger than females**.
 - Spotted Deers are **social animals**. They commonly occur in herds of 10 to 50 individuals.
 - They **mainly feed on grasses** throughout the year. Their diets include herbs, shrubs, foliage, and fruits.
 - **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List: Least Concern.**
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