WHAT IS OPEN NETWORK DIGITAL COMMERCE?
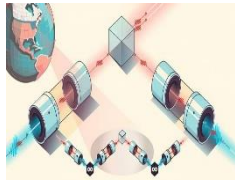
In a first, the Centre has on boarded 11 fair price shops on the state-run e-commerce portal Open Network Digital Commerce (ONDC).

- It is **an open-source network** set up to enable buyers and sellers to transact with each other irrespective of the e-commerce platform on which either of them are registered.

- It will enable local commerce across segments, such as mobility, grocery, food order and delivery, hotel booking and travel, among others, to be discovered **and engaged by any network-enabled application.**

- It is an initiative of the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**(DPIIT) under **the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**

- **Purpose:**
  - To promote open networks for all aspects of the exchange of goods and services over digital or electronic networks.
  - To create new opportunities, curb digital monopolies and support micro, small and medium enterprises and small traders and help them get on online platforms.
  - It seeks to **democratise digital or electronic commerce**, moving it from a platform-centric model to an open-network.

- **Benefits:**
  - It **offers small retailers** an **opportunity to provide their services**, and goods to buyers across the country through an e-commerce system.
  - It enables merchants to save their data to build credit history and reach consumers.
  - It is expected to **digitise the entire value chain**, promote inclusion of suppliers, derive efficiencies in logistics and enhance value for consumers.
  - ONDC protocols would standardise operations like cataloguing, inventory management, order management and order fulfilment.

QUANTUM INTERNET

A team of Stony Brook University physicists and their collaborators have taken a significant step toward the building of a quantum internet testbed by demonstrating a foundational quantum network measurement that employs room-temperature quantum memories.

About Quantum Internet:

- It is a theorised and much sought-after **network of interconnected quantum computers** that will allow people to send, compute, and receive information using quantum technology.

- A quantum internet would be a **network of quantum computers, sensors**, and communication devices that will create, process, and transmit quantum states and entanglement.

- It is anticipated to enhance society's internet system and provide certain services and securities that the current internet does not have.

- The purpose of the quantum internet is not to replace the internet we know today, but to instead create a co-existent network that can be **used to solve specific types of problems.**

Working:

○ Quantum computers use fundamental units of information similar to the bits used in classical computing. These are **called "qubits."**

○ However, unlike conventional computer bits—which convey information as a 0 or 1—qubits convey information through a **combination of quantum states**, which are unique conditions found only on the **subatomic scale.**

○ Qubits are not either 0 or 1, but rather both and neither, in a quantum phenomenon called **superposition.**

KILKARI PROGRAMME

Recently the Union Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare virtually launched the Kilkari programme, a Mobile Health (m-health) initiative for beneficiaries in local content in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

- **'Kilkari'** (meaning 'a baby's gurgle'), is a **centralised interactive voice response** (IVR) based **mobile health service.**

- **Features:**
    - It delivers free, weekly, time-appropriate 72 audio messages **about pregnancy**, **childbirth,** and **childcare** directly to families' mobile phones from the **second trimester** of pregnancy until the child is one year old.
    - Women who are registered in the Reproductive Child Health (RCH) portal based on the woman's LMP (last menstrual period) or the child's DoB (Date of Birth), receive a weekly call with pre-recorded audio content directly to the mobile phones of pregnant women and mothers with children under the age of one year.
    - Kilkari audio messages are present in the form of the voice of a fictitious doctor character called Dr. Anita.

- It is centrally **hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** (MoHFW) for all the States/UTs and no further investment in the technology, telephony infrastructure or operational costs is required to be borne by States/UTs.

- This service is FREE of cost for States/UTs and beneficiaries.

- The programme is **integrated with the centralised Reproductive Child Health (RCH) portal** of MoHFW and is the single source of information for this **mHealth** service.

- Currently, Kilkari is under implementation in 18 States / UTs of India.

What is Mobile Academy?

- It is a free audio training course designed to expand and **refresh the knowledge of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs)** and improve their communication skills via their mobile phones, which is both cost-effective and efficient.

- It is an anytime, anywhere training course that can train thousands of ASHAs simultaneously via mobile phone.
- It is operational in 17 States/UTs except Chandigarh with six languages viz. Hindi, Bhojpuri, Oriya, Assamese, Bengali & Telugu versions.

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT (WSDS) 2024

The Vice-President inaugurated the World Sustainable Development Summit in New Delhi recently.

About the World Sustainable Development (WSDS) Summit:

- It is the **annual flagship event of the Energy and Resources Institute** (TERI).
- **Instituted in 2001,** the Summit series has a legacy of over two decades of making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal.
- It is the **only independently convened international summit on sustainable development** and environment, **based in the Global South**.
- WSDS strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of global communities by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform.
- **WSDS 2024** is the **23rd edition of the summit.**
- WSDS 2024 will take place on the **theme 'Leadership for the Sustainable Development and Climate Justice'.**

Key Facts about The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI):

- TERI is a leading **think tank** dedicated to c**onducting research for the sustainable development of** India and the **Global South.**
- It is an **independent**, multi-dimensional organisation, with **capabilities in research, policy, consultancy, and implementation.**
- **History**:
  - TERI was **established in 1974 as an information centre** on energy issues.

- Research activities, initiated towards the end of 1982, were rooted in TERI's firm conviction that efficient utilisation of energy and sustainable use of natural resources would propel the process of development.

- Its work across sectors is **focused on:**
  - Promoting **efficient use of resources**
  - **Increasing access** to and uptake **of sustainable inputs** and practices
  - **Reducing the impact on the environment** and climate
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi.**

RAMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE (RRI)

Indian scientists at the Raman Research Institute (RRI) recently designed a new image-correction algorithm that significantly enhances the study of ultracold atoms.

About the Raman Research Institute (RRI):

- It is an **autonomous research institute** engaged in **research in basic sciences**.
- **Location: Bengaluru**
- The institute was **founded in 1948 by Indian physicist and Nobel Laureate Sir C.V. Raman,** with **funds from private sources**.
  - Sir **C.V. Raman served as its director,** carrying on his personal research **until his demise in 1970.**
- It was **restructured in 1972 to** become an **aided autonomous institute receiving funds from the Department of Science and Technology** of the Government of India.
- The **Governing Council is the executive body** of the Institute and conducts the administration and management of the Institute.
- Today, the **main areas of research** at the Institute are **Astronomy & Astrophysics**, **Light & Matter Physics**, **Soft Condensed** Matter, and **Theoretical Physics.**

What are Ultracold atoms?

- The **atoms whose temperatures are near absolute zero** (zero Kelvin) are known as ultracold atoms.

- At low temperatures near absolute zero, atoms **behave according to the principles of quantum mechanics** rather than classical physics.

AJANTA AND ELLORA CAVES

The Ministry of Tourism recently included the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Ajanta and Ellora caves in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar in its Swadesh Darshan Scheme II.

About Ajanta and Ellora Caves:

- Ajanta and Ellora caves, considered to be one of the **finest examples of ancient rock-cut caves,** are located in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (**Aurangabad) in Maharashtra**.

- The Ajanta and Ellora cave complex is adorned with beautiful **sculptures, paintings**, and **frescoe**s and **includes Buddhist monasteries and Hindu and Jain temples**.

- The **Ajanta caves are 29 in number** and were **built between the 2nd century BC and the 6th century AD**, whereas the **Ellora caves** are more spread out and **34 in number** and date to the period between the **6th and 11th Centuries AD**.

- **Ajanta Caves** are **mostly Buddhist sites** and were used as a retreat by Buddhist monks.
  - The caves consisted of cells for meditation, assembly halls for discussions, and stupas for rituals.

- **Ellora** has a better **mix of Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist structures**.

- The caves are adorned with **sculptures that reflect the spiritual beliefs** of the time.
  - The sculptures range from depictions of deities, celestial beings, and mythological scenes to portraits of royalty and everyday life.

- The **Kailash Temple in Ellora** is an architectural marvel. It is **one of the largest monolithic structures** in the world.
  - The structure is **carved vertically from a single rock**.

Key Facts about the Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- It was launched in 2015 by the **Ministry of Tourism,** Government of India, **to develop** sustainable and **responsible tourism destinations** in the country.
- It is a **100% centrally funded**
- Under the scheme, the Ministry of Tourism **provides financial assistance to State governments,** Union Territory Administrations, **or Central Agencies to develop tourism infrastructure** in the country.
- **Operation & Maintenance** (O&M) **of the projects** sanctioned under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme is the **responsibility of the respective State Government**/UT Administration.

Swadesh Darshan 2.0:

- o The Ministry of Tourism has revamped its Swadesh Darshan scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0) for the **development of sustainable and responsible tourist destinations,** covering tourism and **allied infrastructure**, tourism services, human capital development, **destination management,** and promotion, backed by policy and institutional reforms.
- o The objective of the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme envisages an **increase in private-sector investment** in tourism and hospitality.
- o It may help in increasing **Public Private Partnerships (PPP)** in the field of tourism and the operation and maintenance of the assets created under the scheme.

INCREASING THE RETIREMENT AGE FOR SC AND HC JUDGES

Why in News?

- The government has told a parliamentary panel that extending the retirement age of Supreme Court and High Court judges based on their performance may not be practical.

- Earlier, the Standing Committee on Law and Personnel, in its report on **'Judicial Processes and their Reforms'**, had recommended a performance appraisal system for extending the tenure of the SC and HC judges beyond the existing retirement age.

Highlights of the Report on Judicial Processes and their Reforms:

- The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, and Law and Justice (Chair: Mr Sushil Kumar Modi) submitted its report on August 07, 2023.
- Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include **increasing the retirement age for judges.**
- The Committee observed that the retirement age of judges needs to be increased **to keep pace with advances in medical sciences and increased longevity**.
- **Currently**, the retirement age for SC and HC judges is **65 and 62 years**, respectively. This needs to be increased by **amending the relevant Articles** (124 and 217) of the Constitution.
- Additionally, **a system of appraisal** may be devised by the SC Collegium to evaluate the performance and health conditions of judges, quality and number of judgements delivered before extending their tenure.

Debate on the Age of Retirement for SC and HC Judges:

- Outgoing judges of the SC have often reflected on their tenure, and found that **there was not sufficient time to meaningfully contribute to the institution**.
- **In 2022**, former Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana was in conversation with Justice Stephen Breyer of the US Supreme Court who was voluntarily retiring at age 83 after a 27-year tenure.
- CJI Ramana was set to retire after 8.5 years at the SC, and remarked that **65 was 'too early an age for someone to retire'**.
- CJI Ramana still fared significantly better than most other judges of the SC.
  - **Of the 32 Judges currently at the SC**, only CJI Chandrachud, and Justices J.B. Pardiwala, K.V. Viswanathan, and Dipankar Datta **will cross the 8-year mark**.

- o These judges are the few that cross the average tenure of sitting judges of the SC, of **5.4 years.**

Why does the Govt Oppose the Idea of Raising the Retirement Age for SC and HC Judges?

- According to the government, increasing the retirement age for SC and HC judges may not be practical, as it may result in **"undue favouritism"**.
- **This will result in empowering the SC** Collegium (and will further erode the powers of Parliament) for the evaluation of the judges at the time of giving extensions on individual basis.
- This will make the judges "**susceptible to pressures**", thus impinging on their performance as impartial judges.
- Besides, **this would create an avoidable burden** on the limited manpower resources in the Judiciary and the Executive, who are involved in the appointment process.