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NARCOTICS CONTROL BUREAU

Recently, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has dismantled a pan-India drug distribution network operating under the name Team Kalki.

- It is the **nodal drug law enforcement** and **intelligence agency** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs,** Government of India.
- It was constituted under the provisions of **the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985** (NDPS Act).

Functions of Narcotics Control Bureau:

- **Coordination among various Central and State Agencies** engaged in drug law enforcement;
- Assisting States in enhancing their drug law enforcement effort;
- Collection and dissemination of intelligence;
- Analysis of seizure data, study of trends and modus operandi;
- Preparation of **National Drug Enforcement Statistics**;
- **Liaison with International agencies** such as UNDCP, INCB, INTERPOL, Customs Cooperation Council, RILO etc;
- National contact point for intelligence and investigations
- It also functions as an **enforcement agency through its zonal offices.**
  - The zonal offices collect and analyse data related to seizures of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, study trends, modus operandi, collect and disseminate intelligence, and work in close cooperation with the Customs, State Police, and other law enforcement agencies.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi

ASMITA INITIATIVE

Recently, the Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports launch the nationwide athletics league at 250 locations across the subcontinent under the ASMITA (Achieving Sports Milestone by Inspiring Women Through Action) programme.

- It was **started in 2021.**
- It is part of **Khelo India's gender-neutral mission** to promote sports among women through leagues and competitions.
    - ASMITA leagues not only aim to increase the participation of women in sports but also to utilize the leagues as a platform for the **identification of new talent** across the length and breadth of India.
- It is an affirmative action in sports for increasing women's participation.
- **Objective:** Inclusive and grassroots-driven sports development.
- The Khelo India ASMITA league is a **core component of the 'Khelo Bharat Niti,'** promoting sports for nation-building and women's empowerment.
- The **Sports Authority of India** (SAI) supports **National Sports Federations** in conducting **Khelo India women's leagues** across multiple age groups at both zonal and national levels.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Key Facts about Khelo India:

- It is a flagship Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India.
- It is aimed at promoting **mass participation and sporting excellence.**
- Khelo India Games have been declared an 'Event of National Importance' in 2020 under the Sports Broadcasting Signals Act, 2007.

BHARATNET PROJECT

Recently, the government said that through BharatNet project India expanded its optical fibre networks, 5G services and digital public infrastructure to more than 2.15 lakh Gram Panchayats.

- It is project of the Government of India aimed at **providing broadband connectivity** to all **Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country.**
- **Objective:** The primary objective is to provide unrestricted access to broadband connectivity to all the telecom service providers.
    - This enables access providers like mobile operators, **Internet Service Providers** (ISPs), Cable TV operators, and content providers to launch various services such as **e-health, e-education, and e-governance in rural and remote India.**
- **Phases of BharatNet Project:**
    - **Phase I:** Focused on laying optical fibre cables to **connect 1 lakh Gram Panchayats** by utilising existing infrastructure. This phase was completed in 2017.
    - **Phase II(ongoing):** Expanded coverage to an **additional 1.5 lakh Gram Panchayats** using optical fibre, radio, and satellite technologies.
    - **Phase III (ongoing):** Aims at **future-proofing** the network by integrating 5G technologies, increasing bandwidth capacity, and ensuring robust last-mile connectivity.
- **Funding:** It is primarily funded through the **Digital Bharat Nidhi** (DBN), which is a fund that replaced the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
- **Implementation:** It is being executed by a **Special Purpose Vehicle** (SPV) namely **Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL).**

PROBA-3 MISSION

Recently, the European Space Agency (Esa) has lost contact with one of the two spacecraft powering its Proba-3 mission.

- It is the **European Space Agency's** (ESA) first mission dedicated to precision formation flying.
- It is the innovative mission which will demonstrate precision formation flying between two satellites to **create an artificial eclipse,** revealing new views of the Sun's faint corona.

Objective: To create an **artificial eclipse** by precisely coordinating two independent satellites. This capability will enable scientists to observe the Sun's corona, a region typically obscured by the intense brightness of the Sun.

- It consists of **two small satellites**: a **Coronagraph spacecraft** and a **solar-disc-shaped Occulter spacecraft.**

Working

- By flying in tight formation about 150 metres apart, the Occulter will precisely cast its shadow onto the Coronagraph's telescope, blocking the Sun's direct light.
- This will allow the Coronagraph to **image the faint solar corona in visible**, ultraviolet and polarised light for many hours at a time.
- It will provide new **insights into the origins of coronal mass ejections** (CMEs) — eruptions of solar material that can disrupt satellites and power grids on Earth.
- The mission will also **measure total solar irradiance**, tracking changes in the Sun's energy output that may influence Earth's climate.

CHALLENGES TO INDIA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION

- India has emerged as one of the world's leading countries in the transition toward clean and renewable energy.
- India's renewable energy sector has witnessed rapid growth due to several factors:
  - Large-scale government policy support
  - Competitive renewable energy auctions
  - Increasing private investment in solar and wind projects
  - Falling costs of renewable energy technologies
- India has also set ambitious energy transition targets, including:
  - Achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030
  - Meeting 50% of energy requirements from renewable sources
  - Achieving net-zero emissions by 2070
- As a result, renewable energy capacity in India has expanded rapidly across states such as **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka**, which possess favourable conditions for solar and wind power generation.

Stranded Renewable Power in India

- One of the most pressing issues facing India's renewable energy transition is the phenomenon of stranded renewable power.
- Stranded power refers to situations where electricity generated from renewable sources cannot be transmitted to consumers due to limitations in the power grid.
- For example, in **Rajasthan**, more than 4,000 MW of fully commissioned renewable energy capacity remains unable to evacuate power during peak hours because of grid congestion.
- Although Rajasthan has approximately 23 GW of renewable capacity installed, the available evacuation capacity is only about 18.9 GW, leading to curtailment of power generation.

Transmission Infrastructure Bottlenecks

- Transmission infrastructure plays a crucial role in the renewable energy ecosystem because renewable energy generation is often concentrated in specific geographic locations, while electricity demand is spread across the country.
- Large transmission corridors have been constructed to transport electricity from renewable-rich regions to demand centres.
- However, many high-capacity transmission lines are currently operating far below their designed capacity.
- For instance, 765 kV double-circuit transmission corridors designed to evacuate around 6,000 MW are often operating at only 600–1,000 MW, resulting in utilisation levels below 20%.
- These transmission corridors involve massive public investment, with each corridor costing approximately Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 5,000 crore.
- Underutilisation of such infrastructure results in inefficient use of public resources and increases the cost burden on electricity consumers.

Institutional Reforms Needed

- Experts suggest that addressing India's renewable energy challenges requires stronger institutional coordination.
- **Improved grid utilisation targets**: Grid operators should be evaluated not only on maintaining stability but also on maximising utilisation of transmission assets.
- **Transparent curtailment mechanisms**: Curtailment should be distributed proportionately among generators to ensure fairness.
- **Dynamic reallocation of network capacity**: Unused transmission capacity should be made available to other generators through transparent and real-time mechanisms.
- **Better coordination between planning and operations**: Transmission planning agencies and grid operators must align their decisions to ensure that planned infrastructure delivers its intended capacity.

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION — REMEDY WORSE THAN DISEASE

- The proposal for One Nation, One Election **(ONOE)** aims to synchronise elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies so they occur simultaneously.
- Proponents argue that this reform would reduce **election expenditure**, limit prolonged security deployment, prevent constant political campaigning, and reduce disruptions caused by the **Model Code of Conduct**.
- However, comparative global experiences and India's constitutional framework raise **serious concerns.**

Electoral Systems and Democratic Safeguards

- Countries such as **South Africa** and **Indonesia** operate under **proportional representation**, which distributes political power across multiple parties and protects minority representation.
- India's first-past-the-post system operates differently. A strong **national electoral wave** could sweep both parliamentary and state elections simultaneously, weakening regional parties and reducing political diversity.
- The example of the **United States** offers limited relevance. Its **presidential system** separates the executive from legislative confidence, ensuring fixed electoral cycles.
- India's parliamentary system, by contrast, requires governments to retain the confidence of the legislature to remain in office.

The Problem of Unexpired-Term Elections

- A central feature of the **129th** Amendment Bill, 2024, developed from recommendations of the committee chaired by the former President **Mr Ram Nath Kovind**, is the concept of unexpired-term elections.
- If a legislature dissolves early, the newly elected body would serve only the **remaining portion** of the original cycle.

- This arrangement creates multiple distortions. First, it **devalues the franchise**, as voters would elect governments with **truncated mandates**.
- Second, short-term governments may lack incentives for long-term policy reform, encouraging populism and policy drift.
- Third, the absence of a clear minimum residual term could produce a governance dead zone.
- At the state level, postponing elections to maintain synchronisation could prolong Article 356 of the Constitution of India (President's Rule).
- At the Union level, prolonged caretaker arrangements could conflict with the parliamentary meeting requirement under Article 85 of the Constitution of India.

The Cost Argument

- Supporters of ONOE emphasise the financial burden of elections, yet the costs remain relatively small. Parliamentary estimates place combined Lok Sabha and state election expenditure at roughly ₹4,500 crore, around 0.25% of the Union Budget and about **0.03% of GDP.**
- India's phased election model allows the Election Commission of India to rotate EVMs, VVPATs, and security forces, improving logistical efficiency.
- Conducting simultaneous elections nationwide may require **additional resources,** weakening claims of administrative savings.

Conclusion

- The ONOE proposal promises administrative convenience, cost reduction, and reduced campaign disruption, yet its constitutional implications are far-reaching.
- Synchronised elections risk weakening federalism, diluting **legislative accountability**, and altering the balance of India's **parliamentary democracy**.
- The system of staggered elections provides continuous **democratic oversight** and preserves the autonomy of states.
- Electoral frequency should not be viewed as an administrative burden but as an essential feature of representative government.

WHITE PHOSPHORUS

- White (sometimes called yellow) phosphorus is a **white to yellow waxy solid** with a garlic like odour.
- **Properties:** It **ignites spontaneously** in air at temperatures above 30 °C and continues to burn until it is fully oxidized or until deprived of oxygen.

Applications:

- It is often **used by militaries to illuminate battlefields**, to generate a smokescreen and as an incendiary.
- It is used for military purposes in **grenades and artillery shells** to produce illumination, to generate a smokescreen and as an incendiary.
- Its major industrial uses are in the **production of phosphoric acid**, **phosphates** and other compounds.
  - Phosphates are used to manufacture a range of **products including fertilizers** and detergents. Phosphorus has been used as a rodenticide and in fireworks.

Impact of White phosphorus on Humans:

- It is harmful to humans by all routes of exposure.
- The smoke from burning phosphorus is **also harmful to the eyes and respiratory tract** due to the presence of phosphoric acids and phosphine.
- It can **cause deep and severe burns**, penetrating even through bone.