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INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

- It is the **world's leading intergovernmental organisation** for **scientific and technical cooperation in the nuclear field.**
- The IAEA is an **autonomous organization within the United Nations system.**
- It **reports to both** the United Nations **General Assembly and the UN Security Council.**
- Its **primary goal** is to ensure that **nuclear energy is not diverted for weapons purposes.**
- **Member Countries:** The agency currently has **180 member states**, reflecting its wide international mandate and credibility.
- **Headquarters: Vienna, Austria.**
- **Institutional Structure:**
    - **General Conference:** The General Conference, composed of **all member states, meets annually** to **approve budgets** and **set general policy directions.**
    - **Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors, comprising **35 members,** meets about five times a year to: approve safeguards agreements, carry out statutory functions, and appoint the Director General.
    - **Secretariat**: It is led by the Director General and handles the IAEA's daily operations.
- **Functions**:
    - **Promoting Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy:** The IAEA encourages the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, emphasizing sustainability and safety.
    - **Safety and Security:** The agency **establishes safety standards** and **provides assistance** to ensure that nuclear operations are conducted safely and securely.
    - **Verification**: The IAEA **conducts inspections** and **monitoring to verify compliance with nuclear non-proliferation agreements.**

KURUMBA PAINTING

- It is a **prehistoric art form,** estimated to be over 3000 years old.
- It originates from the **Kurumba tribe** in **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.**
- The art was traditionally drawn on **rocks and in caves across the high hills of the Nilgiris.**

Raw Materials and Tools Used:

- Kurumba paintings use natural **pigments sourced from the forest**.
- Yellow-brown and black pigments come from **Vengai tree resin**, while green pigments are derived **from crushed leaves.**
- Artists use **fine twigs, bamboo sticks, and natural fiber brushes for application**.
- The paintings are traditionally done on **walls, fabric, and handmade paper.**

Design and Color:

- Kurumba tribal **paintings use natural colors**—green from leaves, red and white from soil, and black from tree bark—applied with cloth on cow dung-coated walls.
- The art features simple, **linear motifs with dots, lines, and geometric shapes, depicting huts,** animals, and **community life.**
- Themes center around **spiritual beliefs, rituals, festivals, and daily activities.**
- This minimalist yet expressive style preserves the tribe's cultural heritage and reflects their deep spiritual bond with nature.

Product Range: Wall murals, decorative panels, ritual paintings, cloth artworks.

PREPARING INDIA FOR A TRUE INNOVATION-LED ECONOMY

- India shows strong policy ambition through major funding commitments, regulatory reforms, and improvements in global innovation rankings.
- Yet the core foundations of innovation remain fragile. Indicators such as **low R&D intensity**, limited global technological influence, weak research-to-market translation, and inadequate **private-sector participation** continue to constrain progress.
- The challenge facing India today is not the absence of intent but the gap between **policy ambition** and **effective execution**.

Policy Momentum and Growing Government Commitment

- Recent policy initiatives signal a determined effort to strengthen the national innovation ecosystem.
- The government's ₹1,00,000 crore Research, Development, and Innovation **(RDI) Fund** represents a significant step toward strengthening technological capacity.
- The 2026 Union Budget further reinforced this direction with a ₹20,000 crore corpus supporting **deep-tech startups**, expanded **tax incentives**, and investments in digital infrastructure.
- The expansion of the **Atal Tinkering Labs** programme, from ₹500 crore to ₹3,200 crore, demonstrates a long-term commitment to cultivating young innovators and strengthening STEM education.
- In addition, the **SHANTI Act, 2025** enabled patents for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and radiation, potentially encouraging greater private-sector participation in advanced technological fields.

The Missing Link: From Research to Market

- The most significant weakness in India's innovation system lies in the transition from scientific research to commercialisation.
- Innovation delivers real economic impact only when ideas move successfully from the **laboratory to the market**.

- Universities and public research institutions produce increasing volumes of **scientific output**, yet mechanisms for technology transfer, venture creation, and risk capital alignment remain limited.
- High-technology entrepreneurship requires patient capital, strong intellectual property protection, and ecosystems that tolerate technological risk and failure.
- Leading innovation economies have built strong connections between **academia, industry, and finance**, enabling discoveries to evolve into globally competitive technologies.

The Crucial Role of the Private Sector

- India's innovation future ultimately depends on the active participation of the private sector.
- Government initiatives can provide funding and policy support, but sustainable technological progress requires strong industry-led research investment.
- Businesses must commit to **long-gestation innovation**, particularly in deep technology sectors such as advanced communications, space technology, and artificial intelligence.
- India's commercial space sector has produced several promising startups, demonstrating the potential of technology-driven entrepreneurship.
- The RDI Fund could further accelerate innovation if industry embraces long-term investment and collaboration with research institutions.
- The emergence of **6G technology standards** in the coming years will serve as a critical benchmark of India's technological contribution.

Conclusion

- Transforming India into a global innovation leader will require stronger private-sector engagement, deeper investment in scientific research, and closer collaboration between universities, industry, and venture capital.
- The policy groundwork has been laid; the next phase of India's innovation story will depend on whether **industry-driven R&D** rises to meet the opportunity.

MOTION TO REMOVE THE CEC - CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS AND INSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS

- **Removal procedure:** The Constitution of India [**Article 324 (5)**] provides a stringent process to ensure the independence of the CEC. The procedure mirrors the removal process of a **Supreme Court judge**.
- **Steps involved:**
    - **Initiation of notice**: At least 100 members of the Lok Sabha or 50 members of the Rajya Sabha must submit a removal notice to the Speaker or Chairman.
    - **Admission and inquiry**: If admitted, a three-member committee is constituted to investigate the charges.
    - **Grounds for removal:** Removal can occur only on the grounds of Proved misbehaviour, and incapacity.
    - **Parliamentary approval:** The motion must be passed in both Houses of Parliament with a special majority -
        - Majority of total membership of the House, and
        - Two-thirds of members present and voting.
- **Meaning of "Proved misbehaviour":** The phrase has been interpreted to include -
    - Deliberate abuse of constitutional authority,
    - Partisan functioning favouring a political formation, and
    - Actions undermining the credibility and impartiality of the Election Commission.

Legislative Response to the SC Verdict - The CEC Act:

- Soon after the SC judgment, the Union government enacted a new law governing appointments to the Election Commission.
- **Key change in the appointment process:**
    - The new arrangement replaced the Chief Justice of India with a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

- Thus, the selection committee now consists of - Prime Minister (Chairperson), Leader of the Opposition, and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

- **Implications:** This structure gives the **executive** a **majority** (2 out of 3 members), raising concerns that the independence of the ECI may be compromised, and the executive may influence appointments.

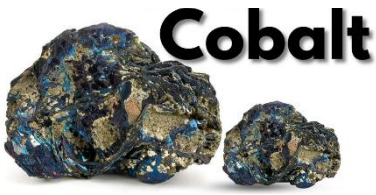
Challenges and Concerns:

- **Politicisation of Constitutional offices:** A removal motion could deepen the perception that constitutional authorities are being dragged into political conflicts.
- **Executive dominance in appointments**: Changes in the appointment process may weaken the institutional independence of the ECI.
- **Erosion of public trust:** If electoral authorities are seen as partisan, public confidence in free and fair elections may decline.
- **Institutional instability:** Frequent political challenges to constitutional authorities may undermine the stability of democratic institutions.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen appointment mechanism:** Restore a balanced selection committee including judicial representation.
- **Ensure transparency in decision-making:** Election Commission decisions should be backed by clear reasoning and institutional accountability.
- **Parliamentary responsibility:** Removal motions should be used only in exceptional circumstances to preserve institutional credibility.
- **Institutional reforms**: Introduce clear guidelines defining "misbehaviour" to avoid political misuse.
- **Promote electoral integrity**: Expand programmes like SVEEP to deepen voter awareness and participation.

COBALT



- It is a hard, **lustrous, silver-grey metal.**
- **Properties:**
  - It is a **ferromagnetic strategic alloying metal.**
  - It is a chemical element with the **symbol Co and atomic no.27.**
  - It is associated mostly with **copper, nickel and arsenic ores.**
  - Cobalt is extracted as a **by-product of copper, nickel, zinc or precious metals**.
- Major World reserves of cobalt: Democratic Republic of Congo, Russia, Canada, Philippines and Cuba.
- **Occurrences of cobalt in India:** Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, Nagaland and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Applications:**
  - Major use of cobalt is in **metallurgical applications**, in Special alloy/Super alloy Industry, in magnets and cutting tools industries.
  - Cobalt is used as precursors (cobalt compounds) for cathodes in **rechargeable batteries**.
  - It is also **used in powerful magnets**, cutting tools and high-strength alloys in the aerospace, energy and defence sectors.
  - Cobalt compounds have been used since antiquity as a **pigment (cobalt-blue) for pottery**, glass, paints and other media.

NATIONAL SHIPPING BOARD

- It is a permanent statutory body established in 1959, **under Section 4 of Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.**
- **Function:** It advise the Government of India on matters related to shipping including the development.

- It has played a very distinguished role in the Maritime development of the country, as its deliberation and recommendations have contributed to the evolution of a sound and pragmatic **National Maritime Policy over the years.**
- **Composition:**
    - It consists of **Chairman and Members.**
    - **Six Members** elected by Parliament (Four from the Lok Sabha and two from Rajya Sabha from amongst its Members).
    - **Tenure:** The **Chairman and other members** of the Board held office **for a period of two years.**
    - Such Members of **other members not exceeding sixteen** as the Central Government may think fit to appoint on the Board to represent the Central Government, Ship-owners, and Seamen.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

US LAUNCHES SECTION 301 TRADE PROBE INTO INDIA

- Section 301, part of the Trade Act of 1974 (Sections 301–310), empowers the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to investigate foreign trade practices that may violate trade agreements or unfairly restrict US commerce.
- The law allows the USTR to initiate investigations independently or based on complaints, examine foreign government policies affecting trade, and impose remedies such as tariffs or other trade restrictions.
- As a result, Section 301 serves as the US government's primary legal instrument for responding to perceived unfair trade practices by other countries.

Possible Tariffs as US Launches Fast-Track Section 301 Probe

- Trade experts note that most countries targeted in the investigation have **trade deficits in goods with the US**.

- The probe is moving quickly, with a short window for public comments and hearings scheduled for early May.
- This could mean that fresh tariffs could be imposed on India and other countries after May.

US Concerns Over India's Excess Manufacturing Capacity

- The USTR has targeted India for structural excess capacity in several manufacturing sectors.
- It noted that India recorded a **$58 billion trade surplus** with the US in 2025, with global surpluses in textiles, healthcare products, construction materials, and automobiles.
- The USTR also highlighted excess capacity in sectors such as solar modules, petrochemicals, and steel, stating that India's solar module production is nearly three times higher than its domestic demand.

Implications of the US Section 301 Investigation for India

- According to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), the US investigation highlights several Indian sectors where structural excess capacity or export surpluses may exist.
- This includes solar modules, petrochemicals, steel, textiles, healthcare goods, construction materials, and automobiles.
- The US notice points out that India's solar module manufacturing capacity is nearly **three times higher** than domestic demand, suggesting the possibility of export-driven surpluses.
- Similar concerns have been raised regarding expanding capacity in petrochemicals and steel.
- Experts stated that the investigation mainly addresses global concerns over manufacturing overcapacity.
- They emphasised that India's export growth is largely demand-driven and diversified, though the situation will need to be closely monitored.