

AGREEMENT ON PRE-NOTIFICATION OF THE 'FLIGHT TESTING OF BALLISTIC MISSILES'



MISSILES'

Pakistan recently urged India to comply with the timeline stipulated in the Agreement on pre-notification of flight testing of ballistic missiles as it took note of the first flight test of India's indigenously developed Agni-5 missile.

Agreement on Pre-notification of the 'Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles' was signed between India and Pakistan on October 3, 2005. According to the pact, both countries are supposed to send each other an 'advance notification' of the flight test that they intend to undertake of any land or sea- launched, surface-to-surface ballistic missiles.

- The notification should be "**no less than three days in advance** of the commencement of a **five-day launch window** within which it intends to undertake flight tests of any land or sea-launched, surface-to-surface ballistic missile".
- Each country also has to **ensure that the test launch sites don't fall within 40 km** and the impact area isn't within 75 km of the International Boundary or the Line of Control along the side of the country undertaking the test.
- Each party shall also further **ensure that the planned trajectory** of the ballistic missile being flight tested **shall not cross the International Boundary or the Line of Control** between India and Pakistan, and further, it shall maintain a horizontal distance of at least 40 km from the International Boundary and the Line of Control.
- The parties shall **treat the bilateral pre-Notification** exchanged under this agreement as **confidential**, unless otherwise agreed upon. The notification **shall be conveyed through the respective Foreign Offices and the High Commissions**.
- The agreement states that pre-notification **applies only to tests conducted with surface-to-surface ballistic missiles** launched from land or sea. The agreement **does not apply to cruise missiles**. It also **does not apply to surface-to-air missiles**.
- A **party may withdraw** from this agreement by giving six months written notice to the other, indicating its intention to abrogate the agreement.



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AI, ELECTIONS, DISINFORMATION

Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Elections:

- In 2018, the **Cambridge Analytica scandal** brought into mainstream public discourse the impact of social media on electoral politics, and the possibility of manipulating the views of Facebook users using data mined from their private posts.
- AI can accelerate the production and diffusion of disinformation **in broadly three ways**, contributing to organised attempts to persuade people to vote in a certain way.
 - **First**, AI can magnify the scale of disinformation by thousands of times.
 - **Second**, hyper-realistic deep fakes of pictures, audio, or video could influence voters powerfully before they can be possibly fact-checked.
 - **Third**, and perhaps most importantly, by microtargeting.
- AI can be used to **inundate voters with highly personalised propaganda**, as the persuasive ability of AI models would be far superior to the bots and automated social media accounts.



- **The risks are compounded by social media companies** such as Facebook and Twitter significantly cutting their fact-checking and election integrity teams.

- While YouTube, TikTok and Facebook do require labelling of election-related advertisements generated with AI, that may not be a foolproof deterrent.

Imminent Dangers Posed by the AI on the Election Process:

- A new study predicts that AI will help **spread toxic content across social media platforms** on an almost-daily basis in 2024 and could potentially affect **election results in more than 50 countries**.
 - This could **destabilise societies** by discrediting and questioning the legitimacy of governments.
- The World Economic Forum's **Global Risks Perception Survey**, ranks misinformation and disinformation among the top 10 risks.

- The easy-to-use interfaces of large-scale AI models **enable a boom in false information and “synthetic” content** - from sophisticated voice cloning to fake websites.

Recent Regulatory Steps by India to Curtail Misinformation by AI Models:

- **The Indian government** has asked digital platforms to provide technical and business process solutions to prevent and weed out misinformation that can harm society and democracy.
- According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), **a legal framework against deepfakes and disinformation will be finalised after the elections.**
- Earlier this month, the MeitY had issued **an advisory to companies** such as Google and OpenAI, that their services should not generate responses that are illegal under Indian laws or threaten the integrity of the electoral process.
 - The advisory had faced a backlash from some generative AI space startups **over fears of regulatory overreach that could throttle the emerging industry.**
- While the government stressed that the advisory was only meant at "significant" platforms and not startups, **the incident highlights the need for regulators to tread carefully on the narrow line** between -
 - Combating AI-linked misinformation and
 - Being perceived as restricting AI-led innovation.

ETHANOL 100 FUEL



ETHANOL 100 fuel has high-octane rating, typically between 100-105. It proves ideal for high-performance engines, ensuring improved efficiency and power output all while minimizing environmental impact.

- Moreover, ETHANOL 100’s versatility shines through, as it can be used in **a wide array of vehicles, including flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) designed to run on gasoline, ethanol or any blend of the two.**

- Its practicality and potential to become a mainstream fuel option with the right infrastructure in place. It includes 93-93.5 percent ethanol blended with 5 percent petrol and 1.5 percent co-solvent, which is a binder.
- It stands as a cleaner, greener alternative to gasoline, boasting lower emissions of greenhouse gases and pollutants, thus aiding in combating climate change and enhancing air quality in our communities.

What are flex-fuel vehicles?

- These are designed to run on a variety of fuels. These are equipped with an internal combustion engine (ICE) which can run on petrol or ethanol or methanol, giving consumers choice at the point of sale of the fuel.
- Apart from a few modifications, flex fuel vehicles are similar to petrol-only cars.

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (AFDB)



African Development Bank (AfDB) is a **regional multilateral development finance institution** established to contribute to the economic development and social progress of African countries—the institution's regional member countries. The bank is also **known as the Banque Africaine de Développement**.

- It was founded following an agreement signed by member states in 1963 in Khartoum, Sudan, which became effective in 1964.
- **Mission:** To help reduce poverty, improve living conditions for Africans, and mobilize resources for the continent's economic and social development.
- AfDB seeks to stimulate and mobilize internal and external resources to promote investments as well as provide its regional member countries with technical and financial assistance.
 - It is a financial provider to African governments and private companies investing in the Bank's regional member countries.
- **Headquarters:** Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

- The AfDB Bank Group **comprises three entities:** the African Development Bank, the African Development Fund (ADF), and the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF).
 - While the AfDB issues loans to African middle-income countries, the ADF supports countries that do not have sufficient resources to benefit from regular AfDB financing. These countries are offered interest-free loans and grants to finance sustainable development.
 - The NTF was founded in 1976 with capital from Nigeria. It provides **cofinancing** for AfDB measures and financing for NTF-specific measures in the public and private sectors in low-income member countries.
- **Membership:** It has 81 member countries: **54 from the African continent** and the other **27 from other regions** around the world.
- **Shareholding:**
 - The shareholding of the Bank is **60%-40%** between regional member countries and non-regional member countries respectively.
 - **Nigeria is the largest** shareholder of AfDB.

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

The Eri (tank) network in the Kazhuveli watershed region is to be proposed for nomination to the World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme.



About World Monuments Fund:

- It is the leading independent organization **devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places** to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities.
- Since 1965, it has preserved the world's diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries.
- It draws on heritage to address some of today's most pressing challenges: climate change, underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery.
- **Headquarter:** New York City

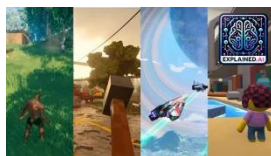
- In **2015**, WMF India became the most recent entry to the World Monuments Fund family of affiliates, established under India's Companies Act, following the country's policy to include heritage conservation in corporate social responsibility programs

What is the World Monuments Watch?

- It is a nomination-based program that connects local heritage preservation to global awareness and action.
- **Every two years**, the Watch rallies support to places in need and the people who care for them, spotlighting new challenges.
- At its core, the Watch's call to action seeks to empower timely preservation efforts that improve the lives of communities. The 2025 Watch will include 25 places, each telling an urgent local story with global relevance.

WHAT IS SIMA?

Google DeepMind revealed its latest AI gaming agent called SIMA which can follow natural language instructions to perform tasks across video game environments.



- **Scalable Instructable Multiworld Agent (SIMA) as an AI Agent which can process data and take action themselves.** It can be called a generalist AI Agent that is capable of doing different kinds of tasks.
- **Features**
 - It is like a **virtual buddy** who can understand and follow instructions in all sorts of virtual environments
 - It can accomplish tasks or solve challenges assigned to it. It “understands” commands as it has **been trained to process human language**.
 - One distinct feature of this AI Agent is that it is **capable of learning and adapting**.
 - SIMA does this through the interactions it has with the user. The more you interact with SIMA, the smarter it gets by learning from its experiences and

improves over time. This makes it better at understanding and fulfilling user requests.

- However, SIMA goes beyond that and can **follow instructions in a variety of game** This could potentially introduce more helpful AI agents for other environments.
 - These research marks the first time an agent has demonstrated it can understand a broad range of gaming worlds and follow natural-language instructions to carry out tasks within them, as a human might.
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ANTI-CAA PROTESTS IN ASSAM AND TRIPURA

Why in news?

After the recent announcement of rules for the Citizenship (Amendment) Act or CAA, there are loud voices of dissent against it, but this time only in Assam and Tripura (The passage of CAA had caused unrest in the Northeast in 2019). The reason is that most parts of the Northeast, except for large areas of Assam and Tripura, have been **excluded** from the CAA.

However, the Act specifies that these provisions do not apply to: the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, or Tripura as included in the **Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution, and the areas covered under '**The Inner Line**' notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.

Inner Line system

- An Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime is operational in the four Northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, **Mizoram** and Manipur.
- ILP is a special permit that residents of other parts of India need to apply for and receive, in order to enter and spend any duration of time in these states.

Why are Assam, Tripura against CAA?

- **Boundary with the Bangladesh and most of the region does not come under either the Sixth Schedule or the ILP regime**

- Assam shares a 263-km border with Bangladesh while Tripura has a 856-km border with Bangladesh.
 - **Strong anti-immigrant sentiment**
 - Both states have strong anti-immigrant feelings because they share long, open borders with Bangladesh.
 - Also, they have experienced a continuous flow of refugees from the neighbouring country since the days of East Pakistan.
 - While **some** of these migrants are Muslim, **most** are believed to be Bengali-speaking Hindus.
 - **Worried over rising number of Bengali speakers**
 - CAA does not include Muslim refugees or migrants, focusing instead on legitimizing Hindu refugees.
 - This has angered Assamese ethno-nationalists and Tripuri tribals who are worried about the growing number of Bengali speakers.
 - **Separating CAA from NRC Raises Concerns**
 - The government is now saying that the CAA will not be connected to the National Register of Citizens (NRC)— to weed out illegal immigrants, which was originally conceived for, and only implemented in Assam, but remains stalled.
 - This change worries many in Assam because they feel the CAA undermines their main beliefs and political platform. Tripura faces similar concerns.
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CENTRAL GOVT. APPROVES NEW EV POLICY WITH TAX RELIEF

Background:

- India has committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November 2021.
- This will require clear pathways to decarbonize high greenhouse gas (GHG) intensive sectors such as transport and energy.

New EV Policy with Tax Relief

- Govt. of India has approved a scheme to promote India as a manufacturing destination so that e-vehicles with the latest technology can be manufactured in the country.
- The policy is designed to attract investments in the e-vehicle space by reputed global EV manufacturers.
- This will provide Indian consumers with access to latest technology, boost the Make in India initiative, strengthen the EV ecosystem by promoting healthy competition among EV players.
- It will also lead to high volume of production, economies of scale, lower cost of production, reduce imports of crude Oil, lower trade deficit, reduce air pollution, particularly in cities, and will have a positive impact on health and environment.

Key Features of the Policy:

- Minimum Investment required: **Rs 4,150 Cr;**
- No limit on maximum Investment;
- **Timeline for manufacturing:**
 - 3 years for setting up manufacturing facilities in India, and to start commercial production of e-vehicles, and reach 50% domestic value addition (DVA) within 5 years at the maximum.
- **Domestic value addition (DVA) during manufacturing:**
 - A localization level of 25% by the 3rd year and 50% by the 5th year will have to be achieved.
- The **customs duty of 15%** (as applicable to CKD units) would be applicable for a period of 5 years
- **Not more than 8,000 EVs per year** would be permissible for import under this scheme. The carryover of unutilized annual import limits would be permitted.
- The Investment commitment made by the company will have to be backed up by a bank guarantee in lieu of the custom duty forgone.