

WHAT IS ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE (ED)?

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) recently conducted fresh raids in at least five places across West Bengal, in connection with the alleged multi-crore school recruitment scam in the state.



Enforcement Directorate (ED) is a multi-disciplinary organization mandated with the investigation of offence of money laundering and violations of foreign exchange laws.

- It was established in 1956 as an 'Enforcement Unit' under the Department of Economic Affairs. Later, in 1957, this unit was renamed the 'Enforcement Directorate'.
- It is under the **administrative control** of the Department of Revenue (under the **Ministry of Finance**) for operational purposes.

ED is responsible for enforcement of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA), Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA), and Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 (FEOA).

- ED has the power to attach the assets of the culprits found guilty of the violation of FEMA. It has also been **empowered to undertake, search, seizure, arrest**, prosecution action, and survey, etc. against the offences committed under PMLA.

Appointment of Director of ED: The ED Director is appointed by the central government on the recommendation of a committee:

- chaired by the Central Vigilance Commissioner and
- members comprising of Vigilance Commissioners, Home Secretary, Secretary DOPT and Revenue Secretary.

WHAT IS 'ORDER OF THE DRUK GYALPO'?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India received Bhutan's highest civilian award, the 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo', during his two-day State visit to the neighbouring nation.



Order of the Druk Gyalpo stands as Bhutan's most esteemed civilian accolade, reserved for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional contributions to society, embodying values of service, integrity and leadership.

- As per ranking and precedence established, the Order of the Druk Gyalpo was instituted as the **decoration for lifetime achievement** and is the pinnacle of the honour system in Bhutan, taking precedence over all orders, decorations and medals.
- The award has been conferred to Prime Minister of India in recognition of outstanding **contribution to the growth of India-Bhutan relations** and for his distinguished service to the Bhutanese nation and people.
- The present Prime Minister of India **became the first foreign head** of government to receive Bhutan's highest civilian honour.
- Others to receive this award include Her Majesty The Royal Queen Grandmother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck in 2008; His Holiness Je Thrizur Tenzin Dendup in 2008; and His Holiness Je Khenpo Trulku Ngawang Jigme Choedra in 2018.

REUSABLE LANDING VEHICLE (RLV) LEX 02

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully conducted the Pushpak Reusable Landing Vehicle (RLV) LEX 02 landing experiment at the Aeronautical Test Range in Chitradurga, Karnataka.



About Reusable Landing Vehicle (RLV) LEX 02:

- This landing experiment is **the second of the series** conducted at Aeronautical Test Range.

- After the RLV-LEX-01 mission was accomplished last year, RLV-LEX-02 demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of reusable launch vehicle (RLV) from off-nominal initial conditions at release from helicopter.

How was the experiment conducted?

- The RLV LEX-02 mission demonstrated **the autonomous landing capability** of the reusable launch vehicle from challenging initial conditions after release from a helicopter.
- It is named Pushpak, the winged vehicle was lifted by an Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter and released from an altitude of 4.5 km.
- It autonomously approached the runway with cross-range corrections and landed precisely, coming to a halt using its brake parachute, landing gear brakes and nose wheel steering system.
- The winged body and all flight systems used in **RLV-LEX-01** were reused in the RLV-LEX-02 mission after due certification/ clearances.
- The mission was accomplished by **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC)** along with the **Liquid Propulsion System Centre (LPSC)** and the **ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (IISU)**.

Reusable Launch Vehicle

- It is essentially a space **plane with a low lift to drag ratio** requiring an approach at high glide angles that necessitates a landing at high velocities of 350 kmph.
- It utilises several indigenous systems. Localised navigation systems based on pseudolite systems, instrumentation, and sensor systems, etc were developed by ISRO.

INDIA – BHUTAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Why in the News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 22, 2024, arrived in **Paro, Bhutan** for a 24-hour State visit.

India – Bhutan Bilateral Relationship:

- India and Bhutan share unique and exemplary bilateral relations, which are based on mutual trust, goodwill and understanding.
- Formal diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were established in **1968**.
- The basic framework of India-Bhutan relations is the **Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation** signed in 1949 between the two countries, which was renewed in 2007.

Trade & Economic Ties:

- The India-Bhutan Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit – was first signed in 1972.
- The agreement establishes a free trade regime between the two countries.
- India is Bhutan’s top trade partner both as an import source and as an export destination.
- Since 2014, India’s merchandise trade with Bhutan has almost tripled from USD 484 million in 2014-15 to USD 1422 million in 2021-22.
 - It accounting for about 80% of Bhutan’s overall trade, with the balance of trade in India’s favour.

Cultural & Buddhist Links:

- A number of Bhutanese pilgrims travel to Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Sikkim, Udayagiri, and other Buddhist sites in India.
- As a part of the 50th anniversary celebration of diplomatic relations, GOI sponsored a visit by **18 Lam Netens (Buddhist monks)** and representative of the Central Monastic Body of Bhutan to India.

Hydropower Cooperation:

- Mutually beneficial hydro-power cooperation with Bhutan is a key pillar of bilateral economic cooperation.
- For Bhutan, hydro-power development continues to be a vital catalyst for socio-economic development.

- Revenues from Hydropower constitutes a significant portion of the total revenues of the Royal Government of Bhutan.
- The ongoing cooperation between India and Bhutan in hydro-power sector is covered under the 2006 bilateral agreement for cooperation and its Protocol signed in 2009.
- Four hydro-electric projects (HEPs) totalling 2136 MW are already operational in Bhutan and are supplying electricity to India.
- The 720 MW Mangdechhu was commissioned in August 2019 and handed over to Bhutan in December 2022.

New Areas of Cooperation:

- Apart from hydro-power cooperation and development partnership has moved into new and emerging areas with full interoperability of the flagship digital project RuPay, which has been successfully completed.
- **Bhutan became the second country to launch the BHIM app**, further deepening the financial linkages between our two countries.
- Space cooperation is a new and promising area of bilateral cooperation.
- The India-Bhutan SAT was launched into space in November 2022 by ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- Inauguration of Ground Earth Station during visit of Chairman, ISRO also took place in March 2023.

Indians Working in Bhutan:

- About **50,000 Indian citizens are working in Bhutan**, mainly in the construction sector, education and technical consultants involved in infrastructure projects.
- Some Indian daily-workers also enter and exit Bhutan every day in the border towns, as a sign of the close economic interdependence between both countries.
- It is estimated that approximately 4,000 Bhutanese are studying in undergraduate courses in Indian Universities on self-finance basis.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



MEITY STARTUP HUB

Ministry of Electronics & IT Startup Hub is empowering innovation, driving growth and forging success within the vast landscape of Startup Mahakumbh 2024.



MeitY Startup Hub is established as an **Independent Business Division (IBD)** under the aegis of Digital India Corporation (DIC) under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, Government of India.

- It is aimed at **fostering entrepreneurship and innovation** in the technology sector. It supports startups, incubators and **Centers of Excellence (CoEs)** through various programs and initiatives to drive digital transformation and promote India's leadership in emerging technologies.
- **Mission:** It has a mission to **build a conducive innovation and start-up ecosystem** by bringing together various technology innovation stakeholders and paving the way toward a strong economy built on the twin engines of innovation and technological advancement.
- It acts as a **national coordination, facilitation and monitoring center** that will integrate all the incubation centers, start-ups, and innovation-related activities of MeitY.

What is Digital India Corporation?

- It has been set up by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, to innovate, develop and deploy ICT and other emerging technologies for the benefit of the common man.
- It plays the role of a leader in **promoting e-Governance** by taking forward the projects and activities of the Digital India Programme, to facilitate its stakeholders to realise its goals.
- It also provides **strategic support to Ministries & Departments**, both at **Central and State level** for carrying forward the mission of Digital India Programme by way of Capacity Building for e-governance projects, promoting best practices, encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), nurturing innovation and technology in various domains.

SIGNALS TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION AND ADAPTATION GROUP (STEAG)

The Indian Army has initiated a significant development in its technological capabilities by establishing the Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG).



About Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group:

- It is a unit dedicated to researching and evaluating futuristic communication technologies like **6G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning** and quantum computing for military applications.

Objective: Its primary objective is to **nurture technologies across wired and wireless systems**, covering a wide spectrum of domains including electronic exchanges, mobile communications, software-defined radios, electronic warfare systems and more.

- The unit will conduct **technical scouting, evaluation, development** and management of core ICT solutions while providing user interface support through the maintenance and upgrade of contemporary technologies.
- It will help **bridge the divide between the armed forces** on the one hand and **industry** and academia on the other. It is aligned with the tenets of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Start-Up India.

Significance:

- It will play a crucial role in **fostering self-reliance** in high-end communication technologies, which have traditionally been dominated by countries with advanced economies and research ecosystems.
- The establishment of this Center of Excellence is expected to be a game-changer in India's quest for **technological self-sufficiency**.

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

The Galapagos Islands, a beautiful destination and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is facing a pressing issue: rising visitor numbers threatening the delicate balance of this unique ecosystem.



About Galapagos Islands:

- **Location:** It is situated in the **Pacific Ocean**. It is **distributed on either side of the Equator** with an underwater wildlife spectacle with abundant life.
- Repeated **volcanic eruptions** helped to **form the rugged mountain landscape of the Galápagos Islands**.
- In comparison with most oceanic archipelagos, the Galapagos are **very young with the largest, and youngest islands, Isabela and Fernandina**, with less than one million years of existence and the **oldest islands, Española and San Cristóbal**, somewhere between three to five million years.
- **Mount Azul**, at 5,541 feet, is the highest point of the Galapagos Islands.
- **Climate:** It is characterized by **low rainfall, low humidity, and relatively low air and water temperatures**.
- It is designated as a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in 1978.
- **Biodiversity:**
 - The Galápagos are best known for **many species are endemic**, as they are **not found anywhere else** in the world.
 - These include the giant **Galápagos tortoise** (*Chelonoidis nigra*), the **marine iguana** (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*), the **flightless cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*), and the **Galápagos penguin**.
 - The **Galápagos penguin** (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) is the **only penguin species to live in the Northern Hemisphere**.

WHAT IS SEA CUCUMBER?

Researchers have discovered the pivotal role that sea cucumbers play in maintaining the health of the world's reefs.



Sea Cucumbers are part of a larger animal group called **echinoderms** and are invertebrates that live on the seafloor. Their body shape is similar to a cucumber, but they have small tentacle-like tube feet that are used for locomotion and feeding.

- They are **found in all marine environments throughout the world**, from shallow to deep-sea environments. Sea cucumbers are benthic, meaning they live on the ocean floor.
- They **excrete inorganic nitrogen and phosphorus**, enhancing the productivity of benthic biota.

Reproduction:

- Sea cucumbers exhibit both **sexual and asexual reproduction**.
- Unlike most terrestrial animals, sea cucumber eggs undergo **external fertilization**—females release eggs into the water that are fertilized when they come into contact with sperm that males have released.

Conservation status:

- **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972: Schedule I**
 - **CITES: Appendix II**
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