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KAILASH-MANSAROVAR YATRA RESUMES AFTER FIVE YEARS

- Rising 6,638 metres in **Tibet's Ngari Prefecture** near India and Nepal, Mount Kailash holds deep religious importance for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Tibetan Bon followers.
- Hindus believe it is Lord Shiva's abode; Jains see it as the site of their first leader's enlightenment; Buddhists call it the universe's centre, and Bon traditions consider it the home of the sky goddess Sipaimen.
- South of the mountain lie two lakes — freshwater **Manasarovar** and saltwater **Rakshastal** — both central to these spiritual traditions.
- Mount Kailash also serves as the source of four major rivers: the Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej, and Karnali, making it both a spiritual and geographical landmark.

How Kailash-Mansarovar Became a Popular Pilgrimage

- Though revered for centuries, Kailash-Mansarovar wasn't a mainstream pilgrimage site for ordinary Indians until the early 20th century.
- Tibetologists note that early Hindu and Buddhist texts described Kailash as a divine place accessible only to advanced spiritual practitioners.
- This changed after 1904, when Tibet opened up to British subjects.
- Charles Sherring, then Almora's district collector, visited Kailash in 1905, recommended improving the pilgrimage route, and promoted it.
- His efforts helped popularise the **Lipulekh pass route** and brought attention to the site among the broader Hindu community, encouraging pilgrim traffic for both spiritual and economic reasons.
- By 1930, around 730 Indian pilgrims made the journey annually, until China's annexation of Tibet in 1950 led to its closure.



- The pilgrimage resumed in 1981, making way for the first batch of Indian pilgrims to Kailash via Lipulekh since its closure.

Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra: Then and Now

- The Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage involves two main treks:
 - a 90 km circumambulation of Lake Mansarovar, taking 3–5 days, and
 - a tougher 52 km circumambulation of Mount Kailash, completed in around three days.
- In the late 1990s, pilgrims would begin at Tseti camp, walk around Mansarovar via places like Huore and Seralung Monastery, then trek around Kailash starting from Tarchen, passing landmarks such as Dirapuk and Dolma La.
- With new motorable roads, trekking on the Indian side has reduced from 27 km in 2019 to just 1 km in 2025.
- The Nathu La route, opened in 2015, offers an even easier journey — pilgrims cover the entire 1,500 km stretch from Nathu La to Mansarovar by car or bus.
- This reflects how the pilgrimage has become more accessible over time.

ENFORCEMENT CRACKDOWN IN 'U.S. DONKEY ROUTE' CASE

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of India have intensified their investigations into human trafficking networks exploiting the "Donkey Route".
- The donkey route is **an illegal immigration pathway** used predominantly by Indian migrants to reach the United States.
- **The ongoing probe reveals an intricate web** of traffickers, agents, fake visa consultancies, and international conduits, with grave implications for national security, human rights, and foreign relations.

The "Donkey Route" (or "Dunki") Explained:

- **Meaning:** It refers to long, illegal, and often dangerous migration routes involving multiple country border crossings. It was popularised by the 2023 Shahrukh Khan film Dunki.
- **Journey path and hazards:**

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- **Typical route:** Starts from India → UAE → Latin American countries (Ecuador, Guyana, Bolivia, where Indian citizens can get visa on arrival or tourist visas easily) → Colombia → Panama (via Darién Gap) → Costa Rica → Nicaragua → Mexico → US.
- **Hazards:** Dense forests (Darién Gap), risk of assault, extortion, and animal attacks. Dark, dangerous pathways/ tunnels under the US-Mexico border (e.g., Ciudad Juarez to El Paso).
- **Cartels:** The criminal gangs operating in the vicinity of the Mexico-US border have in recent times shifted their primary business from drug trafficking to human trafficking, charging up to \$6,000 per person.

Economic Dimensions of Human Trafficking:

- **Cost to migrants:** Agents charge ₹30-60 lakh, depending on the route. In a 2023 case, passengers paid ₹40 lakh–₹1.25 crore for Nicaragua-bound flights via Europe.
- **Agent networks:** Local-level agents in India connected to international kingpins, facilitating fraudulent practices like fake visas, forged documents, and forced illegal crossings.

Implications for India:

- **National security:** Involvement of transnational criminal networks poses risks of terror infiltration and financial crimes.
 - **Diplomatic concerns:** India's image as a top source of undocumented migrants can strain bilateral relations, especially with the US and Canada.
 - **Human rights violations:** Migrants face extreme conditions — death, sexual assault, extortion — violating basic human dignity.
 - **Policy responses needed:**
 - Strengthening emigration laws.
 - Regulating private travel and visa consultancies.
 - Enhancing bilateral cooperation on anti-trafficking.
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WHAT IS BLOOD MONEY?



• Under the Islamic Sharia law, blood money, or 'diya', means that the accused provides financial compensation to the family of the victim in serious crimes such as murder.

- It is followed in countries that incorporate these laws in their legislation.
- The custom is practised **predominantly in cases involving unintentional murder and culpable homicide.**
- It is **also invoked** in murder cases wherein the **victim's kin choose not to retaliate through 'qisas' (a way of retribution under the Sharia).**
- The **end-goal**, as the law says, is not to put a price tag on human life but to **alleviate the plight and suffering of the affected family** and their potential loss of income.
- However, it is to be noted that even if the concerned parties reconcile through 'blood money', the **community and the state will retain the right to impose a deterrent punishment**, including penalties.
- In its contemporary applications, 'blood money' is **upheld in several Islamic countries** with factors such as gender, religion, and nationality of the victim coming into play.
 - **In Saudi Arabia**, for instance, the **traffic regulations specifically mandate payment of 'blood money' to heirs of the victims who die in road accident** In addition, the perpetrator shall be liable to a prison term.
- The system of blood money **leaves the fate of the offender in the hands of the victim's family.**
- The **Sharia law does not state a fixed amount** for 'diya'. However, it can be negotiated by the victim's family.



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WHAT IS THE NATIONAL HEALTH CLAIMS EXCHANGE (NHCX)?



- NHCX is developed under the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** by the **National Health Authority (NHA)** in consultation with the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)**.
- NHCX aims to **streamline and standardize health insurance claim processing**, enhancing efficiency in the insurance industry and improving the patient experience.
- NHCX serves as a **gateway for exchanging health claim information among insurers, third-party auditors, healthcare providers, beneficiaries**, and other relevant entities and ensures interoperability, machine-readability, auditability, and verifiability, making the information exchange accurate and trustworthy.
- **Features of NHCX:**
 - **Checking Coverage Eligibility:** Providers can verify if a treatment is covered by insurance to avoid unexpected costs.
 - **Pre-Auth Request Submission:** Hospitals can request approval from insurers before starting treatment.
 - **Predetermination Request Submission:** Providers can ask for an estimate of benefits for a treatment before it begins.
 - **Claim Submission:** Hospitals submit claims in a standard format for easier processing by insurers.
 - **Payment Status:** Hospitals can check the payment status of submitted claims, ensuring everyone stays informed.
 - **Communication Request:** Providers can send questions or requests for more information through NHCX.
 - **Reprocess Request:** If a claim has issues, providers can request a review for a solution.

E-TRUCK INCENTIVE SCHEME

- It aims to **reduce operational costs for transporters, encourage clean energy adoption** in the heavy vehicle segment, and **enhance air quality in urban** and industrial regions bringing India closer to a sustainable, low-carbon future.



- It helps to accelerate India's **transition to clean, efficient, and sustainable freight mobility.**
- It is the first time the Government of India is extending **direct support for electric trucks.**
- **Features of the scheme**
 - Under the scheme, **demand incentives will be extended to N2 and N3 category electric trucks**, as defined under the Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVR).
 - The **N2 category** includes trucks with a **Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) above 5 tonnes and up to 12 tonnes.**
 - The **N3 category** covers trucks with GVW exceeding **12 tonnes and up to 55 tonnes.**
 - In the case of articulated vehicles, incentives will apply only to the puller tractor of the N3 category.
 - To ensure reliability and performance, the scheme mandates comprehensive manufacturer-backed warranties.
 - The **battery must** be covered under a **warranty for five years or 5 lakh kilometres, whichever is earlier.**
 - The **vehicle and motor must** have a warranty of **five years or 2.5 lakh kilometres, whichever is earlier.**
 - To promote affordability, the incentive amount will depend on the GVW of the electric truck, with the **maximum incentive set at ₹9.6 lakh per vehicle.**

KUNO NATIONAL PARK



- It is located in the Sheopur district of **Madhya Pradesh**.
- It is nestled near the **Vindhyan Hills**.
- It covers an area of 750 sq.km.
- It derives its name from the meandering **Kuno River** (one of the main **tributaries of the Chambal River**), which flows from south to north and divides the park into two sections.
- It was **selected under the ‘Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India’**.
- **Flora:**
 - Kuno National Park has a rich floral diversity with more than 129 species of trees.
 - These **tropical dry deciduous forests** mainly consist of *Anogeissus pendula* (**Kardhai**), *Senegalia catechu* (**Khair**), *Boswellia serrata* (**Salai**), and associated flora.
- **Fauna:**
 - The protected area of the forest is home to the **jungle cat, Indian leopard, sloth bear, Indian wolf**, striped hyena, golden jackal, Bengal fox, and dhole, along with more than 120 bird species.
 - A total of **20 cheetahs were introduced** in Kuno National Park (NP), eight from Namibia in September 2022, followed by 12 more from South Africa in February 2023 **under the Cheetah Project**.

MACHINE VISION BASED INSPECTION SYSTEM

- It is a modern, **cutting-edge technology** that **uses Artificial Intelligence** to inspect trains in real time.
- The system would revolutionise the way trains are maintained and monitored, offering a smarter, safer, and efficient future for Indian train travel.

Working of Machine Vision Based Inspection System:

- It is deployed on a wayside that captures **high-resolution images of the under-gear of moving trains** and automatically detects any hanging, loose, or missing components.
- On detecting anomalies, the system **generates real-time alerts** to facilitate prompt response and preventive action.
- It **combines high-resolution cameras** with intelligent software to scan every passing train for signs of wear and tear.
- From detecting hairline cracks and loose fittings to identifying other mechanical abnormalities, the system conducts inspections within seconds, which earlier took hours or even days to complete.
- By catching faults early, the technology prevents potential breakdowns, enhances safety, and helps avoid train delays.
- It will help in **monitoring the health of rolling stock**.

Advantage: The primary advantage of MVIS is its ability to **carry out consistent monitoring** without disrupting regular train services.

- This initiative also aligns with IR's broader objective of introducing modern, intelligent systems to the railway ecosystem.

Significance: The technology is expected to **significantly enhance the safety of train operations**, reduce manual inspection efforts and help avoid potential accidents/service disruptions.

SANCHAR MITRA SCHEME



- It focuses on **student volunteers—designated as Sanchar Mitras**—will be empowered to **raise awareness** among the public about **key telecom issues**.

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- Under this scheme **Sanchar Mitras** will raise awareness about issues, such as **digital safety, cyber fraud prevention, and EMF radiation concerns**, while also promoting responsible mobile usage and digital literacy.
 - The expanded Sanchar Mitra Scheme not only aims to enhance public awareness but also provides participating students with exposure to **cutting-edge telecom technologies including 5G, 6G, Artificial Intelligence, and Cyber Security**.
 - Through structured training, project participation, and engagement with real-world telecom initiatives, the scheme seeks to build a digitally aware, skilled, and research-oriented youth workforce.
 - **Participating institutions** will be identified in **consultation with local DoT field units**, and students from relevant academic backgrounds—telecom, electronics, computer science, cyber security—will be nominated as Sanchar Mitras.
 - Sanchar Mitras will **receive necessary training from experts** from field and from the **National Communications Academy–Technology (NCA-T)** and DoT’s Media Wing.
 - Sanchar Mitras will carry out **grassroots-level awareness drives**, engage with communities and NGOs, and act as catalysts for informed digital behavior in their surroundings.
 - To encourage excellence, **participants will be assessed periodically** based on innovation, consistency, and outreach impact.
 - Outstanding performers may be **offered exclusive opportunities** including internships, involvement in national telecom projects, participation in high-level forums such as India Mobile Congress, and engagements with ITU standards and policy work.
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