

WHAT IS PROJECT-76?



The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has taken up a preliminary study on the design and development of an indigenous conventional submarine under Project-76.

- Under Project 76, the Warship Design Bureau of the Indian Navy is working on designing and developing the country's **first indigenously conventional diesel-electric submarine**.
- The Indian Navy wants to **build 12 submarines** under Project 76.
- Envisioned as **air-independent propulsion (AIP)-equipped** diesel-electric attack submarines, these submarines, expected to have a **submerged displacement of 3,000 tons**, represent a leap beyond their foreign-designed predecessors like Project-751 (India) and Project-75 submarines.
- It **aims to succeed the Sindhughosh (Kilo) class**, emphasizing the Navy's commitment to maintaining a robust 3,000-ton class of submarines.
- It is expected to feature some of the most advanced features such as, **indigenous Weapon Control system and Lithium-ion batteries**.
- It represents a pivotal milestone in India's pursuit of maritime supremacy, amalgamating top-tier **French technology from Project 75** and the expertise of **German/Spanish collaboration from Project 751 (India)**.
- This undertaking holds immense significance for India's submarine-building capabilities, aiming to **reduce reliance on foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) for submarine design**.

KEY FACTS ABOUT US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

US President Joe Biden's woeful performance in the presidential debate against challenger Donald Trump has re-ignited questions about what would happen should the veteran Democrat step down as party flag bearer at the last minute.

- The president and vice president are **not elected directly by citizens** in the US.
- Instead, they are **chosen by "electors"** through a process called the **Electoral College**.
 - The **Electoral College** is a process in which **electors** or representatives **from each state cast their vote and determine** who will be **president**.
 - **Each state** is given a number of **electors based** roughly on **the size of its population**.
 - There are a **total of 538 electors** selected according to each state's policy.
- **When people cast their vote**, they are **actually voting for electors**.
- The general elections **take place every four years** on the **first Tuesday of November**.
- **All states except** Maine and Nebraska use a **"winner-take-all" system**.
 - In this system, the **party** of the candidate **who receives the most votes** is **awarded all the state's electors**, even if the margin of victory in the state's popular vote is small.
- Following a general election, the slates of **electors meet in their state capitals** to **cast their votes for president** and vice president.
 - The vote occurs on the Monday following the second Wednesday in December.
- The **candidates who receive a majority**, or more than half, of the votes **become president and vice president**.
- **If no candidate receives a majority**, the **president is elected by the House of Representatives**, which may choose among the three candidates with the most electoral votes.
- There are times when a candidate wins the presidency (electoral votes) but not the popular votes (voted by people during the general election).
- The newly **elected President** and Vice President are **inaugurated in January**.



SHOULD EDUCATION BE BROUGHT BACK TO THE STATE LIST

- **Early phase - Education in Provincial list**
 - The Government of India Act, 1935 during the British rule created a federal structure for the first time in our polity.

- The legislative subjects were distributed between the federal legislature (present day Union) and provinces (present day States).
- Education, as an important public good, was kept under the provincial list.
- **After Independence**
 - After independence, the trend set by the GoI Act 1935 was continued and education was part of the 'State list' under the distribution of powers.
- **Recommendation of Swaran Singh Committee**
 - During the Emergency, the Congress party constituted the Swaran Singh Committee to provide recommendations for amendments to the Constitution.
 - One of the recommendations of this committee was to place 'education' in the concurrent list in order to evolve all-India policies on the subject.
- **42nd constitutional amendment and status of education**
 - The 42nd constitutional amendment (1976) by shifting 'education' from the State list to the concurrent list.
- **Attempt to bring back education in State list**
 - The Janata Party government led by Morarji Desai passed the 44th constitutional amendment (1978) to reverse many of the controversial changes made through the 42nd amendment.
 - One of these amendments that was passed in the Lok Sabha but not in the Rajya Sabha was to bring back 'education' to the State list.
 - Since then, education remains in concurrent list of the Constitution.

Prevailing international practices

- In the **United States**, educational standards and standardized tests are set by state and local governments, while federal oversight focuses on financial aid and key educational policies.
- **Canada** delegates education entirely to its provinces.
- In **Germany**, educational legislative authority resides with its states (Länder).
- **South Africa** has national departments for school and higher education, with provinces implementing national policies and addressing local educational needs.
- **Arguments for 'Education' in Concurrent List**
 - **Uniform Education Policy** - Advocates argue for a unified approach to education across the country to improve standards and ensure consistency.

- **Synergy Between Centre and States** - Central coordination is seen as beneficial for aligning national goals with state-level implementation.
- **Corruption and Lack of Professionalism** - Critics cite concerns about inefficiencies and ethical issues within state-level management of education.
- **Arguments for Restoring 'Education' to State List**
 - **Recent Issues with Centralisation** - Events like NEET controversies highlight that centralized control does not eliminate problems, challenging assumptions about governance efficacy.
 - **Autonomy and Tailored Policies** - States argue for autonomy to tailor educational policies to local needs, especially concerning syllabus, testing, and admissions for professional courses.
 - **One size fits all approach can not work** - Considering the vast diversity of the country, a 'one size fits all' approach is neither feasible nor desirable.
 - **Financial Distribution**—A significant amount of education expenditure is borne by the states, suggesting a need for productive discussion towards moving 'education' back to the State list.
- **Way forward**
 - **Hybrid Model** - Experts suggest maintaining central oversight for regulatory frameworks like medical and technical education while devolving policymaking autonomy to states.
 - **Collaborative Governance** - Emphasis must be given on productive dialogue between central and state authorities to achieve balanced educational reforms and efficient resource allocation.

SNOWBLIND MALWARE

A new banking malware called 'Snowblind' is targeting Android users to steal banking credentials.



- It is a new **Android malware** that uses a built-in Android security feature to bypass anti-tamper mechanisms and steal banking credentials.
- This malware **exploits a built-in security feature** to bypass anti-tamper protection in apps handling sensitive information.

- It works by **repacking an app** so it is unable to detect the use of accessibility features that can be used to extract sensitive information like login credentials and get remote access to the app.
- It exploits a **feature called ‘seccomp’**, which stands for **‘secure computing’**.
- It is part of the underlying Linux kernel and the Android operating system and is used to check applications for signs of tampering.
- The security firm discovered that **Snowblind injects a piece of code** that loads before seccomp initialises the anti-tampering measures. This enables the malware to bypass security mechanisms and utilize accessibility services to remotely view the victim’s screen.
- Snowblind can also **disable biometric and two-factor authentication**, two security features commonly used by banking apps to thwart unauthorized access. Like typical Android malware, Snowblind infects users who install apps from untrusted sources.
- While the security firm was unable to identify how many devices are affected by the new malware, it says that Snowblind is mostly **active in Southeast Asia**.

NEXT PHASE OF CONSERVATION PLAN FOR GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

Great Indian Bustard (GIB)

- GIBs are the largest among the four-bustard species found in India.
 - The other three being **MacQueen’s bustard**, **lesser florican** and the **Bengal florican**.
- Being terrestrial birds, they spend most of their time on the ground with occasional flights to go from one part of their habitat to the other.
- They feed on insects, lizards, grass seeds etc. GIBs are considered the flagship bird species of grassland and hence barometers of the health of grassland ecosystems.
- **Habitat and Status**
 - This bird, **found mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat**, has been categorized as **critically endangered** by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
 - As per the 2021 report of the IUCN, they are on the verge of extinction with hardly 50 to 249 of them alive.

- GIBs' historic range included much of the Indian sub-continent but it has now shrunken to just 10 per cent of it.
- Among the heaviest birds with flight, GIBs prefer grasslands as their habitats.
- **Threats**
 - Scientists of Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have been pointing out overhead power transmission lines as the biggest threat to the GIBs.
 - WII research has concluded that in Rajasthan, 18 GIBs die every year after colliding with overhead powerlines.
 - These birds, due to their poor frontal vision, can't detect powerlines in time and their weight make in-flight quick manoeuvres difficult.
 - Kutch and Thar desert are the places which have witnessed creation of huge renewable energy infrastructure over the past two decades.
 - This led to installation of windmills and construction of power lines even in core GIB areas.
- **Conservation measures**
 - In 2015, the Central government launched the **GIB species recovery programme**.
 - Under the programme, the WII and Rajasthan Forest department have jointly set up **conservation breeding centres** where GIB eggs harvested from the wild are incubated artificially and hatchlings raised in controlled environment.
 - The plan is to create a population which can act as insurance against the threat of extinction and release the third generation of these captive-bred birds into the wild.
 - **Bird diverters** have also been installed on power lines to protect the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) from collisions.
 - The diverters act as reflectors that birds can see from about 50 meters away.
 - When birds spot the diverters, they change their flight path to avoid colliding with the power lines.

[eSANKHYIKI PORTAL](#)

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has developed an eSankhyiki portal.

- It provides **real-time inputs for planners**, policy-makers, researchers

and the public at large.

- The objective of this portal is to establish a **comprehensive data management** and sharing system for ease of dissemination of official statistics in the country.
- It has two modules namely:
 - **Data Catalogue Module:** This module catalogues the major data assets of the Ministry at one place for ease of access.
 - It allows users to search within datasets, including within tables, and download data of interest to increase its value and re-usability.
 - The module has **seven data products**, namely **National Accounts Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Index of Industrial Production, Annual Survey of Industries, Periodic Labour Force Survey, Household Consumption Expenditure Survey** and **Multiple Indicator Survey**.
 - The Data Catalogue section already includes over **2291 datasets** along with specific metadata and visualization for each dataset for user convenience.
 - **Macro Indicators Module:** This module offers time series data of **key macro indicators** with features for filtering and visualizing data enabling ease of access for the users.
 - The module also allows users to download custom datasets, visualizations and share them through APIs, thereby increasing the re-usability of data.
 - The first phase of the module includes four major products of MoSPI: **National Accounts Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Index of Industrial Production, and Annual Survey of Industries**, encompassing the data of the last ten years. The portal currently hosts more than 1.7 million records.

It has officially been launched on Statistics Day.

- The initiative is in sync with the theme of the Statistics Day- ‘**Use of data for Decision making**’ as ease of access of data is the prerequisite for evidence based decision making.
- It is a **user centric data portal** which facilitates use and reuse of information for creating impact through value addition and analysis by the users.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CRIMINAL LAW REGIME

Why in News?

Three new criminal laws - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) - came into effect across the country on July 1.

They brought widespread changes in India's criminal justice system and ended colonial-era laws - the Indian Penal Code (1860), Code of Criminal Procedure (1973) and the Indian Evidence Act (1872).

Together, these three laws govern the criminal justice jurisprudence - from defining penal offences, prescribing processes for investigation and evidence gathering to governing the process of a trial in court.

Breaking Down the Three New Criminal Laws:

- **The BNS introduces some new crimes:** For example,
 - **Clause 69:**
 - It penalises sexual intercourse through the employment of “deceitful means” and mentions upto 10 years imprisonment and a fine for the offence.
 - Deceitful means include the false promise of employment or promotion, inducement, or marrying after suppressing identity.
 - Critics say that this might end up criminalising consensual relationships and provide a fillip to the “love jihad” narrative in some cases.
 - **Clause 103:**
 - It (for the first time) recognises murder on the ground of race, caste, or community as a separate offence.
 - In 2018, the SC had directed the Centre to consider a separate law for lynching and the new provision gives legal recognition to such crimes.
 - **Inclusion of offences such as organised crime and terror:**
 - Clause 111(1) of the BNS borrows heavily from the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

- **Organised crime** encompasses any continuing unlawful activity including kidnapping, robbery, vehicle theft, extortion, land grabbing, contract killing, economic offences, cyber-crimes, etc.
- **Clause 304(1):** It defines snatching as a new crime, distinct from theft.
- **Community service as an alternate form of punishment for some offences:**
 - These include small theft, defamation, and attempt to die by suicide with an intention to keep a public official from discharging her duty.
 - However, the BNS does not define what constitutes community service, leaving it to the discretion of judges.
- **BNSS:**
 - **The expansion of detention in police custody:** From the 15-day limit in the CrPC to up to 90 days.
 - **Victim-centric approach:** The BNSS states that in cases where the punishment is seven years or more, the victim shall be given an opportunity of being heard before withdrawal of the case by the government.
 - **Trials in absentia:** Where a person accused of a crime can be tried and convicted in his absence. Critics argue that the introduction of trials in absentia under normal criminal law allows the state to forgo its duty to properly locate the accused before the trial begins.
 - **Removes the provision for statutory bail:** If an accused has more than one offence against his name.
- **BSA:**
 - **Modified the definition of document:**
 - By including electronic and digital records and recognising digital and electronic records as primary evidence.
 - Now, the digital or electronic records will have the same legal effect, validity, and enforceability as other documents.
 - **Expanded the scope of secondary evidence:** It included additional categories such as oral admissions, written submissions, etc.
 - **Modified the need for confessional admission:** A confession made by an accused person is irrelevant in a criminal proceeding.