

VARANASI COURT ORDERS ASI SURVEY OF GYANVAPI MOSQUE PREMISES

Why in news?

- The Varanasi court gave directions for a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi mosque premises by the Archaeological Survey of India.
- The survey will exclude the wuzukhana area which was sealed last year on the orders of the Supreme Court.
- This was after Hindu litigants pointed to the presence there of what they identified as a Shivling.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI under the Ministry of Culture is the premier organization for archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
- It was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham.
- Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance is the prime concern of the ASI.
- Besides, it regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**.
- It also regulates **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972**.

Grounds on which Mosque side opposed the suit and the ruling of the district court

- **The Places of Worship Act, 1991**
 - Mosque committee had alleged that the current suit violated Sections 3 and 4 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991.
 - These sections mandated that one cannot tinker with any place of worship which has been **existing and where worship has been performed as on August 15, 1947**.
 - i.e., the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15 August, 1947 shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day.
 - The Varanasi court said in its order that the Places of Worship Act does not bar the civil suit.

- It relied on the argument that even after August 15, 1947, the religious character of the Gyanvapi mosque allowed for prayers to Hindu deities.
 - It said that the petitioners have not sought the relief for converting the place of worship from a mosque to a temple.
 - **The Wakf Act, 1995**
 - The Muslim side argued that the subject matter of the civil suit is a Wakf property.
 - According to Section 85 of the Act, only the Wakf Tribunal, Lucknow, can decide the suit.
 - But the court said that the suit is not barred by the Wakf Act.
 - The Wakf Act, according to the court, is to solve disputes within the community and not to extinguish claims from outside the community.
 - **Kashi Vishwanath Temple Act, 1983:**
 - The Muslim side also challenged the civil suits on the grounds that under this Act, the temple land was clearly demarcated, and that the Board of Trustees appointed under law did not interfere in the case.
 - The court ruled that this Act of 1983 does not specifically bar a suit claiming right to worship idols installed in the endowment within the premises of the temple, or outside.
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WHAT ARE WATERSPOUTS?

A magnificent golden waterspout was recently filmed on the Kama River in Russia's Perm region.



About Waterspouts:

- A waterspout is a **tornado-like column or funnel of violently rotating air** that usually **forms over the surface of the sea**.
- It is a **non-supercell tornado over water having a five-part life cycle**,
 - **formation of a dark spot on the water surface;**
 - **spiral pattern** on the water surface;
 - **formation of a spray ring;**
 - **development of the visible condensation funnel;**

- and ultimately, **decay**;
- Waterspouts **form mostly in tropical and subtropical areas**. But regions, including Europe, Middle-East, Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica also report these on rare occasions.
- They may **assume many shapes and often occur in a series, called a waterspout family**.
- **Duration:** Waterspouts **can be relatively short-lived**, ranging from a few minutes to an hour or so.
- **Size:** Waterspouts are **typically much smaller in scale compared to tornadoes**, with diameters ranging from tens to a few hundred meters.

They are classified into **two main types: tornadic waterspouts and fair-weather waterspouts**.

- **Tornadic waterspouts:**

- They are **tornadoes that form over water, or move from land to water**.
- They have the **same characteristics as a land tornado**.
- They are **associated with severe thunderstorms**, and are often **accompanied by high winds and seas**, large hail, and frequent **dangerous lightning**.

- **Fair weather waterspouts:**

- They **usually form along the dark flat base of a line of developing cumulus clouds**.
- This type of waterspout is generally **not associated with thunderstorms**.
- While **tornadic waterspouts develop downward in a thunderstorm**, a **fair-weather waterspout develops on the surface of the water and works its way upward**.
- By the time the funnel is visible, a fair-weather waterspout is near maturity.
- Fair weather waterspouts **form in light wind conditions so they normally move very little**.

What is a Tornado?

- A tornado is a **narrow, violently rotating column of air that extends from a thunderstorm to the ground**.
- Because wind is invisible, it is **hard to see a tornado unless it forms a condensation funnel made up of water droplets, dust and debris**.

LOGISTICS DATA BANK PROJECT

Recently, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) held a Logistics Data Bank Project (LDB) Meeting to review the measures taken by Port Authorities to improve port performance.



About Logistics Data Bank Project:

- This project was launched on 2016 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Mumbai.
- **Objectives:** The project launched to make India's logistics sector more efficient through the use of Information Technology.
- **Implementing Agency:** It is being implemented through a Special Purpose Vehicle called **Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Logistics Data Services Ltd. (DLDSL)** - that is jointly (50:50) owned by the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) Trust and Japanese IT services major NEC Corporation.

Key features:

- Every **container is attached to a Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RFID)** tag and then tracked through RFID readers - aids **importers and exporters in tracking their goods in transit.**
- This has, in turn, cut the overall lead time of container movement as well as reduced transaction costs that consignees and shippers incur.
- The project covers "the entire movement (of containers) through rail or road till the Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station.
- The service **integrates information available** with the agencies across the supply chain to provide detailed, real-time information within a single window.
- It is billed as a major 'ease of doing business' initiative aimed at boosting India's foreign trade and ensuring greater transparency.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

STAR-C INITIATIVE

India is considering expanding its Solar Technology and Application Resource Centres (STAR -C) initiative to a number of Pacific Island countries.



About STAR-C Initiative:

- The programme aims to **boost solar power ecosystems** in the poorest countries.
- The initiative is run by the **International Solar Alliance** in partnership with the **United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)**.
- It aims to create a **strong network of institutional capacities within ISA member states** to enhance quality infrastructure for the uptake of solar energy products and services.
- The project is also funded by France.
- **Programme's objectives:** Building solar workforces, standardizing products, setting up infrastructure, and raising awareness among policymakers in developing countries.
- Through this initiative, India aims to enhance the institutional capacities of **International Solar Alliance** member states and contribute to the development of quality infrastructure for solar energy uptake.

Key Facts about International Solar Alliance

- It was conceived as a **joint effort by India and France** to mobilize efforts against climate change through deployment of solar energy solutions.
- It was conceptualized on the side-lines of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in **Paris in 2015**.
- With the amendment of its Framework Agreement in 2020, all member states of the United Nations are now eligible to join the ISA.
- **Headquarter:** India

THE INTER-SERVICES ORGANISATIONS (COMMAND, CONTROL AND DISCIPLINE) BILL 2023

Why in News?

- The Standing Committee on Defence (headed by Jai Oram) has agreed to all provisions of the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023, saying it must be passed without any amendment.
- The 39th Report (17th Lok Sabha) of the committee on the bill was presented to Lok Sabha and also laid in Rajya Sabha.

Key Features of the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill 2023:

- **Inter-services Organisation:**

- Existing Inter-services Organisations will be deemed to have been constituted under the Bill. These include -

- The Andaman and Nicobar Command,
- The Defence Space Agency, and
- The National Defence Academy.

- The central government may constitute a **Joint Services Command**, which may be placed under the command of a Commander-in-Chief.

- **Control of Inter-services Organisations:** The Bill empowers the Commander-in-Chief/ Officer-in-Command of an Inter-services Organisation to exercise command and control over the personnel serving in or attached to it.

- **The superintendence** of an Inter-services Organisation will be vested in the central government.

- **Other forces under central government:** The central government may notify any force raised and maintained in India to which the Bill will apply. This would be in addition to army, navy, and air force personnel.

- **Commander-in-Chief:** The officers eligible to be appointed as the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command are:

- a General Officer of the regular Army (above the rank of Brigadier),
- a Flag Officer of the Navy (rank of Admiral of the Fleet, Admiral, Vice-Admiral, or Rear-Admiral), or
- an Air Officer of the Air Force (above the rank of group captain).

- **Commanding Officer:** The Bill provides for a Commanding Officer who will be in command of a unit, ship, or establishment.
- The officer will also perform duties assigned by the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of the Inter-services Organisation.
- The Commanding Officer will be **empowered to initiate all disciplinary or administrative actions** over the personnel appointed, deputed, posted, or attached to that Inter-services Organisation.

[ONLINE PORTAL LAUNCHED TO REPORT VIOLATION OF BAN ON E-CIGARETTES](#)

Why in News?

- Despite the ban imposed by the Union government in 2019, e-cigarettes continue to be sold on e-commerce sites, even to children below 18.
- Now to curb this, the Health Ministry has launched an online portal to facilitate reporting of violations under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Act (PECA).

About Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019:

- The Act may be called the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Act, 2019.
- The Act gives the Union government the power over the electronic cigarettes industry.
- The Act defines “**electronic cigarette**” as an **electronic device that heats a substance, with or without nicotine and flavours, to create an aerosol for inhalation.**
- From the date of the commencement of this Act, the prohibits any person from producing, manufacturing, importing, exporting, advertising, transporting, selling or distributing electronic cigarettes in India.
- If anyone is found guilty of the above-mentioned activities w.r.t. e-cigarettes then he/she shall be **punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees, or with both.**

About Electronic Cigarettes:

- In simple terms, e-cigarette is a device that has the shape of a cigarette, cigar, or pen and **does not contain tobacco**.
- It uses a battery and contains a solution of nicotine, flavourings, and other chemicals, some of which may be harmful.
- When electronic cigarettes are used, the nicotine solution turns into a mist that can be inhaled into the lungs.
- The amount of nicotine in individual e-cigarettes can vary.
- It is **not yet known whether electronic cigarettes are safe or if they can be used to help smokers quit smoking**.

Concerns w.r.t. E-Cigarettes:

- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive and toxic to developing foetuses.
- Nicotine exposure can also harm adolescent and young adult brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s.
- E-cigarette aerosol can contain chemicals that are harmful to the lungs.
- And youth e-cigarette use is associated with the use of other tobacco products, including cigarettes.

Difference Between E-Cigarettes and Vape:



- The terms vape pen and e-cigarette are often used interchangeably, especially by the media, but they are two distinctly different things.
- E-cigarettes, or electronic cigarettes, are devices that look similar to traditional cigarettes.
- They generally consist of a one-piece unit that you use until it runs out and then throw it away.
- Vape pen, on the other hand, are the hugely popular devices that consist of a **rechargeable battery and refillable tank**.
- Vape can be used again and again by refilling it with variety of e-liquid.

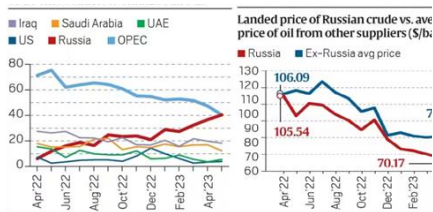
THE DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION OF INDIA'S OIL TRADE WITH RUSSIA

Context

- Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February last year, India's refiners have been buying up **discounted Russian oil**.
- Moscow has since leapfrogged to become India's leading source of crude oil, **accounting for about 40% of India's crude imports**. June marked the 10th consecutive month-on-month increase in India's imports of Russian crude.

The Transformation of India's Oil Trade with Russia

- According to the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), **India's oil imports from Russia have grown more than 10 times since April 2022**.



- The growth has been **steady especially since December 2022**, after the G7 imposed a \$60-per-barrel price cap on seaborne Russian crude.

Factors Led to the Growth in Indian Import of Russian Oil

- **Western Sanctions on Russian Oil**
 - The EU stopped importing Russian coal and banned refined oil imports.
 - The US and UK **banned all Russian oil and gas imports**.
 - Germany **stopped the opening of the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline** from Russia.
 - In December 2022, the EU and G7 set a maximum price of **\$60 a barrel** for Russian crude oil.
- **Huge Discounts Offered by Russia**
 - Russia heavily relied on countries like **India, China, Turkey, and Bulgaria** for oil sales since the imposition of sanctions imposed by western nations.
 - Russia offered huge discounts on crude oil to interested countries. **India used the opportunity to its advantage**.