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AASHVAST LAB



- AASHVAST stands for **Assessment and Analysis of Electronic Systems Hardware for Vulnerabilities and Security Threats**.

- It is a specialized testing and validation system developed to **examine military electronics for hidden security weaknesses**.
- The primary goal is to ensure that **critical military systems operate exactly as intended** and do not contain unauthorized components or malicious code.
- It is developed by the private firm for the **Directorate General of Electronics and Mechanical Engineering (DG EME)**.
- **Working:**
 - **Scale:** There are approximately **14 types of vulnerabilities** that the labs can detect.
 - **Neutralize Threats:** It neutralizes the common **threats of enemy interference in Indian drones**, preventing them from performing their designated tasks in a contested area.
 - **Inspect Both Software and Hardware:** The facility can **inspect both hardware and software components** used in drones, communication systems, sensors, and other defence equipment.
 - It examines the software that **operates these unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)** – to identify and eliminate firmware-level vulnerabilities.
 - **Location based Bug Test:** The system examines **location-based security controls** and assesses how a drone would respond to GPS spoofing or jamming by an adversary.
 - It can scan systems for **hidden passwords, embedded keys and remote-access tools**. It can also check whether a drone accepts only manufacturer-approved software updates.

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- **Significance:**

- The launch of AASHVAST Labs marks a major step toward strengthening the **cyber security and resilience of India's defence infrastructure.**
- The facility will help ensure that military drones, sensors, communication systems, and electronic **platforms remain secure from hidden vulnerabilities and evolving cyber threats.**

EXERCISE SLINEX



- It is a **bilateral naval exercise between India and Sri Lanka,** which was conceptualised in

- It has **strengthened maritime cooperation** between the nations over two decades.

Participation: INS Kavaratti, an indigenous Anti-Submarine Warfare Corvette, and INS Jyoti, the Fleet Tanker, will participate from the Indian Navy.

Phases: The exercise commenced with the **Harbour Phase**, which will be followed by the **Sea Phase**.

- The Harbour Phase includes **professional interactions**, cross-deck visits, sharing of best practices, Yoga, sports and cultural activities.
- The subsequent Sea Phase will focus on enhancing **operational synergy** and interoperability through coordinated activities at sea.
- SLINEX has evolved into an important forum for fostering **maritime cooperation, interoperability and mutual understanding** between the two Navies.

Significance: It is aligned with India's vision of **MAHASAGAR**, SLINEX-26 reinforces India's commitment to a **secure, stable and inclusive maritime environment** and further consolidates the enduring maritime partnership between India and Sri Lanka.

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WHEN LUXURY BRANDS BORROW: THE LEGAL GAP AROUND INDIAN CRAFTS

- Indian crafts and weaves are skills and visual languages carried across generations, rooted in specific regions and communities. Yet when they enter the global luxury fashion system, the people and places behind them become invisible.
- After the controversy over Prada's Kolhapuri chappals, two more instances have drawn criticism.
 - Recently, **Ralph Lauren** presented a pink evening gown featuring **aari work** — hook embroidery from Gujarat. It was described only as hand-applied embellishment.
 - **Fendi's** autumn collection includes a mirror-work Baguette bag, made in Italy over 138 hours, using 39,500 beads and 475 mirrors, priced at \$10,000. It closely resembles the mirrored purses sold at Indian craft fairs.
- The pattern raises a sharp question. Why is it so easy to commercially appropriate a traditional Indian craft, and so hard for the community behind it to claim recognition, ownership or a share of the value?

The Core Legal Contradiction

- Experts identify the root problem. **Intellectual property is territorial, while culture is not.** Laws stop at borders; crafts do not.
- A centuries-old technique does not fit conventional IP categories. There may be a specific artistic expression, a design, a geographical identity or a protected name.
- But the underlying tradition belongs to a community and has evolved over generations.
- Hence, traditional crafts have **cultural provenance but no clearly identifiable legal owner.** That gap is what gets exploited.

What GI Can and Cannot Do?

- A Geographical Indication (GI) **protects** the name, origin and reputation of a qualifying product. It does not necessarily protect every motif, stitch or visual element associated with a craft. This is the crucial limitation.

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The Problem of Authorship

- Traditional craft unsettles the very idea of an author. The first creator of a technique may be unknown, unidentifiable, or simply irrelevant to how the tradition actually grew.
- Each generation passes knowledge on and alters it slightly. The community keeps practising it.

Documentation: Necessary but Delicate

- Experts propose a carefully maintained digital registry covering motifs, techniques, names, regions and custodial communities.
- Such a registry **would not grant ownership** over every visual similarity. But it would make it far harder for a company to claim that a centuries-old Indian tradition originated in a European design studio.

The 'Inspiration' Escape Route

- European brands rely on the language of "inspiration." Their design and copyright frameworks are also stronger than those of developing countries.
- A further loophole exists in technique itself. If work is fully machine-made, it is not aari but computerised crewel work — and that relabelling becomes an escape route.

The Risk of Over-Protection

- There is a real danger in protecting crafts too aggressively. The law meant to preserve them could freeze them. The aim, therefore, should be to prevent extraction, false authorship and unacknowledged exploitation — not to stop culture from moving. Protection should not turn a living craft into a museum piece.
- **International developments**
 - The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) is negotiating rules on misappropriation, attribution, community rights and benefit-sharing.
 - The **Berne Convention** also offers some avenues to challenge unauthorised use.

India needs collective legal identity for artisan communities, documented provenance, and enforceable attribution with benefit-sharing. Inheritance must not enrich everyone except those who kept it alive.

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INDIA'S NGO's AT A NEW FUNDING CROSSROADS

- The proposed **FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026** has revived the debate over foreign funding, national security, religious activity and civil society autonomy.
- Since the FCRA was enacted in 1976, governments have remained concerned that overseas funds could influence domestic affairs or destabilise the country.
- Today, concerns also include **religious conversion and proselytisation**, particularly involving Christian organisations.
- The core challenge is balancing **national security and financial accountability** with the need for an independent and plural civil society.

FCRA and the Question of Foreign Influence

- The FCRA seeks to ensure that foreign financial resources do not undermine political independence, social stability or institutional integrity.
- The government argues that foreign contributions can sometimes support opaque networks, politically sensitive campaigns or religious activities.
- However, foreign funding is not inherently harmful. Only a proportion of NGOs receive overseas contributions, and such funding is relatively small compared with government expenditure.
- Foreign grants remain valuable because they are often **flexible, need-based and less bureaucratic** than government assistance.
- The challenge is therefore to distinguish between **legitimate development assistance** and activities threatening national interests.

Proposed Changes and Concerns

- The proposed legislation would allow foreign contributions and assets created from them to temporarily vest in a **government-appointed designated authority** when an FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered or lapses.
- If registration is restored within the prescribed period, assets and unused funds can be returned. Otherwise, assets may be sold or transferred to government departments.

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- Although provisions for **revision and judicial appeal** exist, NGOs fear greater governmental control and uncertainty.
- Christian organisations are particularly concerned about possible unequal treatment.
- Their concerns also extend to beneficiaries because many charitable organisations operate **schools, hospitals, old-age homes and welfare institutions**, especially in tribal and north-eastern areas where they may be major or sole service providers.

The Developmental Contribution of Foreign Aid

- Foreign assistance has produced both benefits and risks. Some organisations have argued that overseas funding can encourage the adoption of **foreign ideas unsuited to Indian conditions**.
- Yet foreign assistance has also introduced new technologies, organisational practices, professional methods and innovative development approaches.
- In periods of inadequate government expenditure and domestic philanthropy, foreign funding strengthened India's voluntary sector.
- Nevertheless, donor influence remains a concern because funding can shape organisational priorities.
- Hence, **funding diversity** is essential to preserve institutional independence.

The Way Forward: Balancing Regulation with Civil Society Freedom

- India needs a regulatory framework that protects national interests without weakening **democratic pluralism and civil society independence**.
- NGOs receiving foreign contributions should maintain strict financial records, disclose funding sources and demonstrate proper utilisation of resources.
- Regulation should be **transparent, proportionate, predictable and religion-neutral**.
- Financial violations, legitimate advocacy, charitable activity and genuine national-security threats should not be treated alike.
- Excessive restrictions could weaken organisations that support vulnerable communities and contribute to democratic accountability.

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PROJECT CHEETAH - GANDHI SAGAR EMERGES AS A 2ND CHEETAH HABITAT IN MP

- Recently, Madhya Pradesh CM released **CCB-2**, a three-year-old female cheetah brought from Botswana, into **Gandhi Sagar** Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The relocation from Kuno National Park aims to establish Gandhi Sagar as a **viable second home** for cheetahs in MP and strengthen the long-term conservation strategy under Project Cheetah.
- The move comes shortly after KGP12, an India-born female cheetah, gave birth to four cubs at Kuno National Park, marking an important milestone for the programme.

Project Cheetah:

- **Genesis:** Discussions to bring the Cheetah back to India were initiated in **2009** by the Wildlife Trust of India.
- **Plan:** Under the 'Action Plan for Reintroduction of Cheetah in India', 50 cheetahs to be brought from African countries to various national parks over 5 years.
- **Most suitable site - Kuno Palpur National Park (KNP) in MP:**
 - Amongst the surveyed sites of the central Indian states, KNP has been rated as the most suitable habitat with adequate prey base.
 - It is assessed to be capable of supporting **21** Cheetahs and is likely the **only wildlife site in the country** where villages have been completely **relocated** from within the park.
 - Kuno also provides the possibility of **harbouring four of India's big cats** - tiger, lion, leopard and Cheetah, enabling them to coexist as they have in the past.
- **First reintroduction:**
 - India's cheetah reintroduction programme began in (September) **2022**, with African cheetahs being brought to India after the species had become extinct in the country.

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- **Rise in population:**

- The birth of four cubs at Kuno is particularly significant because their mother, KGP12, was herself born in India to a cheetah brought from South Africa.
- Thus, the cubs represent the **second generation** of cheetahs born on Indian soil. The latest births reportedly took India's cheetah population to **56**.

Significance of the Relocation:

- **Geographic diversification:** Concentrating the population at a single site can increase vulnerability to disease, ecological disturbances and other risks. Gandhi Sagar provides an additional habitat.
- **Breeding potential:** A balanced male-female composition can improve the prospects of establishing a breeding population.
- **Landscape-level conservation:** Project Cheetah seeks to develop multiple suitable habitats rather than depend exclusively on Kuno.
- **Long-term population viability:** The broader objective of Project Cheetah is not merely to increase the number of cheetahs but to establish ecologically viable, genetically diverse and sustainable populations across suitable landscapes.
- **Boon to the ecosystem:** Conserve the big cat, save not just the prey base (including certain threatened species), but also other endangered species of grasslands in the region. They are not a threat to humans and do not attack large livestock either.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen habitat management and prey availability.
- **Monitor** cheetah health, mortality and reproductive success scientifically.
- Maintain adequate genetic diversity through carefully planned translocations.
- Develop wildlife **corridors** and landscape connectivity where feasible.
- Ensure community participation and minimise human–wildlife conflict.
- Continuously assess carrying capacity before expanding the population.

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KHEJRI TREE



- Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria* (L.) Marbride) is considered a **sacred tree in Rajasthan**.

- It is also called **jant or janti** in areas like Alwar, Sikar,

Jhunjhunu,

- Khejri is the **state tree of Rajasthan**.
- **Distribution:** It is found growing in arid and semi-arid parts of **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi** and some parts of southern India.
- **Features:**
 - The tree is **frost and drought resistant** and tolerates extreme temperature ranging from 40–45 °C in summer to less than 10 °C in winter.
 - It is capable of growing in **areas of rainfall ranging from 100–600 mm**.
 - The tree can **withstand the hottest winds**, the driest season and stay alive where other plants cannot survive.
 - It is a **deciduous tree** with finely divided, feathery leaves and small yellow flowers.
 - It is known for its **adaptability to arid conditions**, the tree **thrives in dry and sandy soils**.
- **Significance:**
 - It is a **nitrogen-fixing tree** which enhances the **fertility of the soil**.
 - The fruit is used to make the very **popular local dish ‘Sangri’**
 - The bark of this tree is used **medicinally for a range of ailments**.
 - It plays a vital role in **preserving the ecosystem** of arid and semi-arid areas, mainly in the Thar Desert.
 - Its highly nutritious leaves constitute **important source of fodder for livestock** while nutritious pods are valued as vegetable for human beings.