



CURRENT AFFAIRS: MAY 2024

INTERNET SHUTDOWNS

As per an 'Access Now' report, India witnessed 116 shutdowns in 2023, the highest number of shutdown in world for the sixth consecutive year. Internet shutdown

- It is an intentional disruption of internet communications for specific population or within a location for any duration of time, often to exert control over the flow of information.
- Currently, suspension of telecom services (including internet shutdowns) is governed by Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017, notified under Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.
 - o It provide for a temporary shutdown of telecom services in a region on grounds of public emergency (up to 15 days at once).
 - o The 1885 Act empowers the central government to regulate various types of telecom services including internet services and grant licenses for them.

OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES (OBCS) LIST

The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) is reviewing the state list of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) using powers granted under the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act.

About OBCs and OBCs list

- **Definition:** There is no standard definition of OBC in the Indian Constitution. Socially and Educationally backward Classes (SEBCs) are commonly known as other backward classes (OBCs).
- **OBCs list:** Currently, for each state, there are two OBC lists one at the central level (for benefits by the Central Government initiatives) and another at the state level (for benefits by the State government initiatives).

o **Central List:** Article 342A (1) of the Constitution authorized the President (in consultation of the governor of the state) to specify the Central list of the OBCs, in relation to a particular State or Union Territory.

✓ Further, any modification to the central list of the OBCs can be done only by the Parliament.

o **State List:** Article 342A (3) empowers every State or UT to prepare and maintain for its own purposes, a list of SEBC entries which may be different from the Central List.

• **Reservations for OBCs: Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution** enable reservation for OBCs in admission to educational institutions, and in public employment.

o In 1990, the Centre implemented 27% reservation for OBCs in Central Educational Institutions and Central Government services as recommended by the **Mandal Commission**.

o Such reservation for OBC was upheld by the Supreme Court in **Indra Sawhney Vs. Union of India 1992** subject to exclusion of the “**Creamy Layer**” (different groups based on income and parental rank).

About NCBC

• **Constitutional Body:** NCBC was granted Constitutional Status under Article 338B (inserted through 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018).

o **Article 338 B** mandates Union and every State Government to consult the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the rights of OBCs.

ARTICLE 329(B)

• Recently, the Election Commission of India invoked Article 329(b) of the Constitution before the Supreme Court to limit judicial intervention in the electoral process.

- As per 329(b), no election to either House of Parliament or to the either House of the Legislatures of a State shall be called in question except by an election petition presented to such authority and in such manner as may be provided for by or under any law made by the appropriate legislature.

- o The articles 324 to 329 of the Indian Constitution, which are enshrined in Part XV, specifically deal with the provisions related to elections.

- Supreme Court in **N. P. Ponnuswami vs Returning Officer, Namakkal Constituency & Ors. (1952)** states that once the Election Commission of India officially notifies the election process, the court cannot intervene or interfere.

- Also, under **Representation of the People Act (1951)**, Section 80 states that, the validity of any election cannot be challenged or questioned except by filing an election petition.

- o Election petitions are filed in the concerned state's High Court, which has original jurisdiction over them.

- o Appeals lie with the Supreme Court of India.

- o An election petition can be filed by any candidate, or an elector relating to the election personally.

- ✓ Elector means a person who was entitled to vote at the election to which the election petition relates.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

ICC prosecutor sought arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister and Hamas leaders for committing crimes against humanity and war crimes.

- Earlier, in March 2023, ICC issued arrest warrant against Russian President in the context of situation in Ukraine.

- Consequences of the ICC issuing arrest warrants: The accused would be arrested and if not, would restrict their freedom of movement, as member states are obliged to arrest the accused.



About International Criminal Court (ICC)

- It is the first international permanent court to investigate and prosecute individuals accused of serious international crimes,
- ICC's founding treaty, called the Rome Statute (adopted in 1998 entered into force in 2002), grants the ICC jurisdiction over 4 main crimes.
- Membership: 124 countries are States Parties to Rome Statute of ICC.
 - o India, Israel, the US, Russia and China are not parties to the Rome Statute.
 - o Palestine became the 123rd member (2015) and Malaysia became 124th State party(2019).
- Enforcement: ICC's decisions are binding.
 - o However, it does not have its own police force and relies on State cooperation, which is essential to the arrest and surrender of suspects.

4 Categories of crimes under ICC

 Genocide	 Crimes against humanity	 War crimes	 Crime of aggression
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specific intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group by killing its members or by other means. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Serious violations committed through large-scale attack against civilian population ● 5 forms listed in the Rome Statute includes offences like murder, rape, imprisonment, enforced disappearances, enslavement, torture, apartheid etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grave breaches of the Geneva conventions in the context of armed conflict ● Includes use of child soldiers; killing or torture of civilians/prisoners of war; intentional attacks against hospitals, historic monuments etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, integrity or independence of another State.

Comparison between ICC and ICJ

Parameters	 ICC	 ICJ
Genesis	Rome Statute	Established in 1945 by UN Charter
HQ	Hague (Netherlands)	Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands)
Composition	18 judges, with 9-year, non-renewable term, in 3 divisions: Pre-Trial, Trial, and Appeals elected by Assembly of States Parties	15 judges elected to 9-year terms by UN General Assembly and the Security Council.
Cases	Holds only individuals criminally responsible for offences.	Hears 2 types of cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal disputes between States submitted to it by them (contentious cases) • Requests for advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by UN organs/ specialized agencies

POKHRAN-I

India is celebrating 50 years landmark of its first nuclear tests in Pokhran, Rajasthan, as part of the 'Smiling Buddha' operation conducted on 18th May 1974.

- Operation Smiling Buddha (Pokhran I), was India's first nuclear explosion which was described as a peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE). PNEs are nuclear explosions for non-military purposes.
- India became the first nation apart from the P5 countries (five permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) members) – China, Russian Federation, France, the United Kingdom and the United States – to conduct the test.

About Operation Smiling Buddha or Pokhran I

- Location: Secret army test range located in the desert of Pokhran, Rajasthan
- Technique: A fission device using Plutonium as fuel.
- Importance
 - o Raised India's credible deterrence and national security.

✓ India had already fought three wars (1962 China war and 1965 & 1971 wars against Pakistan). Also, China had conducted its nuclear tests during 1964.

o It highlighted India's technological prowess in nuclear research.

ARREST UNDER UAPA ACT

• In *Prabir Purkayastha vs. State (NCT of Delhi)* case, the Supreme Court ruled that investigative agencies should provide written reasons for arrests in cases related to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Supreme Court Judgement:

o Court's order in the *Pankaj Bansal vs Union of India & Ors* case mandated that arrested persons under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 must be provided with written grounds of arrest.

✓ Court extended this order for Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) also.

o Obligation to provide written grounds for arrest or preventive detention, as mandated by Article 22(1) of the Indian Constitution, is inviolable and cannot be disregarded under any circumstances.

✓ Article 22(1): Provided that no person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest.

o Informing an arrested person about the grounds of arrest is crucial, as it's the only effective way for

✓ The arrested person to consult his Advocate;

✓ Oppose the police custody remand

✓ To seek bail.

- UAPA Act (1967) aimed at enabling more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities carried out by individuals and associations, [as well as addressing terrorist activities,] and dealing with matters related to such activities.

HERMES-900

- Indian Army and Navy will receive Hermes-900 from Israel to boost their surveillance capabilities.

About Hermes-900

- o It is a next generation multi-role, Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial system.
- o Features over-the-horizon, persistent multimission, multi-payload capabilities with class leading payload carrying capacity of 350 kgs.
- o Capable of performing missions for area dominance, persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, Target acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR).
- o Can also perform ground support and maritime patrol missions, and offers the capability for integrated multi-platform, multi-sensor operation.

MILITARY EXERCISES IN NEWS

- **Tarkash:** The seventh edition of the Indo-U.S. joint counter-terrorism exercise 'Tarkash' was recently held in Kolkata.
 - o It was held between the India's National Security Guard (NSG) and U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF).
- **Shakti:** 7th edition of Exercise 'Shakti', a joint military exercise between India and France, started in Meghalaya.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN INDIA

Recently, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) adopted the Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge.

What are Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge?

- Genetic Resources (GRs): Resources that are contained in medicinal plants, agricultural crops, and animal breeds.
 - o While GRs themselves cannot be directly protected as intellectual property, inventions developed using them can be protected through a patent.
- Traditional knowledge (TK): Knowledge system held by indigenous communities, often relating to their natural environment like Agriculture, scientific, ecological and medicinal knowledge.

Challenges associated with India's TK and GRs

- **Biopiracy:** Exploitation, patenting, and commercialization of TK and GRs by foreign entities without benefit-sharing or recognition of indigenous communities.
- **Impact on Farmers:** Farmers who developed staple food crops through generations have no effective rights over patented varieties by multinational companies.
- **Lack of Documentation:** This enhances risk of loss or erosion in transmission of traditional knowledge to younger generations in the face of modernization and cultural change.
- **Inadequate Global Legal Framework:** To prevent misappropriation, ensure benefit-sharing, and recognize indigenous community rights.
- **Insufficient Conservation of Biodiversity:** Increasing environmental degradation and climate change threaten habitats and ecosystems that harbour genetic resources.

Measures by Government to Protect India's TK and GRs

- **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL):** Digital repository to prevent bio-piracy and wrongful patents.
- **India's Patent Act, 1970:** Adopted the **PDR mechanism** for the disclosure of involved GRs and TK in the claimed patent.
- **The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmer's Rights Act, 2001:** Protects **farmers' and breeders' rights to plant varieties**, acknowledging their roles in conservation and improvement.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (in line with Convention of Biodiversity):** Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources and knowledge
- **Forest Rights Act 2006:** Provides for Community rights over forest resources and traditional practices.
- **Geographical Indications Act 1999:** Guarantees Collective rights over traditional knowledge linked to a region.
- **Ministry of AYUSH:** Dedicated ministry for traditional medicine.
- **UNESCO recognition:** Yoga, etc. recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage.

INDIA BECAME THIRD LARGEST SOLAR POWER GENERATOR

• This is highlighted as per Global Electricity Review (GER) 2024 report, released by global energy think tank Ember.

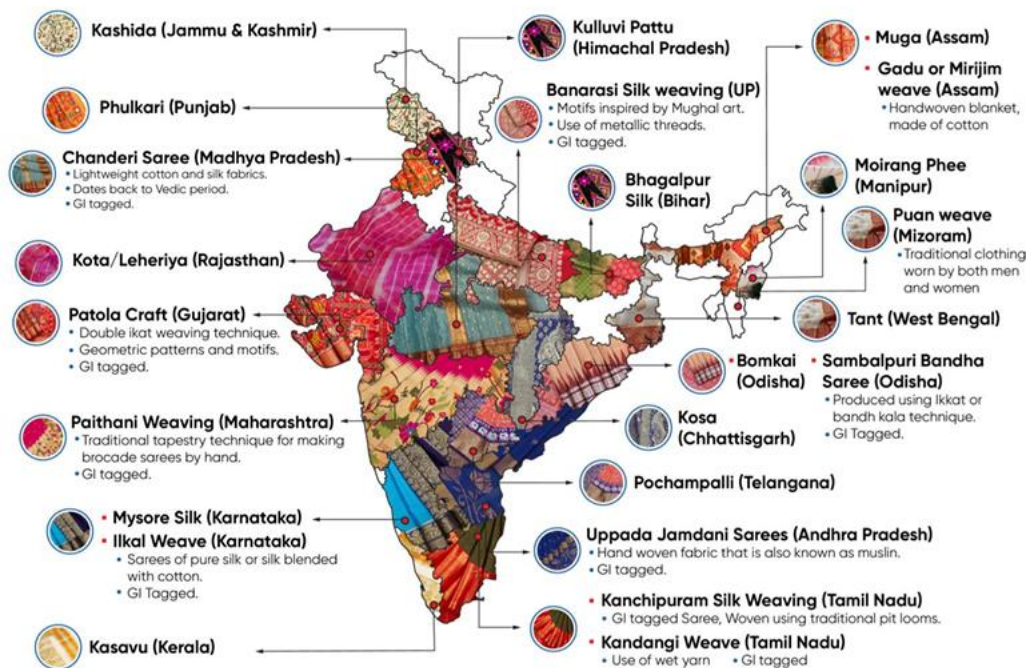
Key findings of the report:

- Renewables provided 30% of global electricity for the first time.
- Solar was the main supplier of electricity growth in 2023.
- India saw the world's fourth-largest surge in solar generation in 2023 behind China, the US and Brazil.
- India overtook Japan to become the third-largest solar power generator in 2023, providing 5.9% of global growth in solar.
- India produced the second highest amount of electricity from coal.
 - ✓ India's per capita emissions from the power sector are the fourth lowest in the G20, despite high coal reliance.
- India's per capita emissions from the power sector are just over half the global average and even further below the average in Asia.

WEAVING IN INDIA

Recently on National Textile Day, tribute was paid to Indian weavers.

Weaving Styles of India



SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT ON JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT

- Supreme Court passed judgement to strengthen Juvenile Justice Act, 2015
- Supreme Court's judgement in "Child in Conflict with Law (CCL) through his mother v. State of Karnataka" case dealt with act's provision for preliminary assessment of CCL in heinous offences.

About Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) 2015

o **Scope:** It consolidates and amend the law relating to CCL and Child in need of Care and Protection (CCP).

✓ CCL means child below 18 years of age who is alleged/found to have committed an offense.

o **Board:** It mandates setting up Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) in every district to deal with cases of CCL.

o **Preliminary Assessment:** In case of heinous offences alleged to have been committed by a child above 16 years of age, JJB shall conduct a preliminary assessment to assess capacity of the child.

- ✓ After preliminary assessment, the Children's Court may decide that whether the child can be tried as adult.

Key Highlights of Judgement

o An appeal against the preliminary assessment order of the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) would be filed before the Children's Court (not Sessions Court) wherever available.

- ✓ Also, court has prescribed 30 days' time limit for preferring such appeals.

o The time period of 3 months prescribed for completion of preliminary assessment is not mandatory but merely directory in nature.

SOLAR STORM (GEOMAGNETIC STORM)

Recently, Earth witnessed G5 level of solar storm, the strongest in two decades and possibly one of the strongest displays of auroras in past 500 years.

What are Solar Storms?

- Solar storms are like massive bursts of energy from the Sun.
 - o They happen when a large eruption on the Sun's surface, often accompanied by solar flares and coronal mass ejections (CMEs), accelerates charged particles to incredibly high speeds.
 - o Depending on the intensity, they are classified from G1 (Minor) to G5 (extreme).
 - o High speed solar winds bring geomagnetic storms.
 - o These are a result of Sun entering a period of peak activity called Solar Maximum.
- Solar Flare is an intense burst of radiation, while CMEs are huge cloud of plasma (hot, ionized gas) and magnetic fields ejected from the Sun near Sunspots.



o These ejected particles can travel over a million miles per hour, and when they reach Earth, they interact with our planet's magnetic field, causing disturbances.

SAHITYA AKADEMI

- Ruskin Bond was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship.
- Fellowship is the highest honour conferred by Akademi on a writer.
- It is reserved for 'the immortals of literature'.
- Major literary of Ruskin Bond: Vagrants in the Valley, Once Upon a Monsoon Time, Angry River, Strangers in the Night, All Roads Lead to Ganga, etc.



PLACES IN NEWS

India

- Ladakh**
 - India protests Chinese road construction at Shaksgam Valley in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- Himachal Pradesh**
 - Wildlife authorities have started a survey to estimate the population of the Himalayan ibex along with blue sheep.
- Rajasthan**
 - Scientist have found the green lynx spider in Tal Chhappar Wildlife Sanctuary in Churu District.
- Rajasthan**
 - Disappearance of Semal trees from Southern Rajasthan is creating adverse effects on the forests and people.
- Karnataka**
 - A portion of Hampi's Virupaksha Temple collapsed.
- Lakshadweep**
 - Scientists have found mass sea anemone bleaching off Agatti island.
- Kerala**
 - Kerala banned the use of oleander flowers in temple offerings after death of two women due to accidental poisoning from the flower.
 - Mass fish deaths were reported in the Periyar River.
- Bihar**
 - Kanwar Lake (also known as Kabartal Wetland or Jheel) is deteriorating.
- Meghalaya**
 - Despite a ban from National Green Tribunal in 2014, none of 26,000 abandoned rat-hole coal mines in East Jaintia Hills district have been shut down.
- Arunachal Pradesh**
 - A Red panda was recently sighted in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Assam**
 - National Green Tribunal has taken notice of construction activities in Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary (Assam).
- Mizoram**
 - A rare hemi-parasitic terrestrial plant, *Phtheirospermum lushaiorum* (named after "Lushai" tribe of Mizoram) was found in Phawngpui National Park of Mizoram.
- Andhra Pradesh**
 - Sri Lankan golden backed frog has been rediscovered after 200 years in India at Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Tamil Nadu**
 - A new species of marine tardigrade named *Batillipes chandrayaani* after Chandrayaan-3 moon mission is discovered from the southeast coast.

World

- Netherlands**
 - 26th World Energy Congress, co-hosted by the World Energy Council (WEC), concluded in Rotterdam.
 - Self-bred corals from the World Coral Conservatory project nested among Europe's largest coral reefs at the Burgers' Zoo in the Netherlands
- Croatia**
 - Incumbent Croatian Prime Minister has secured office for third consecutive time.
- Russia**
 - Newly captured aerial footage of Batagay Crater has revealed that it is growing every year as the frozen ground melts.
- Iran**
 - Iran President Dies in Helicopter Crash.
- Second Thomas Shoal**
 - Philippines denied China's claim on agreement over disputed South China Sea's Second Thomas Shoal.
- Cambodia**
 - Cambodia formally accepted the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.
- Papua New Guinea**
 - Papua New Guinea is hit by a massive landslide.
- New Caledonia**
 - France declares a state of emergency in New Caledonia.
- South Africa**
 - South Africa is celebrating 30 years of the end of Apartheid, a system of racial discrimination.
 - SKAMPI, a prototype telescope of SKA Observatory (SKAO) constructed in South Africa achieved first light, demonstrating its potential.
- Slovakia**
 - Slovakian Prime Minister was shot multiple times after a cabinet meeting in Handlova town.
- Burkina Faso**
 - Burkina Faso suspended BBC and Voice of America after covering report on mass killings.
- Venezuela**
 - According to reports, Humboldt (or La Corona) - Venezuela's last standing glacier in the Andes, has shrunk to a size that no longer qualifies it as a glacier.
- Spain**
 - Spain becomes 99th member of International Solar Alliance (ISA)
- Ghana**
 - India-Ghana agreed to strengthen trade ties at 4th joint trade committee meeting in Accra.