

- **SPI scheme addresses requirement for support to existing pharma clusters** to improve productivity, quality and sustainability to **make India a global leader in Pharma Sector.**
 - ⊕ **SPI Tenure: FY 2021-2022 to FY 2025-26 (5 years).**
- **SPI Scheme has three components**
 - ⊕ Assistance to Pharmaceutical Industry for Common Facilities (**APICF**)
 - ⊕ Revamped Pharmaceutical Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (**RPTUAS**)
 - ⊕ Pharmaceutical & Medical Devices Promotion and Development Scheme (**PMPDS**)

APIC F	PMPDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aim: Strengthen existing pharmaceutical clusters' capacity for their sustained growth by creating common facilities. ➤ Tenure: 5 years. ➤ Limit of incentive will be 70% of approved project cost or Rs 20 crore, whichever is less, ➤ Eligible activities: R&D Labs; Testing Laboratory for Pharma Products; Effluent Treatment Plants; Logistic Centers; Training Centers. ➤ Monitoring: Project Management Consultant (PMC), agency appointed by Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP). ➤ Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Improvement in quality standards and environmental regulatory compliance; ⊕ Reduction in wastage of manufactured pharma products; ⊕ Increased availability of trained personnel for pharma clusters; etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aim: Facilitate growth and development of Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Sectors through conducting studies, awareness programs, etc. ➤ Tenure: 5 years. ➤ Eligible activities: Database Creation of pharmaceutical and medical device sector, etc. ➤ Monitoring: PMC. ➤ Benefits: Bring awareness about Government policies and identifying problems/issues faced by industry.

Note: Refer News Today dated 12th March 2024 to know the details of Revamped Pharmaceutical Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (RPTUAS).

Election Commission of India (ECI) announced Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for upcoming 2024 Parliamentary Elections

- MCC comes into effect after ECI announced that country would vote in seven phases from April 19 to June 1 and results will be announced on June 4.
- **About MCC**
 - ⊕ It is a set of **guidelines laid down by ECI to govern conduct of political parties** and candidates in run-up to an election to **ensure free and fair elections.**
 - ⊕ This is in keeping with **Article 324 of Constitution**, which gives ECI power to supervise elections to Parliament and State legislatures.
 - ⊕ It is **operational from date that the election schedule is announced till date that results are announced.**
 - ⊕ It is **not enforceable by law**, but some provisions are enforceable through corresponding provisions in statutes like Representation of People Act, 1951 etc.
- **Activities prohibited after implementation of MCC**
 - ⊕ Candidates **cannot announce financial grants.** Moreover, **government cannot launch new projects.**
 - ⊕ **No promises from authorities** related to infrastructure development like roads, etc.
 - ⊕ **Prohibition of any ad-hoc appointments** in government or public undertakings.
 - ⊕ Ministers or candidates **cannot sanction grants or payments** from discretionary funds.
 - ⊕ **Ban of government resources** like transport, machinery, etc. for campaigning.

Role of ECI in light of evolution of MCC

- In 1960, MCC was first introduced in **state assembly elections in Kerala.**
- In 1974, ECI directed **Chief Electoral Officer** to constitute district level standing committee under which **District Collector kept check on MCC violation.**
- In 1979, ECI **added a section to regulate 'party in power'** and prevent it from gaining an unfair advantage during elections.
- In 2013, Supreme Court in **S. Subramaniam Balaji vs. State of TamilNadu** case directed ECI to **include guidelines regarding election manifestos**, which it had included in MCC.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notified Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024

MoEFCC notified rules in exercise of powers conferred under **Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPA) 1972**. Key

highlights of rules

- ⊕ **Application for transfer of captive elephants** shall be made to **Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF)** having jurisdiction over area where elephant is registered. On
 - ⊖ receipt of application, DCF shall
 - ◆ **Obtain a certificate of a veterinary practitioner;**
 - ◆ **Conduct inquiry and physical verification of facility** where elephant is presently and proposed to be housed;
 - ◆ Forward application/report to **Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW)** within **fifteen days**.
- ⊕ **Transfer within state:** After report examination, CWW **permit or reject transfer of captive elephants within seven days**.
- ⊕ **Transfer outside of states:** CWW of donor state shall **forward application to CWW of recipient state within fifteen days**.
- ⊕ **Terms and conditions for transfer:** Owner is no longer able to maintain elephant; No transfer unless genetic profile of animal has been entered in electronic monitoring application of MoEFCC; etc.
- ⊕ **Validity:** Elephant transfer shall be effected within a **period not exceeding three months** from date of grant of permission. **Transport permit shall not be more than one month**.

Indian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*)

- ▶ Subspecies of Asian elephants native to Indian subcontinent.
- ▶ **Habitat:** Dry-thorn forests, moist and dry deciduous forests, tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen forests.
- ▶ As per Elephant Census 2017, **Karnataka has highest number of elephants** followed by Assam.
- ▶ **Characteristics:**
 - ⊖ **Leader of an elephant group: Female.**
 - ⊖ **Maximum gestation period: 22 months.**
- ▶ **Conservation status:**
 - ⊖ IUCN status: **Endangered**
 - ⊖ CITES status: **Appendix I**
 - ⊖ **WPA, 1972 Schedule I**

Six heritage sites of Madhya Pradesh included in UNESCO's tentative list

Inclusion in tentative list is **first step towards nominating** a site for inscription on the UNESCO's **World Heritage List**.

- ⊕ World heritage is designation for **places of outstanding universal value to humanity**.

Sites on UNESCO's Tentative List	Description
Gwalior Fort	▶ Completed in 8th century AD by Raja Surya Sena , consisting of Man Mandir Palace, Gujari Mahal, Sas Bahu temples etc.
Khooni Bhandara, Burhanpur	▶ Underground water management system, built by Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan during Jahangir's reign. Based on Persian qanat approach .
Rock Art Sites of Chambal Valley	Rock art in hilly areas of Vindhyan, Satpura, and Kaimur ranges .
Bhojeshwar Mahadev Temple, Bhojpur	▶ Lord Shiva temple , built during 11 th century under Raja Bhoj . ▶ Built in Bhumija style (evolved form of Nagara style during Paramara period).
Gond Monuments of Ramnagar, Mandla	Architectural complexes built by Gond rulers consisting of Moti Mahal, Raibhagat ki Kothi, Begum Mahal etc.
The Historical Ensemble of Dhamnar	▶ Rock cut site consisting of 51 monolithic Buddhist caves (5th-7th century CE) and hindu temple complex (Dharmarajeshwara temple) .

204th meeting of the SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) Board concluded with some major approvals

- ▶ **SEBI announced** launch of Beta version of **optional T+0 settlement** for limited scrips and brokers.
 - ⊕ T+0 settlement allows both funds and securities transactions to be **settled on same day** when the trade is initiated. Presently, Indian securities market operate on **T+1 settlement cycle**.
- ▶ **Enhancing Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) for Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs):**
 - Exempted **additional disclosure requirements** for FPIs holding more than 50% of their India equity Assets Under Management (AUM) in a single corporate group. **Relaxed timelines** for the disclosure of material changes to their designated depository participant (DDP).
 - FPI registrations that expire due to non-payment of registration fee, shall be permitted to be reactivated within **30 days**.
- ▶ **Facilitating EoDB for companies coming for Initial Public Offering (IPO)** (process for company to be publicly listed):
 - Doing away with requirement of 1% security deposit** in public/rights issue of equity shares.
 - Change in size of offer for sale** shall be based on only either issue size in rupees or number of shares.
- ▶ **Enhancing trust in AIF (Alternative Investment Fund) ecosystem** by introducing due diligence measures for investors and investments.
 - AIF is a **privately pooled investment vehicle** which collects funds from investors for the purpose of investing.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) vs FPI

FDI is an investment by a person **resident outside India** in an **unlisted Indian company** or in **10% or more** of its paid up equity capital of a **listed Indian company**.

FPI is an investment by a person resident outside India in **equity instruments** (shares, debentures etc.) where such investment is **less than 10%** of paid up equity capital of a **listed Indian company**.

Bharatiya Adim Janjati Seva Sanghathan (BAJSS)

- ▶ Minister for Tribal Affairs laid the foundation stone of 'Centre for Preservation and promotion of Tribal Culture & Heritage' in Jharkhand.
 - It would be showcasing **physical and intangible tribal culture**, and would be a **knowledge and information centre** for assisting tribal development.
 - ⊕ It will be **developed as a live centre**, with space for artisans to demonstrate their skills.
- ▶ Minister also inaugurated renovated **National Unique Tribal Museum and e-Library** at BAJSS, New Delhi.
 - ⊕ BAJSS was established in **1948** by Shri **Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar (Thakkar Bapa)**, for upliftment of tribal community.

Scientists using IceCube Neutrino Observatory in Antarctica detect seven potential astrophysical tau neutrinos that passed through Earth

- ▶ Astrophysical neutrinos are **high-energy neutrinos** that **originate from the farthest reaches** beyond our galaxy.
 - ⊕ As they travel massive distances undisturbed, they can **help us understand about evolution of universe**.

Neutrinos are **subatomic particles** that have **no electrical charge** and **very small mass**, which **might even be zero**.

They are the most **abundant particles in the universe** and they have **very little interaction with matter**. Neutrinos travel **close to speed of light** and are **incredibly difficult to detect**, hence called **“ghost particles”**.

They are produced through many **natural processes** such as Sun's nuclear reactions, particle decays in Earth etc., **particle accelerators and nuclear power plants**.

Neutrinos come in three different flavors: **electron, muon and tau**.

About IceCube, the South Pole Neutrino Observatory

It is a **cubic-kilometer neutrino particle detector**, located near the **Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station**. IceCube is the **first gigaton neutrino detector** ever built and was primarily designed to **observe neutrinos** from the most violent astrophysical sources.

It uses **“strings” (cables) of digital optical modules (DOMs)** to detect neutrinos.

In 2013, IceCube presented its **first evidence of high-energy astrophysical neutrinos** originating from cosmic accelerators.

The India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) Project is aimed at building **underground laboratory** for study- ing neutrinos.

It is jointly funded by **Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Science and Technology**.

Location: Pottipuram in Bodi West hills of **Theni District of Tamil Nadu**.

Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme

RB-IOs saw a significant **68.2% increase in complaints in FY23** compared to FY22.

RB-IOs was launched in 2021 by **integrating three ombudsman schemes:** Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 2006; Ombudsman Scheme for NBFCs, 2018; and Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions, 2019

- ⊕ It adopts **“One Nation One Ombudsman” principle**.
- ⊕ It provides **single window** for resolution of complaints against **RBI regulated entities viz. Banks, NBFCs, Payment System Participants and Credit Information Companies**.
- ⊕ Redressal/adjudication of complaints is handled by **24 Offices of RBI Ombudsman (ORBIOs) and Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre (CRPC)**.



Dwarf Coconut Variety (Kalpa Suvarna) and Hybrid varieties of cocoa (VTL CH I and VTLCH II)

- Government released a new Kalpa Suvarna and VTL CH I and VTLCH II developed by Central Plantation Crops Research Institute.
- **About Kalpa Suvarna**
 - ⊕ Suitable for copra and tender coconut production. It starts flowering 30-36 months after planting.
 - ⊕ Recommended for cultivation in Karnataka and Kerala.
- **About VTL CH I and VTL CH II**
 - VTL CH I:** Cultivated as an inter-crop both in arecanut coconut plantations and suitable for Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
 - VTL CH II:** Tolerant to black pod rot which is in high rainfall region and suitable for Karnataka and Kerala.

Sickle Cell Disease

- Delhi-based Akmus Drugs and Pharmaceutical Limited developed India's first indigenous, room temperature stable drug for Sickle Cell Disease (SCD).
- SCD is a group of inherited Red Blood Cell (RBC) disorders or haemoglobin disorders.
 - It changes the shapes of RBCs from round to a C-shaped form tool called sickle.
 - Sickle cells clog the blood flow and die early, causing a constant shortage of RBCs.
 - It results in chronic anaemia, organ infarction and chronic organ damage.
- India has launched National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission, aiming to eliminate sickle cell genetic transmission by 2047.

Exercise Lamitiye 2024

- It is a Joint Military Exercise between Indian Army and Seychelles Defence Forces.

Somalia (Capital: Mogadishu)

- Indian Navy foils further attempts of Somali pirates using hijacked MV Ruen.
- **Political Boundaries**
 - Easternmost country of Africa, on Horn of Africa.
 - Land border: Kenya and Ethiopia (west), and Djibouti (northwest).
 - Water border: Gulf of Aden (north), Indian Ocean (east).
- **Geographical features**
 - Highest peak: Mount Shimbiris (Mount Surud Cad).
 - Major rivers: Juba and Sebeli.



Biomining

- Delhi's Biomining project is likely to miss the 2024 deadline to clear landfill sites.
- **About Biomining**
 - ⊕ As per Central Pollution Control Board, scientific process of excavation, treatment, segregation and gainful utilisation of aged municipal solid waste or legacy waste is called Biomining.
 - ⊕ It is an environmentally friendly technique to separate soil and recyclables like plastic, metal, paper, textiles, etc. Biomining operations target valuable metals like copper, uranium, nickel, and gold that are commonly found in sulfur-bearing minerals.

Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR)

Odisha police traces illegal poppy farms deep within STR.

About STR

It is a National Park and Tiger Reserve located within Mayurbhanj District, Odisha.

It comes under Deccan Peninsular Bio-geographic Zone, Chhotanagpur Province and Mahanadian Region.

Flora: Moist mixed deciduous forest, Tropical semi-evergreen forest, sporadic patches of dry deciduous forests and grasslands.

Fauna: Tiger, Leopard, King Cobra, Common Cobra etc. UNESCO added it to its list of Biosphere Reserves in 2009.

Kshipra River

Performance audit by CAG stated that Kshipra River continues to remain polluted despite interventions of government agencies.

About Kshipra (Shipra) River

It originates in Vindhya Range (Kokri Bardi hill) and flows in a northerly direction.

It flows across the Malwa Plateau to join Chambal River. Ujjain is situated on its bank, where Kumbh Mela takes place once every 12 years.

Main tributaries: Kahn and Gambhir.

Errata: In News Today dated 20th February, 2024, in article titled 'States/UTs to act as per the definition of "forest" as laid down in the TN Godavarman Thirumulpad (1996) Judgment: Supreme Court (SC)', the statement 'Areas identified as "forests" by an expert committee of SC' has typographical error.

The correct statement will be 'Areas are identified as forests by expert committee constituted by the state government as per the direction of the SC'.