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PM Inaugurates MS Swaminathan Centenary International Conference on his 100th birth anniversary

The conference theme is **"Evergreen Revolution, The Pathway to Biohappiness,"** reflecting Prof. Swaminathan's lifelong dedication to food security.

About MS Swaminathan (1925 - 2023)

- **Key Recognition:** Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1971, First world food prize (1987), UNEP Sasakawa Environment Prize in 1994, UNESCO Gandhi Gold Medal in 1999 etc.
  - Conferred **Bharat Ratna** posthumously (2024).
- **Member of Planning Commission (1980-82),** Chaired UN's Commission on Science and Technology for Development and Director General of International Rice Research Institute in Philippines, Founder of M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF).

Key Contributions of MS Swaminathan

- **Development of High-Yield Varieties**
  - **1950:** Developed frost-resistant potato hybrids and crossed fragile indica rice with hardier japonica varieties, producing **robust, high-yield rice strains.**
  - **1963:** He along with **Norman Borlaug** initiated a breeding program that **incorporated dwarfing genes into wheat,** producing shorter, stronger plants that **boosted yields.**
- **Father of the Green Revolution in India (Began in the 1960s):** Focused on **increasing food production** through the **adoption of advanced breeding & modern techniques**.
- **Concept of Crop Cafeterias:** Diverse crop varieties were grown together, offering a balanced diet and improved nutrition.
- **Approach of Crop Distribution Agronomy: Instead of fixed crop schedule,** new approach allows **midseason adjustments in crop selection and planting**, to optimize yield and food quality.
- Chaired **National Commission on Farmers** and submitted a **report (Swaminathan report)** on ways to enhance the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of farming systems in India.

About Evergreen Revolution:

- Concept provided by MS Swaminathan, defining it as **increasing productivity in perpetuity without ecological harm.**
- **Key Components**
  - Promotion of **organic agriculture** and **green agriculture** (integrated pest management, integrated nutrient supply, and integrated natural resource management).
  - **Village Knowledge Centres** (Time-and locale specific information on crop, animal husbandry etc).
  - **Biovillages** (Sustainable management of natural resources and on-farm and non-farm livelihoods).
  - Focus on **social, economic, and gender equity.**

RBI Grants AU Small Finance Bank Universal License, First in a Decade

The Reserve Bank has granted 'in-principle' approval to AU Small Finance Bank for **transitioning from a small finance bank (SFB) to a universal bank.**

- A Universal Banking Licence **permits a financial institution to offer a wide array of banking services**, including commercial and investment banking, under a single umbrella.
- Last time, the universal banking licences were granted **in 2014 to Bandhan Bank and IDFC Bank**, which later became IDFC First Bank.

Eligibility Criteria for SFB to Transition into a Universal Bank

- **Status**: Scheduled status for a minimum period of five years.
- **Stock Listing**: Shares of the bank should have been listed on a recognised stock exchange.
- **Net Worth:** Having a minimum net worth of ₹1,000 crore.
- **Financial Health**
  - **Profitability:** Should have net profits in the last two Financial Years(FYs).
  - **Asset Quality:** Gross non-performing assets (G-NPA) and net NPA (N-NPA) must be less than or equal to 3% and 1%, respectively, over the last two FYs.
- **Promoter Requirements:** No addition of new promoters or changes to existing promoters during the transition.
- **Preference:** SFBs with a diversified loan portfolio will be preferred.

About Small Finance Bank (SFB)

- **Genesis:** Announced in the Union budget of 2014-15.
- **Objective**: Financial Inclusion.
- **Registration:** Registered as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 2013.
- **Licensing**: Licensed and Governed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- **Capital Requirement**: 200 crore (except for some SFBs).
- **Eligible promoters:** Resident individuals/professionals with **10 years of experience in banking and finance**.

Standing Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel Releases Report on Steel Scrap Recycling Policy (SSRP)

SSRP was notified by **Ministry of Steel (MoS)** in **2019**, with following **objectives:**

- **Promotes Circular Economy (6Rs -** Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover, Redesign & Remanufacture).
- **Formal & scientific collection, dismantling & processing activities** for end-of-life products that are sources of recyclable ferrous, nonferrous & metallic scraps.
- **Creation of Mechanism for treating waste streams** and residues produced from dismantling and shredding facilities, etc.

Key Highlights of the Report

Issue Highlighted	Relevant Recommendations
Lack of comprehensive data base on steel scrap sector	Develop a **robust database of steel scrap.** Create and maintain a **dedicated portal** with updated data on generation, usage, policies, programmes, and benefits. Include comparisons with other countries.
Absence of designated Nodal Ministry for steel scrap matters	**Ministry of Steel** to be the **nodal agency.** It should Collect, compile, update, and share all steel scrap data (state-wise, sector-wise, imports, exports).
Lack of formal scrap markets	Implementing a roadmap to **formalize the informal scrap sector.** **Organise 'Kabadiwallahs'** and dismantlers **into cooperatives** for economic and social benefits.
Absence of Industry status to steel scrap recycling sector	Accord **'Industry status'** to the scrap recycling sector to attract domestic/foreign investment, generate jobs, and boost skill development.
Lack of skill development and certification for scrap workforce	**National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to launch certification courses** on scrap handling. Train workforce and entrepreneurs for future formal sector needs.
Use of obsolete technology in scrap processing centres	Incentivise centres (non-fiscal) to adopt modern technologies like: **AI-powered optical sensors, Blockchain for scrap traceability & Digital platforms to connect aggregators with steel mills.**

Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Presented Its Report on PMGSY

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was launched in 2000 as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme.**

- It aims **to provide all-weather road connectivity to rural habitations** through various phases (PMGSY-I, II, III and IV).
- PMGSY-IV will be implemented from **financial year 2024-25 to 2028-29.**
- **Funding:** 60% Centre, 40% States.

Key Issues Highlighted in Report and Recommendations

Issues	Challenges	Recommendations
Low bidding	Contractors often quote **25-30% below minimum,** raising concerns about project quality.	Implement measures like **security deposits to prevent low bids** and assess their quality impact.
Quality of Construction of Roads	**Poor quality of road materials used** in the construction of roads at many places which are **not able to sustain the rigours of weather and traffic volume.**	**Give flexibility to State Governments** to adjust road width and design norms **based on their local geographical conditions** and transportation needs. Increase PMGSY **road thickness from 20mm to 30mm** for heavy vehicle loads.
Project Delay	Slow Progress of Work in **Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Areas.** Stalling due to issues like **land clearance, fund non-release, leading to cost overruns.**	Improve **Centre-State coordination and streamline approvals to prevent delays.**
Outdated Survey Data	PMGSY-IV survey **relies on the 2011 Census,** potentially misidentifying current needs.	The **road survey under PMGSY-IV should be revised** based on the latest available population figures or an interim assessment.
Incomplete Connectivity	Roads sometimes **only reach the periphery of villages,** failing to connect the actual habitations.	**Identify genuine beneficiaries** and ensure that roads are allocated fairly to areas most in need.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Released Joint Doctrines for Cyberspace Operations and Amphibious Operations

The declassification of these doctrines underscores India's commitment to **enhance visibility, accessibility and wider dissemination of joint war-fighting concepts.**

- They reinforce India's push towards greater **jointness and integration within its armed forces**.

Joint Doctrine for Cyberspace Operations

- It outlines a **unified approach** to defend national cyberspace interests.
- It focuses on **integrating offensive and defensive cyber capabilities** to enable synchronised operations across the **Army, Navy, and Air Force.**
- Key emphases include **threat-informed planning, resilience building, real-time intelligence integration, and the development of joint cyber capabilities**.

Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations

- The framework guides amphibious operations by **integrating maritime, air, and land forces with emphasis on interoperability and rapid response.**
- This **edition revises the 2008 version**, adapting to changes in the geo-strategic environment and enhanced capabilities.
- A balanced amphibious capability **deters threats** and supports **humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) operations** and evacuation missions during peacetime.

Also, CDS has initiated development of numerous new doctrines such as **Military Space Operations, Special Forces Operations, Airborne/Heliborne Operations, Integrated Logistics, Multi Domain Operations.**

About Jointness and Integration

Jointness of defence forces implies synergised use of the resources of the three Services while respecting the uniqueness of each to achieve optimum results and avoid duplication.

Initiatives taken for Jointness and Integration

- Proposal for **Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs) and Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs)** to boost operational readiness.
- **Department of Military Affairs (DMA) with CDS as Secretary** was created in 2020 to facilitate optimal utilization of resources and promote jointness among the three services.
- **Three Joint Logistic Nodes (JLNs) have been Established** and are operational since 2021 at Mumbai, Guwahati and Port Blair for Logistics Integration between the three services.
- **Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control, and Discipline) Rules, 2025.**

Also in News

Ad valorem duty

USA will impose additional 25 percent **ad valorem duty** above the 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs on India.

- Ad Valorem' is a Latin word meaning '**According to Value**'.
- Ad Valorem' is a **duty levied as a percentage of value** of the services or **goods being imported**, rather than on their weight or the number of units.

Coastal Shipping Bill

Parliament Clears Coastal Shipping Bill, 2025 to Boost India's Coastal Economy.

- The bill was proposed for adoption by the **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW).**
- It aims to **reduce India's dependence on foreign vessels**.

Key features of Coastal Shipping Bill, 2025

- **Simplify and modernise the legal framework** which govern coastal shipping.
- **National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan** offers a long-term policy and infrastructure roadmap.
- **National Database for Coastal Shipping** provides real-time, transparent data to guide investors and planners.

Nickel-Copper-Platinum Group Element (Ni-Cu-PGE) Sulphide

India's first ever discovery of Nickel-Copper-Platinum Group Element (Ni-Cu-PGE) sulphide at **Bhalukona-Jamnidih block of the Mahasamund district in Chhattisgarh.**

Applications of Ni-Cu-PGE

- **Nickel:** Used in stainless steel, alloys, and batteries (especially for EVs).
- **Copper:** Electrical wiring, electronics, plumbing, construction.
- **PGEs:** Catalysts, jewellery, electronics, and hydrogen fuel cell technology.

Strategic Value

- Critical for clean energy technologies, EVs, and defence applications, making it a key mineral group for energy transition.

Lichen

A new species of lichen, **Allographa effusosoredica,** has been discovered in the **Western Ghats.**

About Lichen

- Lichen refers to a **symbiotic association of two components**, a fungus, the 'mycobiont', and at least one photosynthetic organism, the 'photobiont', consisting of a micro alga (usually a green alga) or cyanobacterium, or both.
- Lichens are very **useful as** a source of drugs, medicines, perfumery, food stuff, dyes, bio-monitoring and other useful compounds.
- These invade bare areas and contribute to **soil formation**.
- They are used as **Bio-monitors for Air pollution**.

SheLeads II Programme

Second edition of UN Women's flagship capacity-building programme –SheLeads was inaugurated in India.

SheLeads

- It is aimed to advance **gender equality in public and political leadership** by supporting women leaders to participate in elections.

About UN Women

- UN Women is the lead UN entity on gender equality, **created in July 2010.**
- It exists to **advance women's rights, gender equality, and the empowerment** of all women and girls.
- **Key focus area**
  - leadership,
  - economic empowerment,
  - freedom from violence, and
  - women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

Starfish

The starfish were dying due to bacterium Vibrio pectenicida, related to the bacteria causing cholera in humans.

About Starfish

- Belong to a large group of **marine animals** known as echinoderms. Also known as **'Sea Stars' (Because of their shape).**
- **Feeding:** Starfish are mostly **predators and feed on invertebrates** such as mussels and clams.
- **Regeneration**: Most species of starfish can regenerate, or regrow, damaged or lost arms.
- **Circulatory System:** No blood; transport of nutrients and oxygen is via seawater in the water vascular system.
- **Ecological Role:** Important predators in marine ecosystems, helping maintain the balance of species.

Awaza Programme of Action(2024-2034) (APoA)

Third United Nations **Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3)** opened in **Awaza, Turkmenistan.**

- Conference serves as a crucial platform to implement the newly adopted APoA.

About APoA

- Adopted by consensus at the **UN General Assembly in December 2024.**
  - Offers a **comprehensive framework to tackle persistent development challenges faced by LLDCs.**
- **Key Deliverables Include**
  - Establishment of **Regional Agricultural Research Hubs** to strengthen food security.
  - **Launch of an Infrastructure Investment Finance Facility** to mobilize critical funding.
  - Development of a UNFCCC Negotiating Body **to advance trade and climate resilience,** etc.

Virgin Polymers

According to a study, India contributes to 4% of production of four Virgin Polymers with China being the largest producer.

About Virgin Polymers

- Virgin polymer refers to a **plastic material** that is produced directly from raw petrochemical feedstocks like natural gas or crude oil, and has not been previously used or processed.
- **Examples:** Polyethylene (PE), Polypropylene (PP), Polyethylene terephthalate (PET), Polystyrene (PS), Polycarbonate (PC).
- **Uses:** Packaging materials, automotive components, textiles, medical equipment, and consumer goods.
- **Advantages:** Offer uniform properties, free from impurities & superior mechanical strength.
- **Issues:** Considered harmful for environment, Higher carbon footprint compared to recycled polymers, Relies on non-renewable fossil resources etc.

Place in News

Tuvalu (Capital: Funafuti)

Tuvalu, threatened by rising sea levels, **signed the 2023 Falepili Union Treaty with Australia,** allowing 280 Tuvaluans annually to gain permanent residency.

Political Features

- Formerly known as the **Ellice Islands**, is located midway **between Hawaii and Australia** in the **South Pacific Ocean.**
- It comprises **nine islands** (four reef islands and five coral atolls).
- **Nanumea** is the most northern island of Tuvalu. It is a true atoll and consists of five islands.

Geographical Features

- **Climate:** Tropical, moderated by trade winds.
- **Environmental Challenges:** Sea level rise, Increasing salination of the soil, etc.