

NEWS TODAY

Role of Internet in Drug Trafficking and Use highlighted in International Narcotics Control Board Annual Report 2023

- As per report, Internet has **increased the availability of narcotic drugs**, psychotropic substances, and related chemicals on illicit market.
- **Role of Internet in Drug Trafficking**
 - ⊕ **Cryptomarkets** (online darknet marketplaces located on Deep Web) are being used for **wholesale drug trade**, because of anonymity and safety.
 - ⊕ Various **social media platforms** are being used as local marketplaces and inappropriate content is accessible to children and adolescents.
 - ⊕ Using **Internet pharmacies and telemedicine**, patient safety is at risk from illegal internet outlets that **sell drugs without prescription**.
 - ◆ Global trade in illicit pharmaceuticals is **estimated at \$4.4 billion**.
- **Challenges posed by Internet to Drug Control**
 - ⊕ **Encrypted communication methods** posing difficulties for prosecuting online trafficking offences.
 - ⊕ Due to global-reach of Internet, **offenders use regions with less stringent law enforcement** to evade extradition.
 - ⊕ **Online presence of fentanyl** and other synthetic opioids.
- **Recommendations**
 - ⊕ Online platforms should be used to **prevent non-medical use of drugs** and raise **awareness** about harms of drug use.
 - ⊕ **Formulate legislation and policy** to prosecute illegal marketplaces operating on social media platforms.
 - ⊕ **Utilizing real-time counter-trafficking tools** to develop actionable intelligence against traffickers that exploit e-commerce services.

International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)

- **Secretariat:** Vienna, Austria
- **Established in 1968** in accordance with Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.
- It is an **independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body** for implementation of United Nations international drug control conventions.
- It has **13 members**, each elected by Economic and Social Council for a period of five years.
- **INCB initiatives to prevent Internet exploitation for drug trafficking.**
 - ⊕ **Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme.**
 - ⊕ **Project International Operations** on New psychoactive substances (ION).

Global trade has been held back by disruptions at two critical shipping routes: IMF

- According to the **PortWatch platform** (a collaborative initiative of IMF and the University of Oxford):
 - ⊕ Due to attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, the volume of **trade through the Suez Canal dropped by 50%** year-over-year in the first two months of the year 2024.
 - ◆ The Suez Canal is the **shortest maritime route between Asia and Europe**.
 - ◆ It usually accounts for about **15% of global maritime trade**.
 - ⊕ Instead, several shipping companies **diverted their ships around the Cape of Good Hope**.
 - ⊕ Additionally, **due to the severe drought in the Panama Canal**, trade volume fell by almost 32% from the previous year.
 - ◆ Panama Canal connects the **Atlantic and Pacific oceans** through the narrow Isthmus of Panama.
 - ◆ It usually accounts for about **5% of global maritime trade**.
- **Impact of trade disruption**
 - ⊕ Supply chain disruption may lead to **Inflationary pressure** and **food and energy security threats**.
 - ⊕ Increased delivery time due to diversions **hurts companies with limited inventories**.
 - ⊕ Ship re-routing **could affect customs records** on imports and exports.
 - ◆ This will make it **more difficult to gauge the underlying momentum of global trade and economic activity** in the coming months.

Initiatives taken for stability in the Red Sea

- **Operations Prosperity Guardian:** Launched by the US, it is a multinational security initiative under the umbrella of the Combined Maritime Forces that focuses on security in the Red Sea. Its members are the **UK, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain**.
- **Operation Aspides:** Launched by the EU, to restore regional stability around the Red sea.

India proposes a detailed model for UNSC reform that displays flexibility in veto

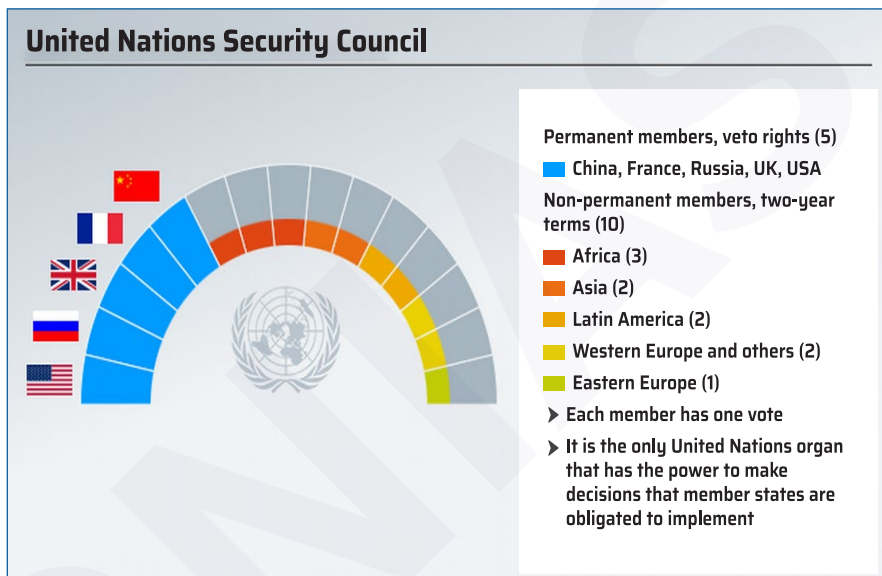
Participating in Inter-governmental Negotiations on UNSC reform, India, along with Brazil, Germany, and Japan (all members of G4 nations) proposed the reform model.

Key highlights of the proposed model

- ⊕ **Enlarged Membership:** 11 Permanent members, and 14/15 non-permanent members with a 2 years term to be elected based on current practice.
- ⊕ **Equitable Regional representation:** Representation of 6 new permanent members shall come from Africa (2), Asia-Pacific (2), Latin America and Caribbean (2), Western Europe and Other Member States (1).
- ⊕ **Working methods of Council:** An affirmative vote of 14/15 of 25/26 members will be required for a decision.
- ⊕ **Veto:** No veto-right to new permanent members until decided by a review, held fifteen years after reform came into force.
- ⊕ **Relationship between UNSC and UN General Assembly (UNGA):** Council should hold regular consultations with President of UNGA, submit annual report and special reports to UNGA, etc.

About UNSC

- ⊕ UNSC is one of the six principal organs of UN with a primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.
- ⊕ Its reform is being sought as:
 - ◆ UNSC does not represent contemporary world.
 - ◆ Inadequate regional representation.
 - ◆ Misuse of veto power by permanent members.



5th Mass bleaching event hits Great Barrier Reef (GBR) in 8 years

Before this event, GBR has suffered mass coral bleaching in 1998, 2002, 2016, 2017, 2020, and 2022.

Bleaching occurs when healthy corals become stressed by spikes in ocean temperatures, causing them to expel algae living in their tissues, which drains them of their vibrant colours.

Causes of Mass Bleaching events

- ⊕ **Climate change induced warming.** For Example, Current underwater heatwave is most intense in southern GBR, which is most affected by bleaching.
- ⊕ **Rising frequency of El Nino** increases frequency and severity of mass-bleaching events.
- ⊕ **Lack of wind and currents** may result in less mixing of water layers, clearer seas, and deeper penetration of solar irradiance, which can intensify bleaching.
- ⊕ **Other causes:** Extremely low tides, Pollution, Overexposure to sunlight etc.

GBR stretches for more than 2,300 kilometres along the northeast coast of Australia.

- ⊕ It is the world's largest coral reef complex, located in Pacific Ocean.
- ⊕ It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1981.
- ⊕ This reef structure is composed of and built by billions of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps.



Coral reefs

- They are made up of colonies of thousands of tiny individual corals, called polyps. These marine invertebrate animals have hard exoskeletons made of calcium carbonate.
- In India, Coral reefs are present in Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep Islands and Malvan (in Maharashtra).

Prime Minister presented first-ever National Creators Award (NCA)

- NCA aims to celebrate diverse voices and talents shaping **India's growth and cultural narrative**, driving positive social change, and fostering innovation & creativity in digital sphere.
 - ⊕ **Spearheaded by MyGov India**, award features wide **array of categories** recognizing **excellence and impact across various domains**, including **storytelling, social change advocacy, education**, etc. in digital sphere.
- Creator Economy refers to the ecosystem of businesses, platforms, and individuals that create, distribute, and monetize content online.
 - ⊕ Initiatives like **Digital India campaign** led to formation of content creators.
- **Status of Indian Creator Economy**
 - ⊕ **80 million Creators and Knowledge Professionals** in India.
 - ⊕ **150000 Professional content creators** in India who are able to monetize their services effectively.
 - ⊕ **Projected to double** from \$250bn to \$480bn by 2027.
- **Factors influencing growth of Creator Economy in India:** Rise in internet usage due to availability of low-cost data and globalization of content consumption; Adoption of remote and hybrid work; Popularity of short-form video content etc.
- **Significance of Creator Economy**
 - ⊕ Promotion of **India's cultural ethos** through creative storytelling.
 - ⊕ Provide exceptional content that has both **entertainment value** and **social messaging**.
 - ⊕ Increase in job roles like **video editors, virtual assistant, graphic designers**, etc.

After 30 years, India to restart Penicillin G manufacture: Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers

- Penicillin G is an **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)** used in manufacturing antibacterial drugs to treat **pneumonia, meningitis, gonorrhea, syphilis**.
 - ⊕ It is also known as **benzylpenicillin, or benzylpenicillinic acid**.
 - ⊕ **In 1928, Scottish biologist Alexander Fleming** isolated the **first specific form of penicillin** from **Penicillium fungi**.
 - ◆ For this he shared **Nobel Prize in Physiology/ Medicine for the discovery in 1945**.
 - ⊕ It is administered intravenously or intramuscularly due to **poor oral absorption**.
 - ⊕ Like many other APIs, **manufacturing of Penicillin G** was phased out from India due to **cheaper imports from China** after globalization.
- **About API**
 - ⊕ API or bulk drug, is **key ingredient of a drug or medicine**, which lends it the **desired therapeutic effect** or produces the intended **pharmacological activity**.
 - ⊕ Despite India being 3rd largest pharmaceutical industry by volume in world, it is **primarily dependent on bulk drug import particularly from China**.
 - ⊕ **Key issues** in established API manufacturing unit include **huge initial costs, intense global competition**, etc.
- **Initiatives for self-reliance in API:** Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers has launched:
 - ⊕ Scheme for **Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks**
 - ⊕ **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** for Pharmaceuticals covers APIs.
 - ⊕ **PLI scheme** for domestic manufacturing of **key starting material (KSMs)/Drug Intermediates (DIs) and API**.

Also in News



Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme

- Centre has **extended RoDTEP scheme** to
 - ⊕ **Advance Authorisation Holders:** Refers to manufacturer exporters or merchant exporters tied to supporting manufacturer.
 - ⊕ **Special Economic Zones Units:** Designated duty-free enclave to be treated as a territory outside the customs territory of India (aims to promote export).
 - ⊕ **Export Oriented Units:** Defined under Foreign Trade Policy as **units undertaking to export** their entire production of goods and services (some exception exist)
- Above **3 sectors** constitute approximately **25% of India's exports**.
- RoDTEP was launched by **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** in 2021 for **refunding various embedded taxes and duties on exported products**.



National Cooperative Database

- **Ministry of Cooperation** inaugurated the NCD.
- **About NCD:**
 - ⊕ It provides **all information pertaining to Cooperative sector** like number of co-operatives in **states/UTs** and in different **sectors**.
 - ◆ There are **more than 8 lakh registered Cooperatives** in the country, with over **30 crore citizens connected to them**.
 - ⊕ **Benefits:**
 - ◆ A **Comprehensive, Authentic, and Updated data repository**.
 - ◆ Helping in **expansion of cooperative sector** by identifying gaps in terms of geographical spread of Cooperative Societies.
 - ◆ **Facilitate planning, policy-making & implementation** for all stakeholders.



Nomination to Rajya Sabha

- Former chairperson of Infosys Foundation Sudha Murty was nominated to Rajya Sabha.
- **Rajya Sabha Nomination**
 - ⊕ Under **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961**, the subject "Nominations to the Rajya Sabha" is allocated to Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - ⊕ Under **Article 80 (3)** of Constitution, **12 members are nominated by President** having special knowledge or practical experience in areas like literature, science, art, and social service.
 - ⊕ In **Ram Gopal Singh Sisodia Vs. Union of India through its Secretary & Ors. 2012**, Delhi High Court upheld nomination of Sachin Tendulkar under Article 80(3).



Indelible Ink (Voter's Ink)

- **Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd (MPVL)**, the sole manufacturer of indelible ink, received its largest order yet from Election Commission for 26.55 lakh vials of marker.
- Under rule 49K of **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961** every elector shall allow his **left forefinger** to be inspected by Presiding officer or Polling Officer and an **Indelible ink mark** to be put on it.
- Once applied, **Purple-coloured ink cannot be removed by any chemical, detergent, soap or oil** for several months.
- **Ink contains silver nitrate**, which on reaction with nail and on exposure to light gets darker.



Exercise 'Dharma Guardian'

- The 5th edition of **annual Indo-Japan military exercise "Dharma Guardian"** (held in Japan and India alternatively) concluded in Rajasthan.



Measles and Rubella (MR)

- India has been bestowed with '**Measles and Rubella Champion Award**' by MR Partnership.
 - ⊕ MR Partnership comprises a multi-agency planning committee, including American Red Cross, World Health Organisation (WHO) etc.
- **Measles** is a **highly contagious virus**, spread by contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing.
- **Rubella (German Measles)** is **acute, contagious viral infection** transmitted by airborne droplets when infected people sneeze or cough.
 - ⊕ **Humans are the only known host.**
- MR are **vaccine preventable diseases**. MR Vaccine is **part of India's Universal Immunization Programme** since 2017.



Anthropocene Epoch (Human Epoch)

- International Commission on Stratigraphy rejected **proposal to declare** the start of the Anthropocene Epoch in geologic time.
- **Anthropocene Epoch** is an **unofficial unit of geologic time**.
 - ⊕ It describes the most recent period in Earth's history when **human activity started to have a significant impact** on Earth's climate and ecosystems, particularly since **industrialization**.
- **Current epoch** is called the **Holocene** which began 11,700 years ago after the last major ice age.
 - ⊕ Currently, on geological time scale, we are living in the **Phanerozoic Eon, Cenozoic Era, Quaternary Period, Holocene Epoch, and the Meghalayan Age.**



Kinmen Islands (Quemoy Islands)

- Taiwan urged China **not to change the status quo** around waters near Kinmen islands.
- Kinmen is the principal island of a **group of 12 Kinmen Islands**.
 - ⊕ It is **under the jurisdiction of Taiwan** and is located in the **Taiwan Strait at the mouth of mainland China**.
 - ⊕ The Island is **hilly**, with both tableland and rocky areas and the **climate is monsoonal subtropical**.
 - ⊕ It was the site of the battle between **Communist and Nationalist parties** when the latter withdrew from the mainland in 1949.



Personality in news



Sambhudhan Phonglo (1850-1883)

- Government paid tribute to the Janjatiya Nayak Sambhudhan Phonglo.
- **About Sambhudhan Phonglo**
 - ⊕ He was an Indian **freedom fighter** from **Longkhor in North Cachar Hills** of Assam's present-day Dima Hasao District.
- **Contribution**
 - ⊕ His concern over **British annexation of Cachar in 1832**, led him to **revolt** against the regime.
 - ⊕ He understood the Britisher's '**divide and rule**' policy and **organized the Damasi youth** to deal with it.
 - ⊕ He organized his army and **attacked the British army led by Major Boyad** and killed him.
- **Values:** Courage, leadership, altruism, etc.

