

# NEWS TODAY

## Legislators cannot claim immunity from prosecution for taking bribes for speech/ vote in the house: Supreme Court (SC)

- In **Sita Soren v. Union of India (2024)**, a seven-judge Constitutional bench of the SC overruled its 1998 judgment in the **PV Narasimha Rao case**.
- **Key highlights of Judgement:**
  - ⊕ **Bribery is not immune:** MPs/MLAs accused of taking bribes cannot claim any immunity from prosecution under **Articles 105 and 194** of the Constitution.
    - ◆ **Article 105 (2)** confers on MPs **immunity from prosecution** in respect of **anything said or any vote** given by them in Parliament or in any **parliamentary committee**.
    - ◆ Article 194(2) grants similar protection to **MLAs**.
  - ⊕ **Two-fold test:** Assertion of a privilege by an individual MP/MLA would be governed by a **twofold test**:
    - ◆ privilege claimed has to be **connected to collective functioning of the House**, and
    - ◆ **Its necessity** must bear a **functional relationship** to the discharge of **essential duties of a legislator**.
  - ⊕ **Jurisdiction of criminal court:** Criminal courts are **not excluded from hearing bribery cases** against legislators merely because it may also be treated by the House as contempt or a breach of its privilege.
  - ⊕ **Scope of parliamentary privileges:** Purpose of parliamentary privilege to provide legislators platform to “speak” and “vote” without fear is equally **applicable to**:
    - ◆ **Elections to the Rajya Sabha** and
    - ◆ **Elections for the President and Vice President**.

### PV Narasimha Rao vs State (CBI/SPE), 1998

- In the case, allegations had arisen that **legislators of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha** had accepted bribes to vote in favour of the government during a **no-confidence motion in 1993**.
- In a **3:2 majority judgment**, a five-judge SC Bench held that **legislators enjoy immunity from criminal prosecution for bribery** as per Article 105(2) and Article 194(2) of the Constitution.

## India's first National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC) inaugurated in Patna, Bihar

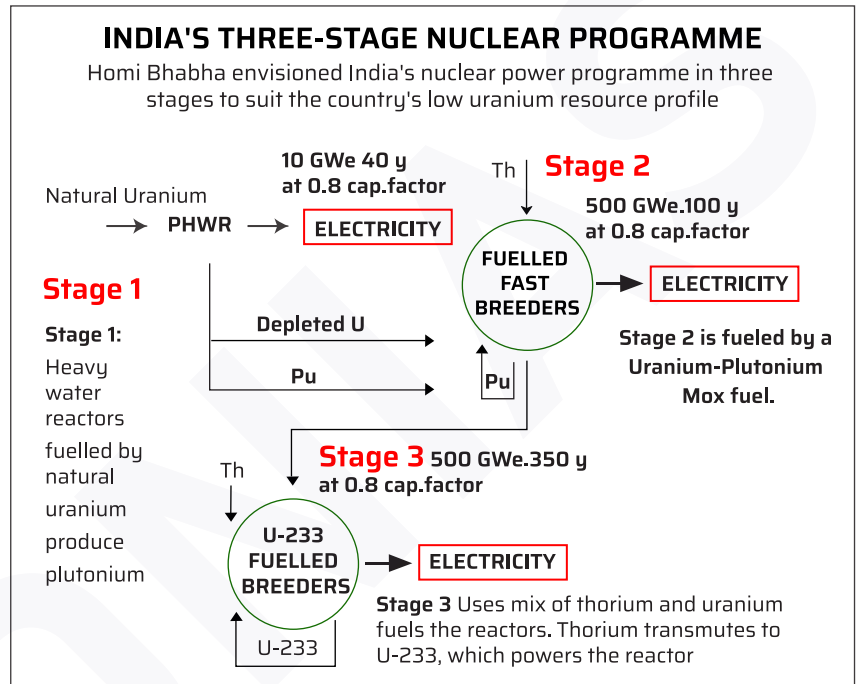
- NDRC, first of its kind in Asia, will serve as a gathering point for **scientists and researchers** dedicated to the study of Gangetic Dolphins.
  - ⊕ It would also boost conservation efforts for gangetic dolphins.
- **About Gangetic Dolphin**
  - ⊕ It is **India's National aquatic animal**.
  - ⊕ One of freshwater dolphin species in the world.
  - ⊕ **Distribution:** **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.**
  - ⊕ **Protection Status:**
    - ◆ **IUCN:** Endangered
    - ◆ **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
    - ◆ **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES):** Appendix I
  - ⊕ **Key Features:**
    - ◆ Locally known as **susu**, which refers to the noise the dolphin is said to make when it breathes
    - ◆ They are **blind and hunt** with the help of **Echolocation**
      - » Emit **ultrasonic sound**, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to “see” an image in their mind.
    - ◆ Frequently **found alone or in small groups**, and generally a mother and calf travel together.
    - ◆ **Females are larger than males** and give birth once every two to three years to only one calf.

### Initiative Taken for Conservation

- **Project Dolphin (2021)**
- **Habitat has been notified as Protected Areas, such as Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary, Bihar.**
- Declaration of **National Dolphin day (5<sup>th</sup> October)**
- **A comprehensive action plan (2022-2047)** has been developed to ensure well-being of the river dolphin and aquatic habitats.
- **Global Declaration for River Dolphins**

## Core Loading Process at India's first indigenous Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) Commenced at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu

- **Core loading is the first approach to achieving criticality**, leading to generation of power from the reactor.
  - ⊕ Core loading activity **consists of loading of reactor control sub-assemblies**, followed by the blanket sub-assemblies and the fuel sub-assemblies.
  - ⊕ **Criticality** means enough neutrons are created by fission to make up for those lost by leakage or absorption so that fission remains constant.
- Operationalization of the PFBR (500 MWe) will **mark the start of stage II of India's three-stage nuclear power programme**.
  - ⊕ It is constructed by **Bhartiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Ltd (BHAVINI)** along with others.
- **About PFBR (Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor):**
  - ⊕ Advanced **third generation nuclear reactor** designed to **produce more fissile material (Pu-239)** than it consumes.
  - ⊕ Will initially use the **Uranium-Plutonium Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel**.
  - ⊕ In it, **Uranium-238** will undergo **nuclear transmutation** to produce more fuel, thus called 'Breeder'.
    - ◆ **Transmutation** is conversion of one chemical element into another.
    - ◆ **Thorium** can be also used, as it transmutes into Uranium-233.
  - ⊕ Utilizes **liquid sodium** as a coolant.
  - ⊕ **Key Benefit:** Inherent **passive safety features** ensuring a prompt and safe shut down of the plant in emergency.
- Once commissioned, India will only be the **second country after Russia** to have commercial operating FBR



## Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution launches 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi'

- **e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi** is a **Digital Gateway initiative** of Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA).
- It aims to **facilitate farmers in obtaining post-harvest loans** from banks **against their stocks** stored in the WDRA registered warehouses.
  - ⊕ The loans are provided against **electronic negotiable warehouse receipts or e-NWRs** (refer to the box).
- **About WDRA**
  - ⊕ WDRA was established in 2010 under the **WDRA Act, 2007**.
  - ⊕ The **mission** of the Authority is to:
    - ◆ Establish a **Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (NWR) system for all commodities** through a network of registered warehouses,
    - ◆ Making the **NWR a prime tool of trade and facilitate finance against it**
    - ◆ Enable banks to **enhance lending portfolio quality and interest in lending** against goods deposited in registered warehouses.
  - ⊕ **WDRA (Negotiable Warehouse Receipts) Regulations, 2011** lays down the rules for NWRs, including terms for **standardization, issuance, surrender, etc.**
  - ⊕ **FCI, NAFED and National Horticulture Board** have issued guidelines that **Central Pool Stock should be kept in WDRA registered warehouses.**

### Warehouse Receipts

- **Warehouse Receipts** are an **acknowledgement in writing or in electronic form** issued by a Warehouseman or his authorised representative **for storage of goods not owned by the warehouseman.**
- **e-NWR** were launched in **2017 by the WDRA**



## Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme launched under iDEX framework

### Key highlights of the scheme

- ⊖ **Ministry:** Ministry of Defence
- ⊖ **Purpose:** To develop about 30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies in the proposed timeframe.
- ⊖ **Financial support:** Grant up to 50% of the product development budget with a cap of Rs. 25 Crore.
- ⊖ **Technologies covered:** Technologies which are critically required for national security and where the country does not have existing capabilities.
  - ◆ Such technologies shall have core Defence applications and may also have export potential.
- ⊖ **Eligibility**
  - ◆ **Startups**, as defined and recognized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
  - ◆ Any **Indian company** incorporated under the **Companies Act 1956/2013**, primarily an **MSME** as defined in the MSME Act, 2006.
  - ◆ **Individual innovators** (research & academic institutions can use this category to apply) registered as **Startup/MSME**.
- ⊖ **Technology Watch Tool:** It is envisaged to be developed to bridge the gap between the expectations and requirements of the modern Armed Forces and the capabilities of the defence innovation ecosystem.
- ⊖ **Tenure:** 2023-24 to 2025-26

### iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)

- iDEX is the operational framework of the Defence Innovation Organization (DIO), a Section 8 (of Companies Act 2013) company.
  - ⊖ DIO is formed jointly by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- iDEX-DIO provides the winner (start-ups/ individuals) of the Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) funding up to Rs 1.5 crores (depending upon the costing of the project and matching contribution).
  - ⊖ To motivate young innovators, iDEX was expanded to iDEX Prime, with the assistance increasing from Rs 1.5 crore to Rs 10 crore.

## Chief Justice of India (CJI) raises concern over denial of bails in District Courts

- CJI highlighted that growing reluctance on the part of trial judges to grant bail is violating **right to personal liberty** under **Article 21** of the **Indian Constitution**.
  - ⊖ This trend is also leading to increased number of appeals reaching High Courts and the Supreme Court.
- This trend is also undermining the longstanding principle that '**bail is the rule, jail is the exception**' [**State of Rajasthan V. Balchand alias Baliay (1978)**]
  - ⊖ Principle is based on belief that if it is ensured that the **accused will be available when required** for the trial stage, **detaining** the person is not compulsory.
- **About Bail**
  - ⊖ Refers to release of a person accused of or **suspected** of **commission** of an offence from the custody of law upon certain conditions imposed by an officer or Court on execution by such person of a bond or a bail bond (**Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**).
  - ⊖ It ensures **synthesis** of two basic concepts of **human values**, namely the **right of the accused person to enjoy his/her personal freedom** and the **public interest**.
- CJI also highlighted that **adjournment culture** in courts is rising.
  - ⊖ It is prolonging the agony of **litigants** and **perpetuating** the cycle of backlog.

### Major Types of Bail under BNSS

- **Bail in Bailable Offences:** Accused is given bail on certain condition (**Section 478**).
- **Section 479** deals with maximum period for which undertrial prisoner can be detained.
  - ⊖ A person undergone detention for a period extending up to **one-half of the maximum period** of imprisonment specified for that offence shall be released by the Court on bail.
  - ⊖ **First-time offender** if undergone detention for the period up to one-third of the maximum period of imprisonment can be given bail
- **Bail in non Bailable Offence:** Accused person may be released on bail on certain grounds, can submit surety or bail bond (**Section 480**).
- If one believes that he/she may be arrested on an accusation of having committed a non-bailable offence, can apply for bail (**Section 482**).

## Also in News



### Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF)

- 7<sup>th</sup> GECF summit concluded with the adoption of **Algiers declaration**.
  - ⊖ The declaration aims to "**promote natural gas as an affordable, reliable energy source**, and harness **sustainable natural gas technologies**"
- **About GECF:**
  - ⊖ Headquartered in Doha, (Qatar), GECF is an **intergovernmental organisation, consisting of the world's leading gas exporting countries**.
  - ⊖ **Members:** Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad, UAE, Venezuela.
    - ◆ **India is neither a member nor an Observer.**
  - ⊖ It seeks to build a **mechanism for a meaningful dialogue between gas producers and consumers** to improve the stability of gas markets around the world.



### Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

- Election Commission of India notified a '**scheme for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** of Manipur to cast **vote at relief camps**' in upcoming elections.
  - ⊖ It will facilitate voting facilities to the people who were displaced from their native places.
- **About IDPs:**
  - ⊖ **IDPs** are those forced to leave their homes due to armed conflict, violence, human rights violations, or disasters, without crossing international borders (**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**)
  - ⊖ **Key challenges faced by IDPs:**
    - ◆ **Higher rates of mortality** compared to the general population
    - ◆ **Increased risk of physical attack**, sexual assault, etc.
    - ◆ **Deprivation of adequate shelter**, etc.





### Article 32 of the Indian Constitution

- Supreme Court (SC) said that **Article 32 cannot be a remedy** after a person has **abused fundamental rights under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 25**.
  - ⊕ Article 19(1)(a) grants **right to freedom of speech and expression**.
  - ⊕ Article 25 grants freedom of **conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion**.
- Article 32 of the Constitution gives an **extensive original jurisdiction to SC** in regard to enforcement of Fundamental Rights.
  - ⊕ SC is empowered to issue **directions, orders or writs**, including writs in the nature of **habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari** to enforce them.



### Surge in indigenous coal production

- Coal production in India has grown from **382.62 million tonnes (MT) in 2004-05** to **893.19 MT in 2022-23** and is all set to touch **1000 MT in the year 2023-24**.
- **Coal India Limited (CIL)** contributes to over **80% of the country's indigenous coal production and supply**.
- Under the current system, **public sector coal companies**, including CIL, **supply coal to the power sector at notified prices**.



### Kulasekarapattinam spaceport (KS)

- Recently, **PM** laid the foundation stone of **Kulasekarapattinam spaceport** in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu.
- **About Kulasekarapattinam spaceport**
  - ⊕ It will be used to launch **SSLVs (Small Satellite Launch Vehicles)**.
  - ⊕ It has several advantages in comparison to **Sriharikota facility** in Andhra Pradesh, such as
    - ◆ Located more **close to the equator and will save fuel**
    - ◆ Rockets can now head straight in the southern direction.
      - » From Sriharikota facility, the rocket first heads east, and then turns south to avoid the airspace of Sri Lanka.
    - ◆ Nearby **ISRO's Propulsion Research Complex location** makes it easier to transport the rocket components safely, and in a shorter period.



### Dry Ice

- Diners at Gurgaon eatery hospitalised after mistakenly being served dry ice.
- **About Dry Ice**
  - ⊕ It is common name for **solid carbon dioxide (CO2)**.
  - ⊕ It gets this name because it does **not melt into a liquid when heated**; instead, it changes **directly into a gas** (a process known as sublimation).
  - ⊕ It is manufactured by **compressing** and cooling gaseous CO2.
  - ⊕ It is considered lethal for human health.
  - ⊕ **Applications:** Hospitals & Clinics, Food Processing & Distribution, Industrial Cleaning and Technical Processes and Theatrical and Special Effects.



### Project Seabird

- **Infrastructure facilities of Project Seabird Phase IIA** will soon be inaugurated.
- **Project Seabird** was initiated by the **Indian Navy in 1986** to undertake **planning for establishment of 3rd major naval base at Karwar (Karnataka)**.
  - ⊕ **Phase I** of Project, designed to **accommodate 10 ships**, concluded in 2011.
  - ⊕ **Phase IIA** of project focus on constructing **infrastructures that comply with guidelines of Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) and MoEFCC**.
    - ◆ IGBC is part of **Confederation of Indian Industry** and works to facilitate **India become a global leader in the sustainable built environment by 2025**.



### Green Hydrogen Plant

- Union Minister of Steel inaugurated **India's 1st Green Hydrogen Plant in Stainless Steel Sector**.
  - ⊕ It will pave the way for sustainable steel production.
- **About the plant**
  - ⊕ It will be the **world's first off-grid Green Hydrogen plant for the stainless steel industry**
  - ⊕ Also the **world's first Green Hydrogen plant with rooftop & floating solar**.
  - ⊕ This project is also a **state-of-the-art green hydrogen facility**.
  - ⊕ **Target:** To reduce carbon emissions considerably by around **2,700 Metric Tonnes per annum**.
- It is aligned with **India's National Green Hydrogen Mission**.

## Places in News



### Mexico (Capital: Mexico city)

- As per reports, the Mexico City is running toward **Day Zero scenario**.
  - ⊕ In Day Zero scenario, water is only available for vital services.
- **Political features:**
  - ⊕ Located in **southern North America**
  - ⊕ **Shares border** with United States, Belize, and Guatemala
  - ⊕ **Surrounded by water bodies:** the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific Ocean
- **Geographical features:**
  - ⊕ It is a part of the **circum-Pacific Ring of Fire**, a region of active volcanism and frequent seismic activity.
  - ⊕ **Highest Peak:** Volcán Pico de Orizaba
  - ⊕ **Major Rivers:** Rio Grande river and Colorado river
  - ⊕ **Desert:** Sonoran Desert

