

India's First City-Specific Zero Carbon Buildings Action Plan (ZCBAP) launched in Nagpur

- Nagpur's ZCBAP aims at developing **all buildings to be net zero carbon by 2050**.
 - ⊕ Zero carbon buildings are buildings that **improve their lifecycle environmental performance** through measures that **reduce embodied, operational and end-of-life GHG emissions** without compromising visual and thermal comforts.
- ZCBAP in Nagpur has been developed jointly with implementing partners of **Zero Carbon Building Accelerator (ZCBA)** project.
 - ⊕ ZCBA project was launched by **World Resources Institute (WRI)** in 2021 along with its global partners.
 - ⊕ Nagpur is **one of six global cities** (other in Kenya, Costa Rica, Turkey, and Colombia) where ZCBA project is being implemented.
- **Need for ZCBAP:**
 - ⊕ India's **building related Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions have more than doubled** from 2000 to 2017.
 - ⊕ Over next 20-30 years, GHG emissions from India's **steel and cement industry** are estimated to increase by nearly three and six times respectively.
 - ⊕ **Brick kilns** are another major source of carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, NOx, and other particulate emissions.
- Nagpur's ZCBAP builds upon **national policy frameworks and initiatives supporting building decarbonization**, which include:
 - ⊕ India's **Nationally Determined Contributions**
 - ⊕ India's **Long-Term Low-Carbon Development Strategy**
 - ⊕ **Energy Conservation Building Code, 2017**
 - ⊕ **Green Building Rating Systems** such as Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) and
 - ⊕ **Eco-Niwas Samhita 2018**



A sitting judge of the Calcutta High Court (HC) resigns and announces his decision to join politics

- Experts believe that such moves not only undermine the credibility of the Judiciary but also go against **constitutional morality, as it breaches Article 50 of the Constitution**.
 - ⊕ The Article provides that State shall take steps to **separate the judiciary from the executive** in the public services of the State.
 - ⊕ Also, there is a possibility of Post-retirement jobs influencing pre-retirement judgments.
- **Earlier Instances of judges taking up politics:**
 - ⊕ A **former Chief Justice of India (CJI)** contested for the presidency of India in **1967**.
 - ⊕ A Supreme Court (SC) judge **contested the 1983 Lok Sabha polls** from **Barpeta in Assam**.
 - ⊕ In **1952**, a SC Judge was **appointed as the Governor of Orissa**.
- In this regard, the **Constitution is silent on post retirement rehabilitation of judges** by the executive. However, the SC adopted the **"Restatement of values of Judicial Life"** in **1997**. Some of the values are:
 - ⊕ **Any act of a Judge** which **erodes the credibility** of the judiciary has **to be avoided**.
 - ⊕ A **Judge should not contest the election** to any office of a **Club, society or other association**.
- The **14th Law Commission Report (1958)** recommended that judges should be barred from accepting employment with the Union or the state, as a post-retirement job.



Maldives signs China military pact in further shift away from India

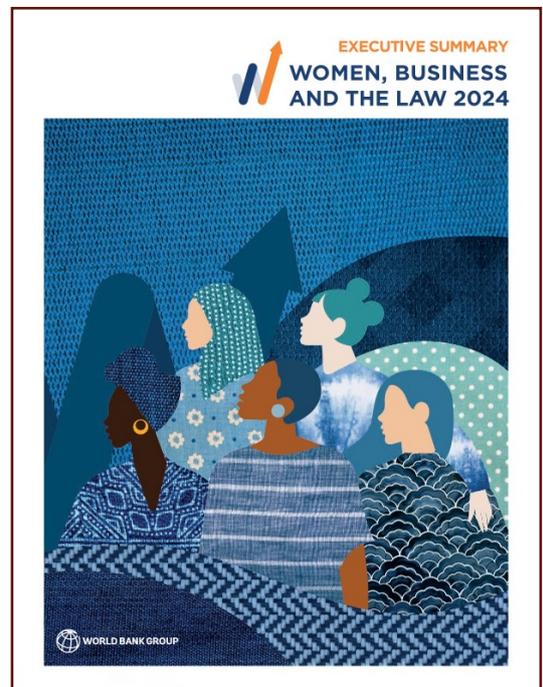
- The decision coincides with its president's announcement that "there will be no Indian military presence in the country."
- **Growing Presence of China in Maldives**
 - ⊕ China has **increasingly expanded its footprints in Maldives.**
 - ◆ A Chinese firm acquired an islet named **Feydhoo Finolhu** on a 50-year lease.
 - ◆ **Investment in large-scale infrastructure projects.** E.g. \$200 million **China-Maldives Friendship Bridge.**
 - ◆ The Chinese research vessel **Xiang Yang Hong 03** is permitted to dock at Male port.
- **Concerns for India**
 - ⊕ **India's Security:** Chinese presence in Maldives could affect Indian security, given the island chain's proximity to India's western coast.
 - ⊕ **Regional Balance of Power:** China's increasing presence in the area could alter the regional balance of power and challenge India's influence.
 - ◆ China has set up a military base in **Djibouti** and has developed several dual-use ports in **Sri Lanka, Myanmar, etc.**
 - ⊕ **Strategic Competition:** The Indian Ocean is strategically significant, for both India and China. China's growing influence can further the strategic competition.
 - ⊕ **China's String of Pearls:** This strategy involves establishing a network of naval bases and infrastructure in the **Indian Ocean, encircling India.**

Steps taken by India to counter Chinese Influence

- **Strategic Partnerships:** With like-minded countries, including the **United States, Japan, Australia,** and other regional partners.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- **Diplomatic Outreach:** To voice concerns about China's expanding influence.

The World Bank releases Women, Business and the Law 2024 Report

- The Report measures the laws that affect women's economic opportunity in **190 economies.**
 - ⊕ Report assesses economies across **10 indicators: Safety, Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Childcare, Entrepreneurship, Assets and Pension.**
- **Key findings of the report:**
 - ⊕ It measures the **gap between women's legal rights on paper and reality.**
 - ◆ Globally, women have just **two-thirds of the rights of men** in the workplace.
 - ◆ **Indian women** have just **60% of the legal rights** compared to men.
 - ⊕ Women earn just **77 cents for every dollar** paid to men.
 - ◆ Less than **20% economies adopted enforcement mechanisms to address the pay gap.**
 - ⊕ Nearly all economies performed poorly in **Safety and Childcare.**
 - ◆ Women have **a third of the legal protection they need** from domestic violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, and femicide.
 - ◆ Women spend **nearly 2.4 hours more a day on unpaid care work** than men, much of it involving childcare.
- **Recommendations:**
 - ⊕ **Expand maternity and paternity leave provisions.**
 - ⊕ **Enact legal mandate for equal pay,** and lift restrictions on **women's work in industrial jobs.**
 - ⊕ Implement legally binding **quotas for women on corporate boards.**
 - ⊕ Ensure **equal retirement benefits** for women, accounting for childcare related work absences.



India's initiatives for gender equality in workplace

- **The Code on Wages, 2019:** It prohibits gender discrimination in matters related to wages and recruitment of employees for the same work or work of similar nature.
- **Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017:** It provides for maternity benefits and creche facility in every establishment having fifty or more employees.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act).**

France becomes the only country to explicitly guarantee abortion as a constitutional right

- This comes after the controversial decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to strip women of the right to abortion.
- **Arguments in favor of Abortion**
 - ⊕ **Abortion rights** are essential to uphold a **woman's autonomy** and **bodily integrity**.
 - ⊕ Denying abortion jeopardizes women's **health, freedom, and equality**.
- **Arguments Against Abortion**
 - ⊕ Terminating a pregnancy is equivalent to **taking a human life**.
 - ⊕ **Psychological and emotional impact** on women who undergo the **procedure**.
- In India, the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act 1971** permits licensed **medical professionals** to perform abortions in specific predetermined situations.
 - ⊕ As per the **2021 Amendment** in the MTP Act,
 - ◆ The opinion of only **one** doctor will be required up to **20 weeks** of gestation.
 - ◆ Authorization of **two** doctors is required, for gestation period from **20 to 24 weeks** for special categories of women like
 - » Survivors of rape, victims of incest, etc.
 - ⊕ **Supreme Court Judgment (X vs. Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, Govt. of NCT of Delhi)**
 - ◆ SC held that **unmarried women** have the **same right** to abortion as married women.
 - ◆ SC also ruled that under the MTP Act, rape would include **marital rape** as well.

Establishment of end-to-end quantum communication link involving both Fiber and Free space as transport medium

- In a first for India, C-DOT and PRL demonstrated **integration** of C-DOT's indigenous **Fibre-based Quantum Key Distribution (QKD)** system with PRL's **Free Space QKD**.
 - ⊕ Centre for Development of Telematics (**C-DOT**) is telecom **Research and Development** arm of Department of Telecommunications.
 - ⊕ Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) is a **research institute** under Department of Space.
- QKD is a **technique of quantum communications** which enables future-proof security of communication **networks** using a **cryptographic protocol** involving components of quantum mechanics.
 - ⊕ It enables two parties to produce a **shared random secret key** known only to them, which can be used to **encrypt and decrypt messages**.
 - ⊕ Any **intervention or tampering** in quantum channel **gets detected** and key distribution can be aborted.
 - ⊕ QKD can be deployed through **different mediums viz. optical fibre, free space** as well as **satellite** to establish secure communication network.
- **Quantum communications** is one of the **four verticals of Quantum Technology** along with Quantum Computing, Quantum Sensors and Quantum Materials.
 - ⊕ Quantum technology is based on principles of **Quantum mechanics** such as superimposition, entanglement, tunnelling etc.
 - ⊕ Its **applications** are in secure communication, computing, simulation, chemistry, healthcare, cryptography, imaging among others.

Initiative taken for quantum technology in India

- National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications (NM-QTA)
- Quantum-Enabled Science and Technology (QuEST)
- Quantum Frontier mission of Prime Minister Science, Technology & Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC)
- National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)

Also in News



Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954

- Supreme court **restrained Patanjali Ayurved** from advertising or **branding** its products meant to address the diseases/disorders specified in **Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act (DMRA) 1954**.
- **About Act**
 - ⊕ It aims to **control advertisement of drugs** in certain cases and to **prohibit advertisement** for remedies alleged to possess **magic qualities**.
 - ◆ Under it, "**magic remedy**" includes a talisman, mantra, kavacha, and other charm alleged to possess miraculous powers for healing or influencing bodily functions.
 - ⊕ **Penalty:** For first conviction, imprisonment **upto 6 months**, and/or fine; and imprisonment upto **one year** for subsequent conviction.



PARAKH

- **PARAKH** has devised the **Holistic Progress Card (HPC)** for
 - ⊕ Foundational stage (Classes 1 and 2), preparatory stage (Classes 3 to 5) and middle stage (Classes 6 to 8).
 - ⊕ Currently working on developing one for the **secondary stage**.
- **About**
 - ⊕ **PARAKH** (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) is the National Assessment Centre.
 - ⊕ It was set up in **NCERT** as an **independent** constituent unit in **2023**.
 - ⊕ **Objective:** setting norms, standards, guidelines and implementing activities related to **student assessment**.
 - ◆ Along with other tasks as mandated by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.



Interoperable net banking payments

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has given approval for implementing an **interoperable payment system for internet banking transactions**, as envisaged in RBI's **Payments Vision 2025**.
 - ⊕ It will be implemented by **NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd (NBBL)**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
 - ⊕ It will **facilitate quicker settlement** of funds for merchants.
- At present, online merchant payment transactions **through internet banking are processed through Payment Aggregators (PAs), which are not interoperable**.
 - ⊕ So, a **bank is required to separately integrate with each PA** of different online merchants.



Star Dunes

- Scientists unveiled the **first in-depth study of Earth's magnificent desert star dunes** revealing the internal structure.
 - ⊕ The study focused on a star dune in Erg Chebbi (eastern Morocco) called **Lala Lallia**, meaning **"highest sacred point"**.
- **About Star Dunes**
 - ⊕ Formed in **areas with complex wind regimes**, which means winds blowing from different directions.
 - ⊕ They **make up just under 10% of the dunes** in Earth's deserts and are the tallest ones.
 - ⊕ **Earth's largest star dunes** are found in the **Badain Jaran desert (China)**.
 - ⊕ They also have been **spotted on Mars and Saturn's moon Titan**.



Great Lakes

- North America's Great Lakes have recorded **significantly below-average ice cover** for the second consecutive year in a row.
- **Great Lakes**
 - ⊕ Great Lakes – **Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario** – form the **largest fresh surface water system** on Earth.
 - ⊕ **Except for Lake Michigan**, the lakes provide a natural border between **Canada and United States**.
 - ⊕ Water in the Great Lakes flows from **Lake Superior**, via Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, into **Lake Ontario**, and into the **Atlantic Ocean** through the **Saint Lawrence River**.



Supreme Court (SC) Approves Rajasthan Government's Two-Child Rule

- It upheld **Rule 24 (4) of the Rajasthan Police Subordinate Service Rules, 1989**, as non-discriminatory and constitutional.
 - ⊕ It stipulates a **maximum limit of two children per candidate**.
- A similar provision was upheld by the SC in its 2003 ruling in **Javed vs. State of Haryana**.
 - ⊕ It was introduced as an eligibility condition to contest panchayat elections.
- **"Population control and family planning"** is a subject on the **concurrent list**.
- Both states have made multiple attempts to push the population towards the two-child policy.



UDGAM (Unclaimed Deposits – Gateway to Access inforMation)

- According to RBI, **30 banks have become part of RBI's UDGAM portal**.
 - ⊕ It facilitates the **registered users** to search **unclaimed deposits/accounts across multiple banks** in one place in a centralised manner.
 - ⊕ Balances in **savings/current accounts which are not operated for 10 years, or term deposits not claimed within 10 years from date of maturity** are classified as "Unclaimed Deposits".
 - ◆ These amounts are transferred by banks to **Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund** maintained by RBI.



UNCOVER Program

- Researchers, as part of the **James Web Space Telescope (JWST) UNCOVER program**, finds a clue about the end of 'dark ages' in early universe.
 - ⊕ Dark ages refer to a period when **sources of light were cloaked in a dense fog of neutral hydrogen gas**.
 - ⊕ It was followed by **'epoch of reionization'** that arose because of arrival of first stars and galaxies.
- **UNCOVER (Ultra-deep NIRCam and NIRSpec Observations Before the Epoch of Reionization)** aims at addressing two core JWST science goals:
 - ◆ Identifying **first-light galaxies** during the Dark Ages,
 - ◆ Studying the **ultra-low luminosity galaxies** that were responsible for reionization.

Places in News



France (Capital: Paris)

- The second India-France Strategic Space Dialogue, underscored the growing importance of space cooperation in bilateral relations.
- **Political features:**
 - ⊕ **France lies near the western end of the great Eurasian landmass.**
 - ⊕ **Bordering Nations:** Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Andorra, England.
 - ⊕ **Monaco is an independent enclave on the south coast** and the **island of Corsica in the Mediterranean** is an integral part of the country.
 - ⊕ **Bordering Water Bodies:** the Mediterranean, the Bay of Biscay, English Channel, Strait of Dover.
- **Geographical Features:**
 - ⊕ **Major mountain ranges:** The French Alps; The Jura Mountains, The Pyrenees,
 - ⊕ **Highest Point:** The Mont Blanc
 - ⊕ **Major Rivers:** The Seine and the Loire, The Rhône and The Rhine.

