

'Help to Die': The French President backs bill allowing medically assisted death

- It could make France the next European country to **legalise euthanasia for the terminally ill patients** by allowing them to "choose the path of least resistance when death has already arrived."
- **Euthanasia**, also called mercy killing, is the **practice of ending the life of a patient to limit their suffering**. Instead of condemning someone to a slow, painful, or undignified death, it allows one to 'die with dignity'.
- **2 Types of Euthanasia**
 - ⊖ **Active**: Involves an active intervention to end a person's life with substances or external force, such as administering lethal injection.
 - ◆ Allowed in **Belgium, Canada**, etc.
 - ⊖ **Passive**: Refers to withdrawal of life support or treatment, such as ventilator, that is essential to keep a terminally ill person alive.
 - ◆ Allowed in **Austria, Finland, Norway**, etc.
- **Ethical conundrum with Euthanasia**
 - ⊖ **Arguments for**: **Personal liberty to execute** a living will to refuse treatment, right of a **dignified life** by preventing needless suffering, etc.
 - ⊖ **Arguments against**: **Devalues human life** as taking life is inherently wrong and immoral, **against medical ethics** of nursing, care giving and healing, etc.

Legal status of Euthanasia in India

- Currently, there is **no law on Euthanasia**.
- **Only passive Euthanasia is allowed in India by the Supreme Court (SC)**.
- **Important Judicial pronouncements**:
 - ⊖ **Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug vs Uoi (2011)**: SC held passive euthanasia for the first time.
 - ⊖ **Common Cause vs Uoi (2018)**: SC held that a person in persistent vegetative state can opt for passive euthanasia.
 - ◆ **SC also held that Right to Die with dignity is a fundamental right under Article 21**.

Study titled 'Of the Women, By the Women, For the NATION' released by SBI

- Study aims to capture the **changing landscape of SHGs** through analysis of **credit utilization and digital behavior matrices of SHGs/ SHG members/ Lakhpati Didis**.
 - ⊖ A **Lakhpati Didi** is a SHG member who earns an annual household income of ₹ 1 Lakh or more.
- SHGs are **voluntary organization of people operating within a framework of rules and regulations for common economic and social objectives** with an approach of **participatory decision-making and sharing of benefits in an equitable manner**.
- **Key highlights of the report**
 - ⊖ Incomes of female members of SHGs have **more than tripled** in the last five years.
 - ⊖ **~97.5% of the SHGs have bank accounts**.
 - ⊖ **~65% of rural SHG members have moved upwards in terms of relative income in FY24** as compared to FY19.
 - ⊖ With rise in income of female SHG members, **rural Female Labour Force Participation Rate (all ages) is also rising with the correlation of 0.91**.
- **SHG Bank Linkage Programme (SHG - BLP)**
 - ⊖ **Started as a pilot by NABARD in 1992-93** to link around 500 SHGs to the formal financial institutions.
 - ⊖ It has now become the **largest microfinance programme for delivering financial services to poor** in a sustainable manner.



Other initiatives for empowerment of SHGs

- **Micro Enterprise Development Programme**: For need-based skill development for matured SHGs.
- **Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programmes**: Envisages conduct of livelihood promotion programmes in clusters.
- **Scheme for promotion of Women SHGs (WSHGs) in backward & LWE districts of India**
- **National Rural Livelihood Mission**: Provides interest subvention to eligible SHGs.

Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers inaugurated a Credit Assistance Program for Jan Aushadhi Kendras

- **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI)** exchanged an MoU for providing **credit of working capital** to existing and proposed Jan Aushadhi Kendras (JAKs).
 - ⊕ Program proposes to use **GST-Sahay platform** and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) while providing **unsecure working capital loan for small businesses**.
 - ⊕ It also adds a **'credit layer'** in DPI, apart from identity and payment layer.
- There are around **11,000 JAKs operating in India**, which the government aims to **expand to 25,000** in next 2 years.
 - ⊕ JAKs are outlets under the **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)** which provide **generic medicines at affordable prices**.
 - ⊕ JAKs are run by **private entrepreneurs** and with the government support (financial assistance), provide around 2000 types of **medicines** and 300 types of **surgical devices**.
- PMBJP is a campaign launched by **Department of Pharmaceuticals in 2008** with an objective of **making quality generic medicines available** at affordable prices to all.
 - ⊕ It is **implemented by PMBI**, a society registered under the Department of Pharmaceuticals.
 - ⊕ Under it, medicines are procured only from **WHO-Good Manufacturing Practices (WHO-GMP) certified suppliers** for ensuring quality.

Significance of JAKs:

- **Reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure:** Saving of more than Rs. 28,000 crores over the last 10 years period while buying medicines from JAKs.
- **Improved Availability** of generic drugs at affordable prices.
- **Encourage doctors**, specifically in government hospitals to prescribe generic medicines.
- **Self-employment:** Provided small entrepreneurs with financial autonomy.

Ministry of Power released 12th Annual Integrated Rating and Ranking of Power Distribution Utilities (DISCOMs)

- **Integrated Rating exercise** (launched in 2012) is being carried out on an **annual basis**, with the aim of evaluating performance of DISCOMs.
 - ⊕ It is conducted with the **Power Finance Corporation as the nodal agency** and rates the performance of **55 DISCOMs**.
- **Key Highlights:**
 - ⊕ **AT&C losses improved** to 15.4% in FY23, reaching closer to national goal of 12-15%.
 - ⊕ **Billing Efficiency improved** to 87% and **Collection Efficiency remained high** at 97.3%.
 - ⊕ **Average power purchase cost increased by 71 paise/kWh** during FY23, driven by growth in power demand, more expensive coal imports and higher exchange prices.
 - ⊕ Subsidy disbursements by state governments crossed 100% with a few states **supporting financial losses of discoms through subsidy grants**.
- **Legacy issues with DISCOMs:**
 - ⊕ **Sectoral debt has been steadily increasing**, mainly for CAPEX, financial losses, and working capital.
 - ⊕ Discoms grapples with **high quantum of trade payables** to generation companies and transmission companies owing to stressed finances.
 - ⊕ Some **states still have to clear substantial subsidy arrears**, accumulated over a long period.
 - ⊕ **High AT&C loss:** due to discrepancy in meter, theft, collection inefficiency.

Initiatives taken

- **Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY):** provides for the **financial turnaround** and revival of DISCOMs.
- The **Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)** with a focus on smart metering, loss reduction works, and capacity building
- **National Smart Grid Mission** for smart grid deployment.
- **Additional lending of 0.50% of GSDP** for states on implementation of power sector reforms.

Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers issued Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP) 2024

- Previously, UCPMP for Pharma industry was issued in 2014, which was voluntary in nature.
- **Key highlights of the UCPMP 2024**
 - ⊕ **Information about drugs** must be balanced, up-to-date, verifiable, must not mislead either directly or by implication.
 - ⊕ **Claims and comparison:** Brand names of products of other companies must not be used without prior consent.
 - ◆ Comparisons of drugs must be **factual, fair, and capable of substantiation**.
 - ⊕ **Textual and Audio-Visual Promotion:** Promotional material such as mailings and journal advertisements must not be designed to disguise their real nature.
 - ⊕ **Continuing Medical Education:** Should only be allowed through a **well-defined, transparent, and verifiable set of guidelines**.
 - ⊕ **Relationship with healthcare professionals:** No gifts, monetary grants, pecuniary advantage, etc., should be offered.
 - ⊕ **Ethics Committee for Pharma Marketing Practices:** In each association for handling complaints.
 - ⊕ **Other provisions:** **Department of Pharmaceuticals may issue standing orders** for removal of difficulties in operation of UCPMP.
 - ◆ It shall also **apply mutatis mutandis to medical devices** unless exempted, or to the extent modified by standing orders.

Need of UCPMP

- **Patient Safety:** Unethical marketing that downplays risks or misrepresents benefits can adversely affect patient safety.
- **Responsible innovation:** To ensure resources are directed towards medications that address genuine medical needs.
- **Professional integrity:** To uphold integrity of healthcare professionals by ensuring that prescriptions are based on unbiased and accurate information.

Committee on Digital Competition Law (CDCL) submitted its report along with the Draft Bill on Digital Competition Law

- Ministry of Corporate Affairs had constituted CDCL on the recommendations of report of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance on the subject 'Anti-Competitive Practices by Big Tech Companies'.
- CDCL report lists 9 Anti-Competitive Practices (ACPs) by Big Tech Companies:
 - ⊕ **Anti-Steering Provisions:** Exclusionary behaviour hindering users from switching to third party service providers.
 - ⊕ **Platform neutrality:** According favourable treatment to own products/platform.
 - ⊕ **Adjacency/ Bundling and Tying:** Forcing consumers to buy related services.
 - ⊕ **Data Usage:** Using personal data for consumer profiling.
 - ⊕ Other ACPs include **Pricing/ Deep Discounting, Exclusive tie-ups, Restricting third-party applications, Advertising policies, Search and ranking preferencing.**
- CDCL's Recommendations:
 - ⊕ **Introduction of a Digital Competition Act with ex-ante (before the event) measures** to ensure that Competition Commission of India intervenes before instances of ACPs.
 - ⊕ **Regulation of "Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises" (SSDEs)**, which have ability to influence Indian digital market.
 - ⊕ **Thresholds and criteria for designation as SSDEs:**
 - ◆ **Significant financial strength** comprising turnover, market capitalization, etc.
 - ◆ **Significant spread** of enterprise in Core Digital Services.
 - ⊕ **Monetary penalty for non-compliance** with ex-ante obligations restricted to maximum 10% of global turnover of SSDE.

Present Regulatory Landscape



The Competition Act, 2002



Information Technology Rules, 2021



Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023



Consumer Protection Act, 2019

Also in News



Astronomical Grand Cycles

- According to a study, **gravitational interaction between Earth and Mars** results in **cyclic changes in deep ocean currents** that recur **every 2.4 million years**.
 - ⊕ This 2.4-million-year pattern has been identified as **Astronomical Grand Cycle (AGC)**.
- **Mechanism behind AGC:**
 - ⊕ **Gravity fields of the planets in solar system** interfere with each other and this interaction, called a **resonance**, influences Earth's path around the Sun.
 - ⊕ Such interaction between **Earth and Mars** is associated with **AGC** while Earth's interactions with **Jupiter and Saturn** are associated with **Milankovitch cycles** (which coincide with rise and fall of ice ages).



Samudrayaan

- Minister for Earth Sciences (MoES) announced that **Samudrayaan mission is set to explore ocean bed by 2025-end**.
- **Samudrayaan Mission**
 - ⊕ **Aim:** To develop a **self-propelled manned submersible** to carry 3 human beings to a **water depth of 6000 meters** in the ocean with scientific sensors and tools for deep ocean exploration.
 - ⊕ It is part of **Deep Ocean Mission** of MoES.
 - ⊕ For this, National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) Chennai has developed **Matsya 6000**.
 - ◆ It has **endurance of 12 hours** of operational period and **96 hours** for emergency.



Bharat Shakti

- **Tri-Services Firing and Manoeuvre Exercise – Bharat Shakti** – was demonstrated in Pokharan, Rajasthan.
- **About Bharat Shakti**
 - ⊕ It will simulate **realistic, synergised, multi-domain operations** displaying **integrated operational capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces** to counter threats across **land, air, sea, cyber, and space domains**.
 - ⊕ Key Equipment and Weapons Systems participating in the exercise include **T-90 (IM) Tanks, Dhanush and Sarang Gun Systems, Akash Weapons System, etc.**
 - ⊕ It highlights the **resilience, innovation, and strength of India's domestic defence capabilities** on the global stage.



Kochrab Ashram

- Prime Minister visited **Sabarmati Ashram** and inaugurated redeveloped **Kochrab Ashram on 12th March**.
 - ⊕ On 12th March 1930, Gandhiji started **Salt Satyagraha March or Dandi March** from Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal town of Dandi.
 - ⊕ At Dandi, Gandhiji broke the British government's salt law by gathering natural salt on the sea shore.
- **Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad** was the first Ashram established by **Mahatma Gandhi after coming to India from South Africa in 1915**.
 - ⊕ **Jivanlal Desai**, a fellow lawyer, helped Gandhiji setup the Ashram.



Calling Name Presentation (CNAP)

- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recommended **introduction of CNAP supplementary service** in Indian Telecommunication network.
- **About CNAP**
 - ⊖ CNAP is a supplementary service that **enables the called party to receive calling name information of the calling party.**
 - ◆ **Calling name (CNAM)** of each telephone subscriber should be provided by the originating access service providers.
 - ⊖ It aims to address **incessant spam and Unsolicited Commercial Communication (UCC).**
 - ◆ UCC means any commercial communication that is neither as per the consent nor as per registered preference(s) of recipient.



Global Seed Vault (GSV)

- Recently, gene banks from multiple countries have deposited seeds to the GSV stockpile.
- **About GSV**
 - ⊖ It is part of **international system for conserving plant genetic diversity** guided by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).**
 - ⊖ **Functions as safety depository for orthodox seeds**, primarily of domesticated plants and their wild relatives **which are important to food and agriculture.**
 - ⊖ **Located in Svalbard (a Norwegian archipelago) half way between the Northern pole and mainland Norway.**
 - ⊖ **Seeds are placed in the chambers inside frozen mountain and artificial cooling plants at a constant temperature of - 18°C.**



Atmospheric Research Testbed in Central India (ART-CI)

- Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) inaugurated the **first phase of ART-CI** in Madhya Pradesh.
- **About ART-CI**
 - ⊖ **Aim:** Advancing weather research for **better understanding on processes governing monsoon convection** and land-atmosphere interactions over core monsoon zone.
 - ⊖ It is a **first of its kind testbed facility** spearheaded by the Pune-based **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).**
 - ⊖ It has been established under **Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS) umbrella scheme** of MoES.
 - ⊖ ART-CI will have **remote-sensing and in-situ instruments** providing continuous observations of **convection, clouds, precipitation, soil moisture, radiation etc.**



Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary

- Assam Cabinet has decided to de-notify prime rhino habitat PWS.
- **About PWS**
 - ⊖ **Location:** Suburbs of Guwahati, Assam.
 - ⊖ **River:** on the southern bank of Brahmaputra River.
 - ⊖ Consists of **Rajamayong Reserve Forest and Pobitora Reserve Forest.**
 - ⊖ **Highest density of Greater One Horned Rhinoceros** in the world.
 - ◆ **Eight Rhinos were translocated** from PWS into Manas National Park as part of **Indian Rhinoceros Vision, 2020 (IRV).**
 - ⊖ **Other Species:** Wild Water Buffalo, Wild Boar, Leopard, Capped Langur, Porcupine, Pangolin, etc.
 - ⊖ **Important Bird Area as per Birdlife International.**

Places in News



Cyprus (Capital: Nicosia)

- A Ship carrying 200 tonnes of aid for Gaza departed from Cyprus.
- **Political Features:**
 - ⊖ An **island country in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.**
 - ⊖ **Maritime neighbours:** Turkey (North), Syria (East), and Lebanon (Southeast).
 - ⊖ It is **third largest island in Mediterranean Sea** after Sicily and Sardinia.
 - ⊖ It is a member of the **European Union.**
- **Geographical Features:**
 - ⊖ **Mountain Range:** Kyrenia and Troodos Mountains.
 - ⊖ **Major Rivers:** Pedieos, Serakhis, Kouris, etc.
 - ⊖ **Climate:** Mediterranean climate
 - ⊖ **Highest Point:** Mount Olympus.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI