20th Maritime State Development Council (MSDC) in Goa Concluded

MSDC meeting addressed emerging challenges in maritime sector like **establishing Places of Refuge for distressed ships** and **developing radioactive detection equipment at ports** to improve security.

- MSDC also **enhance conditions for seafarers, advocating for their recognition as essential workers** to facilitate better working conditions.

Key initiatives launched at 20th MSDC

- **Indian Maritime Centre, policy think tank:** To unite siloed maritime stakeholders, promoting innovation, knowledge sharing, and strategic planning to drive development in India's maritime sector.
- **Indian International Maritime Dispute Resolution Centre:** To establish **India as global arbitration hub for maritime disputes,** aligning with "Resolve in India" initiative.
  - It offers merit-based, industry-governed solutions to address multi-modal, multi-contract, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-national nature of maritime transactions.
- **National Safety in Ports Committee application** on National Single Window System platform: To **improve ease of doing business in maritime sector,** streamline regulatory processes and enhance operational efficiency.
- **Showcased innovative state-led initiatives:** E.g. Kerala's monetization techniques for dredging, Gujarat's port-driven urban development projects, etc.
- **Construction of India's largest dredger started:** At Cochin Shipyard Limited in collaboration with Royal IHC Holland.
- **Mega Shipbuilding Park Plan,** across states, discussed: To **consolidate shipbuilding capabilities across regions,** fostering greater efficiency and innovation.
- **State Ranking Framework** discussed: To promote healthy competition, performance enhancement, and sustainable practices among coastal states.

About MSDC (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways)

- **Apex advisory body** constituted in 1997 for **development of Maritime Sector** to ensure **integrated development of major and non- major ports** in coordination with State governments.
- Chaired by **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.** MSDC is mandated to **meet at atleast once in six months.**
- MSDC has been instrumental in aligning policies and initiatives like **Indian Ports Bill and Sagarmala program.**

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Releases Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2024

GCI 2024 **assesses** country-level cybersecurity commitments across five pillars: **legal, technical, organizational, capacity development, and cooperation.**

- It uses a **new five-tier analysis** (Tier 1 to Tier 5) to assess each country's advances with cybersecurity commitments and resulting impacts.

Key highlights

- **India among role model countries:** 46 countries (including India) are in **Tier 1** i.e., "role modelling" countries demonstrating **a strong commitment to all five cybersecurity pillars.**
- **Global Improvement in Cybersecurity:** Since 2021 (last GCI was published), **all regions** have shown **improvement** and A**frica has advanced the most on cybersecurity**
- **Expansion of digital services:** Most countries are either **"establishing" (Tier 3)** or **"evolving" (Tier 4).**
  - These countries have **largely expanded digital services and connectivity** but must integrate cybersecurity measures.

Key issues

- **Worrisome threats:** Ransomware attacks, cyber breaches affecting core industries, costly system outages, etc.
- **Prevalence of cybercapacity gap:** Limitations in skills, staffing, equipment and funding.
- **Operating cybersecurity framework:** Putting cybersecurity agreements into practical operation remains challenging.

Key Recommendations

- Developing and regularly updating a **comprehensive national cybersecurity strategy.**
- **Capacity building** to cybersecurity professionals, youth and vulnerable groups.
- Fostering **domestic and international cooperation** on information-sharing, training opportunities, etc.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Geneva, Switzerland

- **Genesis: On 17 May 1865,** the first I**nternational Telegraph Convention** signed in Paris established the I**nternational Telegraph Union** (the first incarnation of ITU).
  - ITU is the UN's **oldest specialized agency** and, **17 May** became **World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.**
- **Role:**
  - UN's **specialized agency for digital technology**
  - **Harnessing innovation and connecting everyone** to ensure a better future for all
- **Members:** 193 Member States (including India), other members include companies, universities, etc.
- **Flagship reports:** Global Connectivity Report, Global e-waste Monitor

NOTE: For more information on India's cybersecurity initiatives please refer the News Today dated 11th September 2024 and 8th February 2024.
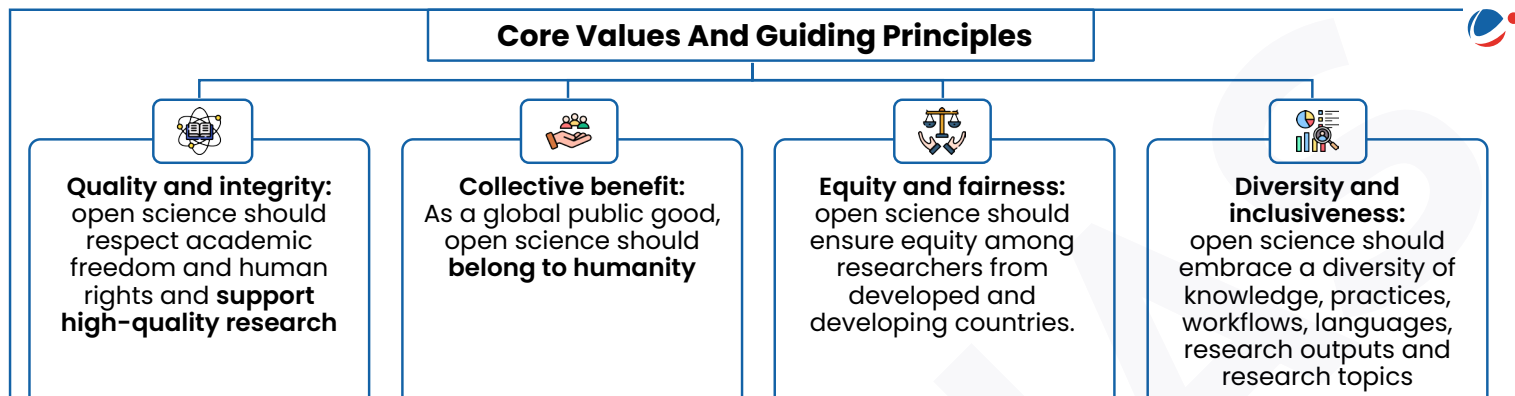
UNESCO calls for Applying Principles of Open Science to Artificial Intelligence (AI)

UNESCO made this call while highlighting that 'adoption of open science is limited by the **black-box** (opaque) **nature of AI systems** and **private companies outpacing academic research in AI'.**

About Open Science

'UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science' adopted in 2021 **defines open science, provides its core values and priority actions** for it.

➤ **Definition:** Open science refers to an inclusive construct that combines **various movements and practices** aiming to **make multilingual scientific knowledge openly available, accessible and reusable for everyone.**

Core Values And Guiding Principles

Quality and integrity: open science should respect academic freedom and human rights and **support high-quality research**	**Collective benefit:** As a global public good, open science should **belong to humanity**	**Equity and fairness:** open science should ensure equity among researchers from developed and developing countries.	**Diversity and inclusiveness:** open science should embrace a diversity of knowledge, practices, workflows, languages, research outputs and research topics

Why is Open Science Threatened Due to AI?

Open science benefits AI by providing data through participative research, however AI poses threat to open science due to:

➤ **Reproducibility crisis:** Other researchers cannot replicate experiments conducted using AI tools.

➤ **Interdisciplinarity:** Limited collaboration between AI and non-AI disciplines can lead to an inconsistent uptake of AI across science.

➤ **Data challenges:** While high quality data is foundational to AI applications, researchers consistently face challenges related to its **volume, heterogeneity and potential for bias.**

➤ **Changing incentives:** Incentives across the scientific ecosystem may be increasing pressure on researchers to be 'good at AI' rather than 'good at science'.

Addressing these challenges requires applying open science principles to AI, particularly focusing on transparency.

DPIIT to launch Bharat Startup Knowledge Access Registry (BHASKAR) initiative for India's Startup Ecosystem

BHASKAR initiative (of **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**) is a **platform designed to centralize, streamline, and enhance collaboration** among key stakeholders within entrepreneurial ecosystem, including startups, investors, etc.

➤ Its primary goal is to **build world's largest digital registry for stakeholders within startup ecosystem.**

➤ It is under **Startup India program,** which aims to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and encouraging investments.

Key Features of BHASKAR

➤ **Networking:** It will **bridge gap** between startups and other stakeholders, allowing for seamless interaction across sectors.

➤ **Centralized Access to Resources:** By providing startups immediate access to critical tools and knowledge, it will **enable faster decision-making and more efficient scaling.**

➤ **Creating Personalized Identification:** Every stakeholder will be assigned **unique BHASKAR ID,** ensuring personalized interactions and tailored experiences across platform.

➤ **Enhancing Discoverability:** Through powerful **search features,** users can easily locate relevant resources, collaborators, and opportunities, ensuring faster decision-making and action.

➤ **Supporting India's Global Brand:** It will **promote India's global reputation as a hub for innovation,** making cross-border collaborations more accessible to startups and investors alike.

India' Startup Ecosystem

➤ India has **3rd largest startup ecosystem** in world and has over 1,46,000 DPIIT-recognized startups.

➤ Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) recognize business as a startup.

Eligibility Criteria for Startup Recognition

➤ An entity shall be considered as a **startup up to 10 years from date of its incorporation**

➤ Startup should be incorporated as **private limited company or registered as a partnership firm or a limited liability partnership.**

➤ **Turnover should be less than INR 100 Crores** in any of previous financial years.

Other Initiatives taken for Startups

➤ **Atal Incubation Centers** by NITI Aayog.

➤ **MAARG portal (Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience and Growth)** of Startup India by DPIIT.

➤ **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) Scheme.**

Lokpal forms Inquiry Wing to probe graft cases against public servants

Lokpal of India has established an **inquiry wing under Section 11 of Lokpal and Lokayukta act 2013,** to discharge its statutory functions.

About Inquiry Wing of Lokpal

- **Purpose:** To **conduct a preliminary inquiry into any offense** alleged to have been committed by a public servant punishable under **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.**
- **Timeline:** Submit inquiry report to Lokpal **within 60 days.**
- **Composition:** Headed by **Director of Inquiry** under Lokpal chairperson.
  - **Director will be assisted by 3 Superintendents of Police** (SPs) - SP (general), SP (economic and banking) and SP (cyber).
  - Each SP will be further assisted by **inquiry officers** and other staff.
- It shall have **all powers of civil court,** under Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.

About Lokpal

- An **anti-corruption ombudsman** established by **Lokpal & Lokayuktas Act, 2013** to investigate & prosecute corruption cases involving public servants.
- Consists of a **chairperson & 8 members** with 50% are judicial members, **appointed by President.**
  - **Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghosh** (2019) was 1st Lokpal. **Justice AM Khanwilkar is current Lokpal.**
- Power of **superintendence & direction over any central investigation agency** including CBI for cases referred to them by Lokpal.

Issues with Lokpal

- **Vacancies:** Lokpal yet to constitute **prosecution wing** headed by Director of Prosecution.
- **Limitation of 7 years** set by Act for filing complaints can prevent victims or whistleblowers from filing complaints after the initial offenses have occurred.
- **Ineffectiveness:** Lokpal disposed of 68% corruption complaints against public servants without any action.

WHO Prequalifies the First Vaccine Against Mpox

MVA-BN vaccine from the **Danish pharmaceutical company Bavarian Nordic** was prequalified by the WHO.

- The vaccine can **be given to people 18 years and older** and has **already been approved in Europe and US.**
- If given before exposure, **single-dose** has around **76% effectiveness** and **double dose** has around **82% effectiveness.**

About WHO Vaccine Prequalification (PQ)

- **Genesis:** It was created in **1987** to **assure the quality of vaccines distributed by UN purchasing agencies.**
- **WHO List of Prequalified Vaccines:** Vaccines showing positive outcomes after evaluation of **relevant data, testing of samples and WHO inspection of relevant manufacturing sites** are included in the list.
  - However, inclusion in the list **does not imply approval** of vaccines and manufacturing sites **by the WHO.**
  - Such approval is a **prerogative of the National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs).**

Significance of WHO Vaccine Prequalification

- Contributes significantly to **WHO Expanded Programme on Immunization** which seeks to ensure **universal access to all relevant vaccines for all populations at risk.**
- **Helps to accelerate vaccine procurement by governments & international agencies** such as vaccine alliance GAVI & UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- Helps **NRAs to fast-track approvals.**

About Mpox
Previously known as monkeypox, Mpox is a **zoonotic** disease (spread between animals & people).

- **Pathogen:** Monkeypox virus (MPXV), an enveloped **double-stranded DNA virus of the Orthopoxvirus genus.**
- **Discovery:** Discovered in **Denmark (1958)** in monkeys kept for research, and first **reported human case** was a nine-month-old boy in DRC **Congo (1970).**
- **Transmission:** Through **close contact** with affected person or animal, **from mother to foetus** (during During pregnancy), etc.
- **Symptoms:** Skin rash or mucosal lesions accompanied by fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, etc.
- **WHO response:** Mpox is declared as a **public health emergency of international concern** (in 2022 and 2024).

Also in News

Centre for Rural Enterprise Acceleration through Technology (CREATE)

Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises has inaugurated **CREATE** setup in Leh.
About CREATE

- It supports and **enhances local productivity, product quality, economic potential and improves livelihoods** for the local communities.
- It will help **advance rural industrialization and foster enterprise creation,** to retain the traditional artisans in challenging regions like Ladakh.
- CREATE will provide
  - **Pashmina Wool Roving Facility,**
  - **Training for development of production facility for Essential Oil Extraction** from Roses and other flowers,
  - **Training for development of production facility for Bio-processing** of available fruits and other raw materials.

Lok Adalat

About 1.14 crore cases settled at 3rd National Lok Adalat of 2024 organized by National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

- NALSA constituted under **Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act, 1987** provides free legal services to weaker sections.

About Lok Adalat

- It's one of the **alternative dispute redressal mechanisms** where disputes/cases pending in court of law or at pre-litigation stage are settled/ compromised amicably.
  - Accorded **statutory status under LSA Act, 1987.**
- It has **same powers as a civil court** under **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.**
- **Its decision is final and binding** and no appeal can be made against its decision.

Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas

Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has unveiled Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas.

About Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas

➤ It **identifies areas with high potential for energy generation.**

➤ It covers **marine meteorological energy** (solar, wind) and **hydrological energy** (wave, tide, currents, ocean thermal, salinity gradients).

➤ It will **serve as reference for policymakers,** industry and researchers for **harnessing rich energy resources available in Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).**

About INCOIS

➤ **Autonomous body** under **Ministry of Earth Sciences** in 1999.

➤ It **provides ocean data, information and advisory services to society,** industry, government and scientific community through sustained ocean observations.

Chamran-1 Satellite

Iran launched a research satellite, Chamran-1, into orbit.

Chamran-1 satellite

➤ **Aim:** To test hardware and software systems for orbital **manoeuvre technology.**

➤ **Launching rocket:** Carried into space by Iran's Qaem **100 rocket** (a 3 -stage solid-fuel launch vehicle).

➤ **Concern:** West including US sees Iran's space programme as a **potential cover for developing intercontinental ballistic missile.**

Operation Chakra III

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) successfully dismantled a virtual asset and bullion-supported cybercrime network through Operation Chakra III (phase 3).

➤ This operation was executed in close **coordination with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of US.**

About Operation Chakra

➤ **Initiated by CBI in 2022,** it is an INTERPOL assisted Global Action to **combat and dismantle organized cyber enabled financial crime networks.**

➤ Its phase 2 was launched in 2023 and phase 1 in 2022.

Operation Sadbhav

India launched Operation Sadbhav to provide **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)** to **Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.**

➤ The operation was launched in the wake of **disasters caused by Typhoon Yagi.**

➤ Operation Sadbhav is part of **India's broader effort to contribute to HADR within the ASEAN region,** in line with its longstanding **'Act East Policy'.**

NOTE: Operation SADBHAVANA is an **initiative of the Indian Army** for civic actions in certain part of the country like Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Sikkim.

Irula Tribe

Despite gaining global attention for extracting and selling snake venom, Irula tribals are facing an uncertain future.

➤ Irula community plays **crucial role in public health by supplying nearly 80% of venom used for antidotes in India.**

About Irula Tribe

➤ One of the **PVTG** in **Tamil Nadu.**

➤ **Residing in Nilgiris region of Tamil Nadu** and places great value on **practice of ancestor worship.**

➤ They are also **spread over Karnataka and Kerala.**

➤ According to anthropological literature, **Irula is one of the oldest tribal communities of India** belongs to **Negrito race** (migrated from Africa).

➤ Speak **Irula language.** It is **written in Tamil script.**

Hindi Diwas

On 14th September 2024, India celebrates Hindi Diwas.

About Hindi Diwas

➤ The **first Hindi Diwas** was celebrated in **1953.**

➤ It commemorates the designation of **Hindi, in the Devanagari script** as the **official language of India** (also provided under Article 343 of the Constitution).

➤ The **President** of India presents the **Rajbhasha Gaurav Puraskar and Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar awards** to ministries, departments, public sector units, citizens, etc. for their exceptional work in promoting the language.

Personality in News — 📰 M (Mokshagundam) Visvesvaraya (1861-1962)

Engineers' Day (September 15) was observed to celebrate the birth anniversary of M Visvesvaraya.

Contributions:

➤ Worked as **Diwan of Mysore** (now Mysuru).

➤ The **architect of the Krishnaraja Sagara dam** on the Kaveri River.

➤ **Devised steel doors to stop** the **wasteful flow of water** in dams.

➤ **Established Bangalore Agricultural University,** University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering etc.

Awards and recognition

➤ Conferred 'Knight **Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire'** by the British in 1915.

➤ **Bharat Ratna award (1955)**

Ethical Values: Perseverance, Honesty, Scientific Temper, compassion etc.