

NEWS TODAY

ICAR Celebrating Golden Jubilee of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)

- India's first pilot KVK was established in the year 1974 by the **Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR)**.
 - ⊕ At present, India has a network of 731 KVKs where each KVKs serve more than 5000 farmers.
- **About KVKs**
 - ⊕ **Objective: Reduce the time lag** between **generation of technology** at the research institution and its application to the **location specific farmer fields**.
 - ⊕ Established on the recommendation of the **Education Commission (1964-66)** and a **committee headed by Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta (1973)**.
 - ⊕ **KVKs** are part of **National Agricultural Research and Extension System (NARS)**.
 - ◆ NARS is responsible for **Agricultural Research Activities** for the benefit of the Indian farming community for producing various crops.
 - ⊕ **Key Activities:** On-farm testing to identify the location specificity of agricultural technologies under various farming systems, providing training to farmers etc.
 - ⊕ **Key Achievements:**
 - ◆ Helped in implementing **in-situ Crop Residue Management programme**, led to reduction of residue burning in Punjab, etc.
 - ◆ **District Agricultural Meteorological Units (DAMU)** under KVKs are providing **Agro-met Advisory Services**.
 - ◆ KVKs are linked with **Common Service Centres (CSCs)** programmes, promoting access of government services to farmer.
 - ◆ **Other:** Value addition in agricultural produce, diversification in agriculture through mushroom cultivation, bee keeping, etc.

About Indian Council of Agriculture Research

- ICAR is an **autonomous organization** registered **society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- **Apex body** for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

NABARD is set to launch ₹1000-crore blended fund for Agritech-startups

- Fund will bolster technology-driven agri-startups and rural enterprises.
 - ⊕ Also, it will invest in startups facing challenges in **scaling up operations** due to **limited access to equity** and **debt instruments** to create new forward and backward linkages in the rural ecosystem.
- **Agritech startups** are individuals or segments of companies **using technology in field of agriculture** leading to **increase in productivity, efficiency, and output**.
- **Services Provided by Agritech-startups:**
 - ⊕ **Promotes Smart Agriculture:** It is done by providing Information on crop yields, rainfall patterns, pest infestation, and soil nutrition.
 - ⊕ **Farming as a service:** For instance, EM3 Agri Services offers farming services and machinery rentals to farmers on a pay-for-use basis.
 - ⊕ **Big data analytics:** Development of farm-specific, data-driven diagnostics to determine soil and crop health can boost productivity and farmer income.
 - ◆ It involves use of **Artificial Intelligence**, etc.
- **Challenges faced by them: Incubators' competence (incubators are in early stage of learning curve), Business model (Unable to connect to real problems of large number of stakeholder), lack of seed fund, Lack of mentorship etc.**

Key Initiatives Taken

- **Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM), 2021**, includes India Digital Ecosystem of Agriculture (IDEA), Farmers Database, Funding to the States on the new Technology (NeGPA) etc.
- **Innovation and Agri-Entrepreneurship Development Programme**, under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) from 2018-19 to promote innovation and agri-entrepreneurship.
- Agri - startups can avail loan under **Priority Sector lending** facility by Banks as per direction of RBI.
- **NIDHI Seed Support Program (NIDHI-SSP)**, under Department of Science & Technology (DST).

Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024 notified by the Department For Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)

- Rules have been brought in accordance with the **Patents Act 1970** to amend **Patents Rules, 2003**.
- Rules aim at **simplifying** the process of **obtaining** and **managing patents** thereby fulfilling the Viksit Bharat Sankalp.
- **Key Provisions:-**
 - ⊕ **Introduced New 'Certificate of Inventorship'** to acknowledge the contribution of inventors in the patented invention.
 - ⊕ **Time limit for filing request for examination** has been **reduced** from 48 months to 31 months.
 - ⊕ **Renewal fee has been reduced by 10%** if paid in advance through electronic mode for a period of at least 4 years.
 - ⊕ **Frequency to file the statements** of working of patents has been reduced from once in a financial year to once in every three financial years.
- **Rules will support the other initiatives for promoting Patents, such as**
 - ⊕ National Intellectual property rights (IPR) Policy 2016, it includes
 - ◆ **National Intellectual Property Awareness Mission (NIPAM)**
 - ◆ **Patent Facilitation Programme**
 - ◆ Expand Knowledge Capacity & Skill Building through initiative like **Scheme for Pedagogy & Research in IPRs for Holistic Education and Academia (SPRIHA)**.
 - ⊕ Establishment of **Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Property** and **Patent Analysis Management System (PAMS)** by **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.

About Patent

- A **statutory right** granted by the respective governments.
- It gives the **exclusive rights** and bars others from making, using, selling and importing product or process, based on the patented invention without **prior permission**.
- **Time period:** 20 years
- **Criteria for patent:-** Should be novel, must involve an inventive step, capable of industrial production etc.
- India has ratified Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).
- **Indian patent office** has granted **>1 lakh patents** between Mar, 2023 to Mar, 2024.

UN Secretary-General urges for disarmament in Security Council meeting held in Japan

- Calling for disarmament now, he urged States with nuclear arsenals to lead the way across **six areas for action**.
 - ⊕ Dialogue to work together for **transparency and prevent accidental use**.
 - ⊕ **Threats to use nuclear weapons** should stop.
 - ⊕ Nuclear weapon States must **re-affirm moratoria** on nuclear testing.
 - ⊕ Nuclear weapon states must **fulfil their disarmament commitments**.
 - ⊕ A joint **no first-use** agreement.
 - ⊕ US and Russia should resume talks to **reduce nuclear stockpiles** under New START treaty.
 - ◆ New START Treaty is **nuclear arms reduction agreement** between US and Russia signed in 2010.

➤ Global treaties for Nuclear Disarmament

Treaty	Objective
Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) -1963	Prohibits testing nuclear weapons
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT)-1967	prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and technology.
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)-1996	Prohibits all nuclear test explosions (not yet in force).
Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW)- 2017	Prohibits development, testing, possession, and use of nuclear weapons (entered into force in 2021).

- **India** signed and ratified only **Partial Test Ban Treaty** among above.

New ILO policy brief calls for domestic workers to be included in care policies

- **Care policies** are public policies that allocate resources to the provision of care and access to care rights, like early childhood care, and long-term care services etc.
- Domestic worker is **any person engaged in domestic work** within an employment relationship and on an occupational basis.
 - ⊕ There are **4.75 million domestic workers** in India (of which 3 million are women).
- **Issues faced by Domestic workers:**
 - ⊕ **Lack of Labor rights and social protection** as 8 out of every 10 are informally employed.
 - ⊕ Domestic work is among five sectors accounting for majority of adult **forced labour**.
 - ⊕ **Other Issues:** Poorly paid jobs, discrimination, sexual exploitation, etc.
- **Recommendation made:**
 - ⊕ **Recognize** domestic workers as **care workers** and include them within **national care policies** and social security systems.
 - ⊕ Ratifying **International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 189 called Domestic Workers Convention, 2011**, for protecting rights of domestic workers. (India has **not** ratified).
 - ⊕ **Skills recognition and skills training initiatives** that ensure formal valuation of their work.
 - ⊕ **Raise awareness** about critical role of domestic workers.

Steps by India:

- ⊕ **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013:** Protects female domestic workers from sexual exploitation.
- ⊕ **Code on Wages, 2019:** has provision for workers engaged as domestic workers.
- ⊕ **Code on Social Security, 2020:** Provides for social security to all unorganized workers including domestic workers.

Supreme Court (SC) refuses to stay H.P. Assembly Speaker order disqualifying MLAs

- The MLAs were disqualified under **anti-defection law** for defying party's whip to be present in the House and vote in favour of government.
- **Anti-defection law** deals with defection of members in Parliament or state legislatures.
- **Under it, a member could be disqualified if he/she:**
 - ⊕ **Voluntarily gives up the membership** of political party or joins any other political party,
 - ⊕ **Votes or abstains from any voting contrary** to directive circulated by political party.
 - ◆ However, if member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by Party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, he shall not be disqualified.
 - ⊕ **Independent candidate** joins a political party after election.
 - ⊕ **A nominated member** if he joins any political party after six months from date of taking seat.
- **Exemption:** If, not less than **two-thirds** of members of legislature party have agreed to **merge** with other party they are **exempted from disqualification**.
- **Role of speaker:** Chairman or Speaker of House have power in deciding cases pertaining to disqualification of members on ground of defection.
- **Issues:** Mergers leading to mass defection, Wide power to the Speaker, curtails individual MP/MLAs freedom.

SC Judgements

- **Kihoto Hollohon v. Zachilhu and ors (1992):** Speaker, while deciding cases pertaining to defection, acts as a tribunal and his decisions are subject to the judicial review power of the high court and SC.
- **Ravi S Naik vs Union of India (1994):** Voluntarily giving up membership does not necessarily mean that legislator needs to formally resign, as this can be inferred from member's conduct as well.

Also in News



Papikonda National Park

- In a bird survey held by IISER-Tirupati in Papikonda National Park (Andhra Pradesh), more than 200 bird species have been sighted.
- **About Papikonda National Park (PNP)**
 - ⊕ Located in northern Eastern Ghats, is spread over the Papi Hills and straddles the Godavari river.
 - ⊕ It is an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area**.
 - ⊕ A unique dwarf breed of goat known locally as the "**kanchu mekha**" originates in this region.
 - ⊕ **Forest type:** Dry Mixed Teak Forests, dry mixed deciduous forests, and moist mixed deciduous forests
 - ⊕ **Fauna:** Gaur, Tiger, Leopard, Hyena, sambar, barking deer, Black-bellied Tern etc.



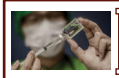
Air Quality Report 2023

- Air Quality Report 2023 is released by Swiss organisation IQAir.
- **Key Findings:**
 - ⊕ **India** had the third worst air quality after **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan**.
 - ⊕ New Delhi has been ranked as the **World's most Polluted Capital City**.
 - ⊕ **Bihar's Begusarai** has emerged as the **world's most polluted metropolitan area**.
 - ⊕ More than 1 billion people in India experience PM2.5 concentrations exceeding the **WHO's recommended levels of 5 µg/m³**.
 - ⊕ **Only Seven countries** met the WHO annual PM 2.5 guideline.
 - ⊕ **French Polynesia** is identified as least polluted.



Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction (SAKHI) App

- **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre** (located at Thumba in Thiruvananthapuram) has developed it to help astronauts on Gaganyaan mission.
 - ⊖ Gaganyaan Mission project envisages demonstration of **human spaceflight capability** by launching crew of 3 members to an orbit of 400 km.
- **Benefits**
 - ⊖ **Monitor health of astronauts** and provides information of blood pressure, heart rate etc.
 - ⊖ **Seamless communication link** by keeping crew connected with onboard computer and ground-based stations.
 - ⊖ **Helps in maintaining a log on mission** in multiple formats including voice records, texts and images.



Ketamine

- Elon Musk defends ketamine use, says it is 'beneficial' for investors.
- Ketamine is a **dissociative anaesthetic (produces trance-like state)** that has some hallucinogenic effects.
- Usage
 - ⊖ As pain **relief, depression**, treatment of suicidal ideation, and epileptic states.
 - ⊖ Makes patients feel **detached from their pain** and environment.
- **Side effects:** overdose can cause unconsciousness and dangerously slowed breathing.
- Ketamine has been included as psychotropic substance under **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985**.



Exercise Tiger Triumph – 24

- **Tiger Triumph – 24** is a bilateral **tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** Exercise between India and USA.



Tobacco Board

- Tobacco Board authorizes 100 million kg crop size for Karnataka during 2024-25.
- **About Tobacco Board (HQ: Guntur, Andhra Pradesh)**
 - ⊖ It is **statutory body constituted** in 1976 under **Tobacco Board Act, 1975**.
 - ⊖ **Function:** Export promotion of all varieties of tobacco and its allied products, and production, distribution, and regulation of **Flue Cured Virginia tobacco**.
 - ⊖ **Ministry:** Dept. Of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- In 2021, India stood as **2nd largest country** in production and **4th largest exporter** of unmanufactured tobacco in world.



Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP)

- Paytm has recently received **third-party application provider license** from National Payments Corporation of India.
- **About TPAP:**
 - ⊖ It is an entity that provides **UPI-compliant apps e.g., Mobile wallets and merchant apps** to end-user customers to facilitate UPI-based payment transactions.
 - ⊖ TPAP participates in UPI through a **Payment Service Provider (PSP) bank**.
 - ◆ **PSP is a banking platform.** It connects to UPI platform to offer UPI payment services to itself and TPAPs.
 - ⊖ Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a **real-time payment system** developed by NPCI.



Chemicals in plastic

- Report by a team of European scientists **identified more than 16000 chemicals in plastics** – from food packaging to toys to medical devices.
 - ⊖ Previously **United Nations Environment Programme** had identified around 13,000 plastic chemicals.
- Among these chemicals, **more than a quarter are thought to be hazardous** to human health and environment.
- **Important Plastic Chemicals:** Diethylhexyl phthalate, Bisphenol A (BPA), Hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD), Dechlorane Plus, etc.

Personality in news



Potti Sriramulu (1901 - 1952)

- Recently, **birth anniversary** of Potti Sriramulu was observed.
- He was an **ardent Gandhian, eminent social reformer & activist**.
- **Key Contributions:**
 - ⊖ He took part in the Indian Independence Movements such as **Salt Satyagraha (1930), Individual satyagraha (1940), Quit India movement (1942) etc.**
 - ⊖ He undertook three fasts, during 1946 to 1948, in support of **Dalits to enter temples**.
 - ⊖ He died after **58 days of fasting** in support of creating a separate **Andhra from Madras Presidency**. He is revered as 'Amarajeevi' for his supreme sacrifice for the **cause of people of Andhra**.
- **Ethical Values:** Leadership, courage etc.

