

# NEWS TODAY

## Impeachment Motion Moved against High Court (HC) Judge in Rajya Sabha

Recently, a motion to impeach a **Judge of Allahabad High Court** was submitted in Rajya Sabha.

- Impeachment process is aimed at ensuring **accountability** and preserving **judicial integrity**.
- None of **six attempts at impeaching a judge** since Independence have been successful.

### Constitutional Provisions Related to Impeachment of Judges

- **While** constitution does not use word '**impeachment**', it is colloquially used to refer to the proceedings **under Article 124** (for the removal of a Supreme Court judge) and Article 218 (for removal of a high court judge).
- **Grounds:** Proven misbehaviour and incapacity (Not defined in the Constitution).
- Procedure is regulated by **Judges Enquiry Act (1968)**.

### Steps in the Impeachment Process

- **Initiation:** A motion must be signed by at least **100 Lok Sabha members** or **50 Rajya Sabha members**.

⊕ Submitted to presiding officer of respective House.

- **Investigation:** If motion is admitted by presiding officer, then it is referred to a **three-member committee** comprising-Chief Justice of India or a judge of Supreme Court, a High Court Chief Justice, and a distinguished jurist.

⊕ Committee investigates charges and **submits report to Speaker/ Chairman** with its findings and observations. Speaker/ Chairman will then place report **before Lok Sabha/ Rajya Sabha**.

- ◆ If committee finds judge guilty, its report is **adopted by House where it was introduced**.

- **Parliamentary Approval:** Debate and voting in both Houses of Parliament **requires special majority (Two-thirds majority)** of members present and voting and a majority of total membership).

- **Presidential Action:** If passed by both houses, motion is sent to **President** for final approval.



## Parliamentary Committee presents Report highlighting issues and suggesting reforms in MGNREGS

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development And Panchayati Raj highlighted issues of low wages and disparity in wage rate across states as major concerning areas related to MGNREGS.

### Other Issues related to MGNREGS

- **Payment-related issues:** Delayed payments and states **not providing unemployment allowance** and **delay compensation**.
- **Technological adoption:** Issues related to **internet connectivity, smartphone** requirement lead to **exclusion** of beneficiaries.
- **Social Audit: Irregularities** in conduction of Social audits by **Gram Sabhas**. E.g Only 14% of planned gram panchayats were audited in 2020-21.

### Key Recommendations of committee

- **Revision of Wage Rate:** Wage rate can be linked to a suitable index accounting for rising inflation.
- **Parity in wages:** Based on **Article 39(d) (DPSP)**, MGNREGA beneficiaries should be paid wages at **parity in all states/UTs**.

⊕ **Article 39(d)** of Constitution provides for **equal pay for equal work** for both man and woman.

- **Robust financial management:** Pendency related to wages and material components need to be eradicated at earliest.
- **Increase Guaranteed Days of Work:** guaranteed days of work should be increased from **100 to 150** to cater to **work demand** as well as to create **durable assets**.

### About Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme
- **Objective:** Provides **legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment** in a financial year to adult members of a **rural household** who **demand employment** and are willing to do **unskilled manual work**.
- **Coverage:** Entire country except districts having 100 % urban populations.

## The Disaster Management (amendment) Bill, 2024 passed by Lok Sabha

The bill seeks to amend the existing **Disaster Management Act, 2005**.

- The bill aims to mainstream **disaster management in development plans**, aligning with recommendations of **15th Finance Commission**.

### Key changes in Bill:

- **Preparation of plan:** Transfers disaster plan responsibilities from executive committees to **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMA)**.
- **Additional Functions of NDMA and SDMA:** adds certain functions at their respective levels like, assess disaster risks, provide technical assistance, recommend relief guidelines etc.
- **State and national disaster database:** Will contain information on type and severity of disaster risks, Allocation of funds etc.
- **Urban DM authorities:** Bill empowers state government to constitute a separate **Urban Disaster Management Authority** for state capitals and cities with a municipal corporation.
- **Formation of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF):** Bill empowers state government to **constitute a SDRF and define its functions and terms of service**.
- **National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) and the High Level Committee (HLC):** Bill provides statutory status to NCMC and HLC.
  - ⊕ NCMC will function as **nodal body for major disasters** while HLC will provide financial assistance to state governments during disasters.

### Disaster Management Act 2005:

- The Act establishes a three-tier structure for disaster management.
  - ⊕ **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA):** Headed by the Prime Minister, responsible for formulating policies, plans, and guidelines for disaster management at the national level.
  - ⊕ **State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs):** Headed by the Chief Ministers, responsible for disaster management at the state level.
  - ⊕ **District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs):** Led by the District Magistrate, responsible for implementing disaster management plans at the district level.

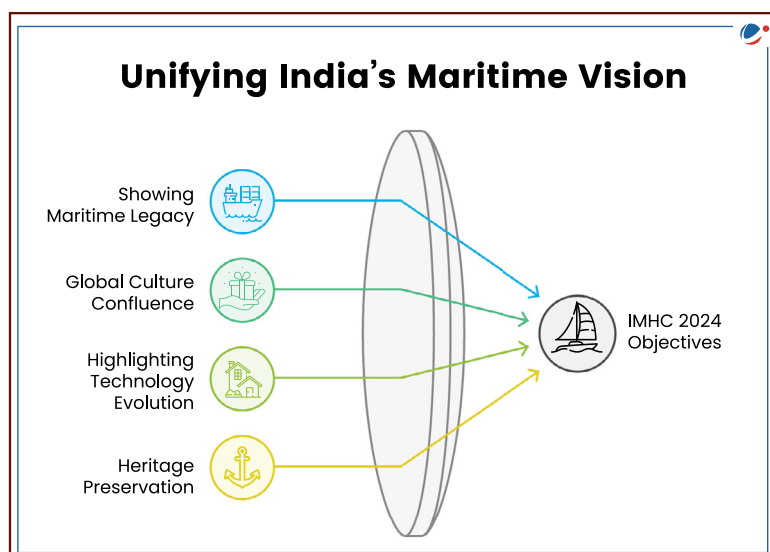
## Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways organised the 1st India Maritime Heritage Conclave (IMHC), 2024

The conclave was themed as "**Towards Understanding India's Position in Global Maritime History**".

- The conclave showcased **India's maritime achievements and its aspirations as an emerging global maritime powerhouse**
  - ⊕ The Ministry is also developing the **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujarat**, under the Sagarmala Programme to **highlight India's maritime heritage** and create the world's largest maritime heritage complex.

### India's Maritime Heritage

- **Early Days (3000 – 2000 BC):** IVC had maritime trade link with **Mesopotamia**.
- **Vedic Age (2000 – 500 BC):** Earliest reference to maritime activities is contained in the **Rig Veda**.
- **Age of the Nandas and Mauryas (500 – 200 BC):** Navy of **Magadh kingdom** is considered to be **world's first ever recorded instance of a navy**.
  - ⊕ **Chanakya's Arthashastra** mentions 'Department of Waterways'.
- **Satavahana Dynasty (200 BC-220 AD):** First native Indian rulers to issue their coins with inscriptions of ships.
- **Gupta Dynasty (320-500 AD):** Development of **ocean navigation and maritime trade** mentioned in writings of travellers **Fa-Hein and Huein Tsang**.
- **Marathas:** Under Shivaji **Maratha navy** developed into a ferocious force with more than 500 ships.
- **Southern Dynasties:** E.g. Chera's famous ports are **Tyndis** (present day Periyapattanam, near Kochi) and **Muziris** (present day Pattanam, also near Kochi).



## FAO's first major assessment of soil 'Global Status of Salt-Affected Soils', report released

Salt-affected soils either have elevated amounts of soluble salts (saline soils) or exchangeable sodium ions (sodic soils) measured in terms of high electrical conductivity, adversely affecting the soil fertility & growth of plants.

### Factors increasing salinisation and sodification

- **Anthropogenic factors:**
  - ⊕ **Inefficient agricultural practices:** Overuse of fertilizers, poor-quality water & overexploitation of aquifers for irrigation, inadequate drainage systems etc.
  - ⊕ **Deforestation:** Removal of deep-rooted vegetation (dryland salinization).
  - ⊕ **Others:** Excessive water pumping in coastal and inland areas, mining activities, etc.
- **Natural factors:** Climate crisis increasing aridity; permafrost thawing; etc.

### Key findings of the report

- **Global**
  - ⊕ **Coverage:** ~10% (~1.4 billion ha) of global land area is affected, with probable increment to 24-32%.
  - ⊕ **Most affected countries:** Australia (area wise), and Oman (percentage wise).
- **India specific**
  - ⊕ **Coverage:** ~2.1% (~6.72 million ha) of its total geographic area is affected.
  - ⊕ **Most affected states (area wise):** Gujarat followed by U.P, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Rajasthan.
  - ⊕ ~17% of irrigated agricultural land due to use of brackish groundwater for irrigation.
- **Sustainable management practices** includes mitigation efforts like mulching, adaptation efforts like breeding salt-tolerant plants, bioremediation, etc.



## Standing Committee on Finance report recommends key reforms for Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

Report **acknowledged** that IBC has made significant strides in improving resolution of distressed corporate assets, enhancing credit discipline, and revival of unproductive assets in India.

- However, Committee **observed persistent challenges** that hinder its full effectiveness.

### Issues highlighted by committee on IBC:

- **Competence and conduct issues** against Resolution Professionals (RPs).
- **Lack of clarity on government creditors' claims** and issues around stakeholder representation.
- **Delays** at the admission and adjudication stage at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
  - ⊕ Nearly 64% of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes (CIRPs) exceeded statutory 330-day limit

### Key recommendations of committee

- Establishing **fast track tribunals** with **strict timelines** for high priority cases, adopting an **urgent list system** to prioritize time-sensitive matters.
- **Introduction of provisions** similar to Article 226(3) of Constitution, to **mandate the processing of applications within 14 days**.
- **PPP models** to improve judicial processes, drawing on success of privatized Seva Kendras.
- **Ensuring NCLT members possess specialized knowledge**, as specified by Supreme Court in the Finolex Industries case.
- **Providing clearer guidelines on treatment of government dues**, especially taxes and penalties, etc.

### About Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016:

- **Purpose:** To reorganize insolvency resolution process in a time bound manner.
- **Four pillars of Code:**
  - ⊕ **Insolvency Professionals (IPs):** Manage insolvency, liquidation and bankruptcy process.
  - ⊕ **Information Utilities (IUs):** Store facts about lenders and terms of lending.
  - ⊕ **Adjudicating Authority (AA):** NCLT for corporate insolvency and Debt Recovery Tribunal for individual insolvencies.
  - ⊕ **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI):** Responsible for specifying regulations for various processes.

## Also in News



### Solar- micro-hydropower

In Manipur's Hengbung village, a groundbreaking micro solar pumped storage facility provides 24/7 power to the village.

#### About solar micro hydropower

- It utilizes **solar energy** to pump water from a lower reservoir to an **upper reservoir during periods of high solar irradiance**.
- This stored water can then be released through a **micro-hydro turbine to generate electricity when solar power is unavailable**.
- **Key advantages:** Grid stability, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, etc.



### Trichloroethylene & Perchloroethylene

US EPA announces final bans on manufacture, processing, & use of **trichloroethylene & perchloroethylene**.

#### About Trichloroethylene & Perchloroethylene:

- **Toxic chemicals** used in **stain removers, degreasers, and range of industrial processes**, including dry cleaning
  - ⊕ **Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)** with significant industrial utility but raise concerns due to their environmental and health impacts.
- **Health Impact:** Linked to severe health issues like **kidney cancer, Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, cardiac defects and bladder cancer**.



### Restricted Return InvITs (Infrastructure Investment Trusts)

Recently, **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has proposed a **framework for Restricted Return InvITs** to enhance investor security.

#### About Restricted Return InvITs

- **Differentiating from traditional InvITs**, where returns are directly tied to full performance of the underlying infrastructure assets, **in this model, returns are structured with downside protection (a floor) and/or an upside cap.**
- **Downside protection:** If the InvIT's returns fall below guaranteed minimum, **sponsors must provide funds** to ensure unit holders receive a baseline return.
- **Upside cap:** If the InvIT's returns exceed a threshold, **excess will go to the sponsor.**



### Algorithmic trading

**Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** proposed a framework to allow retail investors to participate in algorithmic trading through stock brokers.

#### Algorithmic trading (Automated trading):

- It **uses a computer program** that follows a defined set of instructions to place a trade.

#### Key Provisions of Proposed regulatory framework:

- **Stock Brokers' Role:** Provide algo services under strict controls, including two-factor authentication and unique vendor keys.
- **API Usage:** Retail investors developing their own algorithms must register them and limit usage to family members.
- **Empanelment of Algo Providers:** Exchanges to define eligibility and oversee empaneled algo providers.
- **Stock Exchanges' Responsibilities:** Categorize algorithms as "white-box" (transparent logic) or "black-box" (opaque logic).



### Neanderthals

**Oldest Homo Sapiens DNA ever sequenced** suggests **interbreeding** between **Homo sapiens and Neanderthals** roughly **50,000 years ago.**

- Some **Neanderthal genes** show increased frequency in humans, suggesting their **importance in survival.** E.g. **immunity** against **Coronaviruses, skin pigmentation.**
- **Most people today** have genes inherited from Neanderthals, roughly **1-2% of their DNA.**

#### About Neanderthals (Homo Neanderthalensis)

- **Close extinct relatives** to **Homo Sapiens** who coexisted with humans for at least some time.
- They lived from about **400,000 to 39,000 years ago** across **Europe and southwest and central Asia.**
- **Physical Features:** Large nose, strong double-arched brow ridge, relatively short bodies.



### Payment Aggregator

RBI approved JP-Morgan-backed fintech company In-Solutions Global (ISG) to operate as a **payment aggregator.**

#### About Payment Aggregator (PA):

- **Third-party service provider** that enables **online payment by customers** and **acceptance of payments by businesses and e-commerce.**
- PA is a **company** incorporated in India under the **Companies Act, 1956 / 2013.**
- They simplify payment process by collecting information, processing payments, handling refunds, fraud detection and prevention.
- They enable payments through **debit cards, credit cards, NetBanking, UPI, e-wallets** etc.
- Unlike Bank PAs, **non-bank PAs** require **authorisation** from RBI under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.**



### Dark Eagle Anti-missile System

Recently, the **United States** successfully tested the new **Dark Eagle Anti-missile System.**

#### About Dark Eagle Anti-missile System:

- It is a **Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW)** jointly developed by **US Army and Navy.**
- It features a **two-stage ballistic missile** equipped with a **gliding hypersonic warhead (C-HGB)** capable of reaching speeds of up to **Mach 17.**
  - ⊖ **Mach** is associated with **speed of sound** and speeds of **Mach 5 and above** are considered to be **hypersonic.**
- It is designed to **challenge** and potentially surpass capabilities of **Russia's S-300V4, S-400, and S-500 air defense systems.**



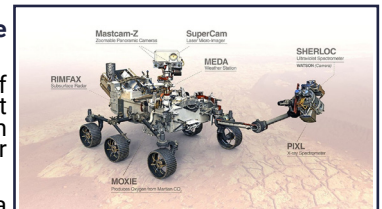
### Perseverance Rover

Recently, **NASA's Perseverance Rover** climbed to the top of **Jezero crater rim** on Mars.

- It will now be able to **access rocks (pieces of early crust) that existed in their present form** much before asteroids collided with the **martian surface.**

#### About Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover:

- **Objective:** Seek signs of ancient life and collect samples of rock and regolith (broken rock and soil) for possible Earth return.
- **Power Source:** It carries a **radioisotope power system (RPS).** This system produces a dependable electricity flow using the heat of **plutonium-238's radioactive decay** as its "fuel."
- **Target:** **Jezero Crater, Mars.**
- **Instruments onboard** (refer to figure)



## Place in News



### Iran (Capital: Tehran)

IAEA says Iran agrees to more monitoring at Fordow enrichment plant.

#### Political features:

- Located in **West Asia**
- **Land Boundaries:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan (North); Afghanistan and Pakistan (East); Iraq (West); Turkiye (Northwest).
- **Maritime Borders:** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.
- **Surrounding water bodies:** Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

#### Geographical Features

- **Climate:** Ranges from arid and semi-arid to subtropical climate.
- **Highest Peak:** Mount Damavand in Alburz Mountain Range. It is also highest volcano in Middle East.
- **Major Rivers:** Dez, Karkheh, Karun, Diyala
- **Natural resources:** Oil and natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, iron ore, lead, manganese, zinc and sulphur.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI