

Supreme Court in *Supriyo vs Union of India* judgment refused to recognize the right of marriage for same-sex couples

Key highlights

- ⊕ **Recognition to Right to Marry:** Marriage is a **statutory right not a fundamental right** guaranteed by Constitution.
 - ◆ Therefore, its recognition is a subject matter for **Parliament and state legislatures** and not of Court.
 - ◆ Thus, court **declined to strike down or tweak** provisions of **Special Marriage Act, 1954** and other allied laws to **include same sex members** within their ambit.
- ⊕ **No to adoption rights:** Court **upheld the Regulation 5(3) of the CARA** which **precludes unmarried couples** from adoption in the "**best interest of the child**".
 - ◆ Since '**Same sex couples**' marriage is not recognised they **are also precluded** from adoption.
- ⊕ **Civil unions for queer couples:** Court **cannot mandate the state to recognize** a civil union.
 - ◆ A "civil union" refers to **legal status** that **allows same-sex couples specific rights and responsibilities** normally conferred upon married couples.
 - ◆ **US, Sweden, etc.** had **recognised civil union** until same sex marriage was legalised in their country.
- ⊕ **Other:** Court favoured government's proposal of a **committee headed by Cabinet Secretary** to look into entitlements for same-sex couples.

Previous judgments of SC for LGBTQIA+

- **Navtej Johar (2018):** Decriminalisation of same-sex relationships.
- **K.S. Puttaswamy (2017):** Recognition of the right to sexual orientation as an aspect of privacy.
- **NALSA (2014):** Recognition of transgenders as third gender.

Sixth edition of the Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS) 2023 report by Janaagrahav (an NGO) released

- Report provides the **first nation-wide analysis of local governance** in Indian cities and expands on the scope of **city-based analysis and evaluation of municipal performance** through a citizen-centric lens.

Key insights on India's urbanisation:

- ⊕ India has **not made progress on city-systems reforms** aligning with the pace of urbanisation.
- ⊕ **Urban legislations of 51% states/UTs** are not available in the public domain in accessible formats.
- ⊕ **39% of India's capital cities** do not have an active master plan.
- ⊕ **Eastern states** (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal) have relatively **better urban legislations**, followed by Southern states.
- ⊕ **Highly urbanised and large states** perform better than less urbanised and smaller states specifically in urban planning.

Five systemic challenges to India's city-systems:

- ⊕ **Lack of a modern, contemporary framework of spatial planning and design standards** for public utilities.
- ⊕ **Weak finances**, both in terms of financial sustainability and financial accountability.
- ⊕ **Poor human resource management.**
- ⊕ **Powerless mayors and city councils** and severe **fragmentation of governance** across municipalities, parastatal agencies and state departments.
- ⊕ **Absence of systematic citizen participation** and transparency.

Instruments of Change required

Spatial Development Plans (SDPs) based on 4 Es of Economy, Equity, Environment, and Engagement.

Model municipal acts and modern city councils to provide much-needed legislative backing.

Participatory budgeting to facilitate targeted, hyperlocal focus on budgeting and problem solving.

Open cities framework that connects citizens and governments real-time in cities.

Digital Public Finance Management for timely transfer of grants to city governments, etc.

Watershed Development (WD)

- The Department of Land Resources (DOLR) signed an MoU with the National Remote Sensing Center **for Watershed Development**
 - ⊕ **Objective:** To monitor the **Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana 2.0 (WDC-PMKSY)** projects through high-resolution satellite data.
- **PMKSY is a centrally sponsored scheme** to enhance physical access to increase irrigation, improve water use efficiency, etc.
- The **Watershed Development (WD) component** of PMKSY is implemented by DOLR.
 - ⊕ **A watershed is a geo-hydrological unit** draining to a common point by a system of drains.
 - ⊕ **WD refers to** the conservation; regeneration and judicious use of all the natural resources particularly land, water, vegetation, and animals and human development within the watershed.
- **Significance of WD**
 - ⊕ **Reduce inequalities** between rain-fed and irrigated areas
 - ⊕ **Sustained water supply** for domestic, agricultural, and industrial needs
 - ⊕ **Reducing wastage of excessive river water flow**, especially during Monsoon
 - ⊕ **To promote climate-resilient agriculture**
- **Way-forward**
 - ⊕ **International collaborations with MDBs** like the World Bank.
 - ⊕ Adopting a **decentralized and participatory development** approach
 - ⊕ Initiation and execution of **location-specific watershed development activities** such as soil, water, and biomass conservation measures.
 - ⊕ **Training and community mobilization** are a pre-requisite for WD.

Challenges faced in WD

- Low focus on **Watershed planning and designing in irrigation projects**.
- Less **local stakeholder participation in planning and implementation**.
- Low priority to **traditional watershed development techniques**.
- Lack of proper **hydrological data collection**.

Electricity Grids and Secure Energy Transitions report released by the International Energy Agency

- The report provides a first-of-its-kind stocktake of grids worldwide.
- **Key highlights**
 - ⊕ **Grids are not keeping pace** with the rapid growth of clean energy technologies like solar, wind, etc.
 - ⊕ The world's electricity use needs to **grow 20% faster in the next decade** than in the previous decade.
 - ⊕ Achieving all national climate and energy goals will require **adding or replacing 80 million kilometers of power lines by 2040**.
- **Challenges for grid of the future**
 - ⊕ **Grid congestion and bottlenecks** in connecting renewable projects
 - ⊕ **High technical grid losses**, India reports one of the highest levels of losses at close to 20%.
 - ⊕ **Investment has been falling off** in recent years in developing countries.
- **Significance of electricity grids for secure energy transitions:** to decarbonize electricity supply, to integrate renewable energy, for efficient exchange of clean electricity between countries, etc.
- **Recommendation**
 - ⊕ **Long-term planning** as grid infrastructure often takes five to 15 years to complete.
 - ⊕ **Increased grid investment**, nearly doubling by 2030 to over USD 600 billion per year.
 - ⊕ **Secure supply chains**, by standardizing procurement and technical installations.
 - ⊕ Expanding and strengthening **grid interconnections** within countries, between countries, and across regions.

Initiatives taken for grid development

- **Global**
 - ⊕ **Global Energy Interconnection:** Proposed infrastructure platform for transmission, and consumption of clean energy.
 - ⊕ **Green Grids Initiative:** to accelerate the construction of the new infrastructure needed for a world powered by renewable energy
 - ⊕ **One Sun One World One Grid:** to connect different regional grids through a common grid
- **National**
 - ⊕ Development of inter- and intra-state transmission capacity through national programs (e.g. **Green Energy Corridor**),
 - ⊕ **SAUBHAGYA** scheme played a role in connecting households to the grid.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) inaugurated Robotic Process Automation (RPA) Lab

- The lab has been built under **Future Skill PRIME Project** funded by MeitY.
 - ⊕ This project aims to create an **up-skilling and re-skilling ecosystem** in 10 emerging technologies, such as AI, IOT, blockchain etc.
- **About Robotic Process Automation (RPA)**
 - ⊕ RPA, also known as **software robotics**, uses **intelligent automation technologies** to perform repetitive office tasks of human workers.
 - ⊕ It combines **Application Programming Interface (APIs) and user interface (UI) interactions** to integrate and perform repetitive tasks.
 - ⊕ RPA **trains algorithms using data** so that the software can perform tasks in a quicker, more efficient way.
- **RPA and artificial intelligence (AI)**
 - ⊕ RPA is **process-driven**, whereas AI is **data-driven**.
 - ⊕ RPA bots can **only follow the processes defined by an end user**. AI bots use machine learning to **recognize patterns in data, in particular unstructured data**, and learn over time.
 - ⊕ Thus, AI is intended to simulate **human intelligence**, while RPA is solely for **replicating human-directed tasks**.

Sectoral applications of RPA

Banking and financial services: customer research, account opening, inquiry processing etc.

Insurance: claims processing operations, regulatory compliance etc.

Retail: customer relationship management, warehouse and order management etc.

Healthcare: optimize information management, prescription management etc.

Also in News



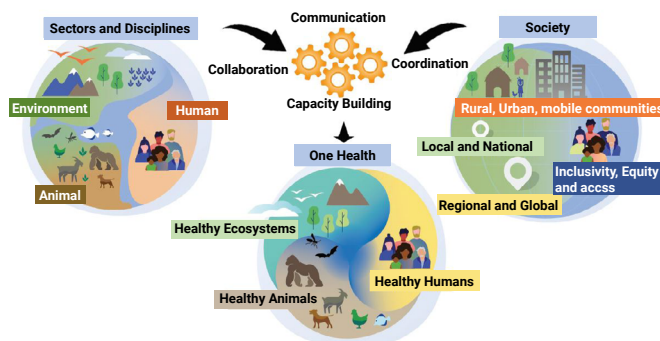
Mount Vesuvius

- Researchers used an AI program to read from an ancient scroll that was burned by eruption of Mount Vesuvius.
- **About Mount Vesuvius**
 - ⊕ It is one of the **active volcanoes** on Europe's mainland.
 - ⊕ Location: **Naples, Italy**.
 - ⊕ It is a **composite stratovolcano**, made up of pyroclastic flows, lava flows, debris from lahars.
- **Stratovolcanoes** have steep sides and are more cone-shaped.
 - ⊕ The mountain has had eight major eruptions in the past 17,000 years, **most recent in 1944**.
 - ⊕ Its **most famous eruption, in A.D. 79**, destroyed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.



75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic diseases

- This was highlighted by the Union Health Secretary at the **National Conclave on "Augmented Zoonotic Diseases Surveillance at Human – Wildlife Interface"**.
- **About Zoonotic diseases:**
 - ⊕ These are diseases transmitted naturally from **vertebrate animals to humans** or vice versa.
 - ⊕ Zoonotic pathogens may be **bacterial, viral or parasitic**, or other unconventional agents.
 - ⊕ It can **spread** to humans through **direct contact** or through **food, water or the environment**.
 - ⊕ They are a **major public health issue** in India. Eg. **Rabies, Brucellosis, Plague, etc.**
 - ⊕ **13 zoonoses** are cause of **2.2 million deaths** per year in India.
- **Reasons for emerging zoonotics**
 - ⊕ The use of **antibiotics in animals**.
 - ⊕ **Reduction in forest cover** increases close contact with populations and disease spreads.
 - ⊕ **Limited knowledge and skill to identify zoonotic diseases**, coupled with limited diagnostic facilities.
 - ⊕ Other reasons like **poor hygiene, environmental contamination, Animal husbandry malpractices on farms, etc.**
- **Recommendations**
 - ⊕ **Need for a One Health approach** which is an **integrated, unifying approach** to balance and optimize the **health of people, animals and the environment**.
 - ⊕ Preparing **health adaptation plan** for climate sensitive zoonotic diseases, **vulnerability assessment**, etc.



Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF)

- Various bridge projects were recently approved in Arunachal under the **Setu Bandhan Scheme** under **Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF)**.
 - ⊕ **Setu Bandhan Scheme** aims to build **Road Over Bridges (ROBs)/Rail Under Bridges (RUBs)/Bridges over the state Roads**.
- CRIF is **fund earmarked for various infrastructure sectors** such as Transport (Road and Bridges, Ports, etc), Energy, Water and Sanitation, etc., **as per the provisions of CRIF Act, 2000**.
 - ⊕ CRIF gets fund by way of **cess, a duty of excise and duty of customs on motor spirit** commonly known as petrol, high speed diesel oil etc.



Use of Bamboo to prevent landslide

- The Kerala Forest Department is planning to **plant bamboo and creeper bamboo** along the highway in Munnar to **prevent repeated landslides**.
- In 2017, Government amended the Indian forest Act to categorise bamboo as a grass.
 - ⊕ Now there is no prohibition on growing or cutting bamboo trees even outside the forests.
- Bamboo grow **four to five feet deep** into the soil and ensure **strong protection to the soil**.
- Using bamboo to prevent landslides has been found **successful** in countries like **Malaysia, the Philippines and Nepal**.



National Film Awards

- **President of India** presented 69th national film awards.
- The awards were established in **1954**
- Awards aim at **encouraging the production of films of aesthetic & technical excellence and social relevance** contributing to the understanding and appreciation of different cultures, promoting unity and integrity of the nation.
- Awards are given in three sections – **Features, Non-Features and Best Writing on Cinema**.
- Every year, a **national panel appointed by the government** selects the winning entry, and award ceremony is held in **New Delhi**.



Ethics committee of Lok sabha

- **Lok Sabha Speaker** referred a complaint against an MP to an ethics committee.
- The Ethics committee consists of **15 Members nominated by the Speaker and for one year term**.
- Functions:
 - ⊕ To examine complaint relating to **unethical conduct of a Member** referred to it by the Speaker.
 - ⊕ Make **recommendations and formulate a code of conduct** for Members,
 - ⊕ Suggest amendments to the **code of conduct**.
- **The First Ethics Committee** of Lok Sabha was set up in 2000 and of Rajya sabha in 1997.



Leniency plus

- **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** recently issued **draft of 'leniency plus' norms** to curb Cartelization.
 - ⊕ **Cartelization** is when enterprises come together illegally to fix prices, indulge in bid rigging, or share customers, etc.
- Under 'Leniency Plus', a cartel can **disclose the existence of another cartel in an unrelated market** in exchange for **reduction in penalty for original leniency proceedings**.
 - ⊕ The "Leniency Plus" regime was part of the **Competition (Amendment) Act 2023**.
- It is expected to further **incentivise applicants to come forward with disclosures regarding multiple cartels** to curb cartelisation.



Supernova

- For the first time, **Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool called Bright Transient Survey Bot (BTSbot)** searched, confirmed, and announced a supernova (SN2023tyk) discovery without any human intervention.
 - ⊕ This tool allows **automation of the entire star explosion discovery process**.
- A supernova is what happens when a **star has reached the end of its life and explodes** in a brilliant burst of light.
 - ⊕ Supernovas are the **largest explosions** in space and radiate more energy than our sun will in its entire lifetime.
 - ⊕ They're also the **primary source of heavy elements** in the universe.



Global Maritime India Summit 2023

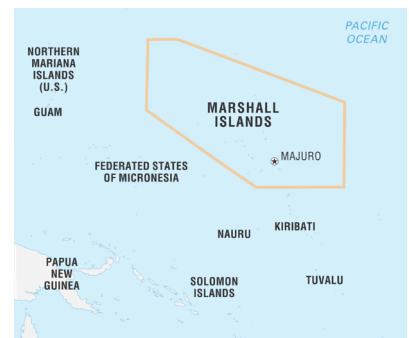
- The third edition of **Global Maritime India Summit 2023** organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
- The summit provides platform for **attracting investment in the country's maritime sector**.
- **Key highlights**
 - ⊕ '**Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**', a blueprint for the Indian maritime blue economy was unveiled.
 - ⊕ Pm laid foundation stone of **Tuna Tekra Deep Draft Terminal** at Deendayal Port Authority, Gujarat.
 - ◆ It will act as a gateway for Indian trade via the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC)

Places in News



Marshall Islands (Capital: Majuro)

- United States signed a new 20-year agreement on **economic assistance to the Marshall Islands**.
- **Political Boundaries**
 - ⊕ Island country, located in **Central Pacific Ocean**, about **halfway between Hawaii and Australia**.
 - ⊕ Nearest neighbours are **Wake Island (north), Kiribati and Nauru (south), and the Federated States of Micronesia (west)**.
- **Geographical Features**
 - ⊕ Situated in two, almost-parallel island chains - **the Ratak (Sunrise) group and the Ralik (Sunset) group**.
 - ⊕ **Largest atoll: Kwajalein**.
 - ⊕ Home to **world's largest shark sanctuary**.



AHMEDABAD



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI



SIKAR