7. Short news

1. Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA)

Recently, Russia's parliament approved legislation to formally withdraw from the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA) with the United States, citing changes in strategic balance and U.S. "unfriendly actions."

About the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA)

The PMDA was a landmark nuclear arms control accord signed in 2000 between the United States and Russia to reduce Cold War-era stockpiles of weapons-grade plutonium. Implementation - The agreement came into force in 2011, committing both nations to dispose of at least 34 tonnes of surplus plutonium each, enough to make around 17,000 nuclear warheads.

Provisions - The agreement required the plutonium to be converted into safer forms, such as mixed oxide (MOX) fuel for civilian nuclear reactors or irradiated in fast-neutron reactors to generate electricity. It aimed to prevent nuclear proliferation by ensuring the plutonium could not be reused for weapons development.

Reasons for Russia's Withdrawal

U.S. Non-compliance - Russia accused USA of violating the PMDA by unilaterally changing its plutonium disposal method from conversion into MOX fuel to simple dilution and underground disposal without Russian consent.

Strategic Grievances - Russia stated that the U.S. had altered the strategic balance through sanctions, NATO expansion, and other anti-Russian measures that undermined the basis of the 2000 accord. The U.S. and Russia remain the two largest nuclear powers, together possessing about 8,000 nuclear warheads, far below the Cold War peak of 73,000 in 1986.

2. Dravya Portal

Recently, the Ministry of Ayush launched the DRAVYA portal to digitally catalogue key medicinal substances across Ayush systems.

About DRAVYA Portal - Digitised Retrieval Application for Versatile Yardstick of Ayush (DRAVYA) is an AI-ready online knowledge repository consolidating classical and modern research on medicinal substances.

Developed by - Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) under the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India.

Objective -

1. Catalogue information on 100 key medicinal substances in its first phase.
2. Provide a comprehensive, open-access database spanning Ayurvedic pharmacology, botany, chemistry, pharmacy, safety, and pharmacotherapeutics.
3. Enable cross-disciplinary innovation and evidence-based integration of traditional medicine with modern research.

Features -

1. AI-ready design to facilitate advanced data analytics and integration with the Ayush Grid.
2. QR code integration for standardised display in medicinal plant gardens and drug repositories.
3. Dynamic updates through dedicated entry software ensuring accuracy and authenticity.

3. ReSAREX–25

Recently, the Indian Coast Guard conducted ReSAREX–25 off the Karnataka coast to test mass rescue operations and inter-agency coordination at sea.

About Regional Search and Rescue Exercise (ReSAREX–25)

ReSAREX–25 is a regional maritime search-and-rescue exercise designed to evaluate and enhance preparedness, operational readiness, and coordination among all sea rescue stakeholders. Location - Mangaluru coast, Karnataka, under the aegis of Coast Guard Regional Headquarters (West),

Mumbai.

Participants - Key agencies participating included the Indian Coast Guard ships and aircraft, Karnataka Police, Coastal Security Police, New Mangalore Port Authority (NMPA), Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Srinivas Hospital, Indian Mission Control Centre (INMCC), and Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Mumbai.

Objective -

1. To activate and validate contingency plans for mass rescue operations at sea.
2. To assess inter-agency communication, coordination, and operational tempo during emergency scenarios.
3. To simulate fire, medical evacuation, and life-saving operations, including drone-assisted and air-dropped rescue equipment.

About Indian Coast Guard

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is a maritime security agency tasked with protecting India's maritime interests and enforcing law at sea.

Establishment - It was established on February 1, 1977 under the Indian Coast Guard Act, 1978.

Nodal Ministry - Ministry of Defence.

Motto - "Vayam Rakshamah", meaning "We Protect."

Jurisdiction - It operates in India's territorial waters, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and continental shelf.

Role - Responsible for maritime safety, search-and-rescue, pollution control, anti-smuggling, and coastal security.

4. 'Saksham' Counter-UAS Grid

Recently, the Indian Army inducted the indigenously developed *'Saksham' Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) Grid*.

About Saksham Counter-UAS Grid

'Saksham' (Situational Awareness for Kinetic Soft and Hard Kill Assets Management) - It is a modular, AI-driven Command and Control (C2) System designed to detect, track, identify, and neutralise hostile drones and unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in real time.

Developer - Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Ghaziabad, in collaboration with the Indian Army.

Procurement Route - Approved under the *Fast Track Procurement (FTP)* route.

FTP route - It is a defence acquisition process that allows the Armed Forces to quickly procure essential equipment and systems to address urgent operational needs, bypassing standard lengthy procedures for faster deployment.

Operational Significance - By enabling secure control over the Air Littoral (airspace up to 3,000 metres), Saksham ensures freedom of movement for friendly aerial assets and swift countermeasures against hostile drones.

How It Works - Operates on the secure Army Data Network (ADN), provides a GIS-based unified air picture, and integrates seamlessly with the Akashteer System for real-time situational awareness.

Features

Real-time Threat Detection - Detects and tracks hostile drones instantly using advanced radar and optical systems.

AI-enabled Predictive Analysis - Employs artificial intelligence for predictive threat assessment and early warning.

Integrated Response System - Merges multiple CUAS sensors and weapons for a synchronised, automated counter-drone response.

3D Battlefield Visualisation - Provides a real-time, three-dimensional Recognised UAS Picture (RUASP) for enhanced situational awareness.

Networked Operations - Operates on the secure *Army Data Network (ADN)* and integrates with the *Akashteer System* for mapping friendly, neutral, and hostile airspace users.

Automated Decision Support - Offers commanders decision-making tools for faster, data-driven tactical responses.

5. 2025 Nobel Peace Prize

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado has been awarded the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize.

About María Corina Machado

Born in 1967, Caracas, Venezuela. Studied Industrial Engineering (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello) and Finance (IESA). Founder of Vente Venezuela political party. Co-founded Súmate (2002) to advocate free and fair elections. Served in the National Assembly (2010–2014); expelled for opposing the government.

About María Corina Machado Work

Honoured for her tireless efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and peaceful political transition in Venezuela. Nobel Committee's Remarks - Lauded as "a woman who keeps the flame of democracy burning amidst growing darkness."

Significance - Represents global solidarity with Venezuela's democratic struggle. Reinforces the role of women leaders in advancing peace and justice.

Her Work and Contributions

Democracy Advocate - Championed free and fair elections and constitutional governance.
Founder, Vente Venezuela - Promotes civil liberties and democratic reform.
Co-founder, Súmate (2002) - Advanced electoral transparency and citizen participation.
Unifying Opposition - Helped unite pro-democracy forces through the Soy Venezuela alliance (2017).
Non-violent Resistance - Promotes peaceful civic struggle against authoritarianism.
Symbol of Defiance - Persisted despite persecution and political bans.
2024 Nobel Peace Prize - Awarded to Nihon Hidankyo, a Japanese organization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb survivors advocating for nuclear disarmament and global peace.

6. District Judge Eligibility

The Supreme Court's Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai ruled that judicial officers with seven years of combined Bar and service experience can be appointed as District or Additional District Judges under Article 233 of the Constitution. The court observed that "a lawyer does not cease to be one upon joining judicial service," emphasizing a broader interpretation of Article 233(2).

Combined Experience Clause - The Court held that a judicial officer's prior practice as an advocate counts toward the seven-year experience requirement for District Judge eligibility.

About District Judge - District Judges form the highest judicial authority in the district judiciary, overseeing civil and criminal matters and supervising subordinate courts.

Constitutional Provision - Under Article 233 of the Indian Constitution, the appointment, posting, and promotion of District Judges are made by the Governor in consultation with the High Court.

Eligibility Criteria for District Judges

1. **Experience -** Minimum seven years as an advocate or combined judicial and Bar experience.
2. **Age Limit -** Must be at least 35 years at the time of application.

Recruitment - Conducted by the State Government in consultation with the High Court.

Progression Path - District Judges, with sufficient experience and merit, are eligible for elevation to High Courts under Article 217 of the Constitution.

Significance of the Ruling - The verdict aims to infuse young talent, reduce stagnation in lower courts, and enhance judicial efficiency through broader eligibility and uniform standards.