

SHORTNEWS

1. TRACHOMA ELIMINATION

NEWS: India has been awarded the **Certificate of Elimination of Trachoma** as a **Public Health Problem** by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** at the **78th World Health Assembly** in **Geneva**.

About Trachoma

- Trachoma is a **disease of the eye** caused by **infection** with the **bacterium Chlamydia trachomatis**.
 - Blindness from trachoma is **irreversible**.
- **Transmission:** Spreads through **personal contact** (hands, clothes, bedding, or contaminated surfaces).
 - **Flies that have touched the eye or nasal discharge of an infected person** can also spread the infection.
- **Disease Progression:** Repeated infections over the years can cause the **eyelashes to turn inward (a condition called trichiasis)**.
 - This leads to pain and can result in **permanent corneal damage and blindness**.

India and Trachoma

- On October 8th, 2023, **WHO officially declared** that **India had eliminated Trachoma as a public health problem**.
- India became the **third country** in the **WHO Southeast Asia region** to achieve this milestone.
- **Role of NPCBVI:** The National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCBVI) played a key role through **prevention, early detection, and treatment of trachoma**.

Efforts Of World Health Organisation (WHO) For Trachoma Elimination

- **SAFE Strategy, 1993:** WHO launched the **SAFE strategy – Surgery, Antibiotics, Facial cleanliness, Environmental improvement** to combat trachoma.
- **The Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD):** Trachoma is **classified as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)** by the World Health Organization (WHO).
 - It is targeted for elimination or control under the **NTD Roadmap 2021–2030**.

2. GOLDEN DOME

NEWS: The United States has officially selected a design for its **ambitious \$175 billion Golden Dome missile defence shield project**, aimed at blocking threats from China and Russia.

About Golden Dome

- The system is **envisioned to include ground and space-based capabilities** that can detect and stop missiles at all four major stages of a potential attack
- **Features space-based sensors and interceptors** to neutralize enemy missiles shortly after launch.
- It **comprises thousands of small satellites in Earth's orbit** to detect and intercept threats, particularly **Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs)**.
- It is inspired by **Israel's Iron Dome**.

Nationwide Survey To Examine Patterns Of Substance Use

Context: The Union government has started planning a **fresh round of a nationwide survey to establish the extent and pattern of substance use**.

- This follows the **last comprehensive survey conducted in 2017–18**, which was a **first-of-its-kind study on estimating illicit drug use in the country**.

About Substance Use

- **Substance use** refers to the **consumption of both legal substances** such as **alcohol, tobacco, and prescription** medications and **illegal substances**, including heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine etc.

Key Features of the 2025 Survey

- **Nodal Ministry:** The **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- **District-Level Focus:** For the first time, **data will be collected at the district level**, enabling localized intervention planning.
- **Enhanced Methodology:** Greater **emphasis on granular data**, including specific pharmaceutical substances.
 - **Better understanding of changing patterns and health impacts** of substance use.

About the 2017–18 Survey

- The 2017–18 survey by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC).
- It used **two main methods**:
 - **Household Survey:** Researchers visited about **2 lakh homes** and talked to **4.7 lakh people** across India.
 - **Respondent-Driven Sampling (RDS):** This method focused on people who **were already using drugs**.
 - Over **72,000 drug users** were surveyed through a peer network — where **one person referred another**.
- **Findings:** **Alcohol** was the **most common substance**. Around **15 crore people** were **drinking alcohol** and this **included 30 lakh children and teenagers** aged between **10 and 17 years**.

- This was followed by **cannabis, opioids, sedatives, inhalants, cocaine, amphetamine type stimulants, and hallucinogens** respectively.

3. INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE, 2025

NEWS: Kannada author Banu Mushtaq's short story collection **Heart Lamp**, which interprets and inhabits the faultlines and silent revolts in the everyday lives of Muslim women, won the **2025 International Booker Prize in 2025**.

Significance of the 2025 Win

- **Milestone:** This is the **first time a Kannada writer** has won a **Booker Prize**.
- **Not the First Nomination:** Kannada literature was previously recognized on the global stage when **U. R. Ananthamurthy was nominated in 2013**, but this is the **first win**.

About International Booker Prize

- **Established: 2005** (originally known as the Man Booker International Prize).
- **Current Format:** Since **2016**, it has been awarded **annually** for a single book, **not a lifetime body of work**.
- **Eligibility:** Open to books **originally written in any language, as long as they are translated into English** and published in the U.K. or Ireland.
- **Prize Money:** **£50,000 is awarded, shared equally between the author and the translator**.
- **Organized by:** The **Booker Prize Foundation**, which also oversees the Booker Prize for English-language novels.
- **Purpose:** Promote literary translation, Highlight global voices and diverse cultures, Elevate lesser-known authors and literary traditions.
- It is translated **from Kannada by Deepa Bhasthi**.
- **Novels and collections** of short stories are **both eligible**.

4. INSV Kaundinya

NEWS: Recently, **the Indian Navy inducted a traditionally built stitched ship** as **INSV Kaundinya**, Karwar Naval Base in Karnataka.

About NSV Kaundinya

- Named after **Kaundinya**, the legendary **Indian mariner** who sailed to **Southeast Asia**.
- The ship is built using **ancient stitching techniques**, modeled after a **5th Century ship depicted in the Ajanta caves**.
- The project was approved by the **National Implementation Committee, chaired by the Union home minister**, as a commemoration project.

Cultural and Historical Features of INSV Kaundinya

- Sails adorned with **Gandabherunda motifs**, representing a **two-headed eagle royal insignia of the Kadamba dynasty**.
- **The bow features Simha Yali carvings and a Harappan-style stone anchor.**
- Built with a **main mast, mizzen mast, and bowsprit mast**, controlled using **steering oars instead of rudders**.
- Uses **square sails** instead of **modern triangular sails**, requiring sailors to **relearn ancient sailing techniques**.

What is a Stitched Ship?

- A **stitched ship** is a type of **ancient wooden vessel** built using **traditional stitching techniques instead of metal nails or fasteners**.
- This method was widely used in **India and other maritime cultures** before modern shipbuilding techniques emerged.
- **Construction:** Made using ancient techniques – wooden planks stitched together with coconut fibre, coir ropes, and sealed with natural resins.
- **Built by:** Traditional shipbuilders and artisans from Kerala.
- **Power:** Uses cotton sails – **no engines or modern machinery**.

5. ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

NEWS: India has officially taken over the Chairmanship of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) for the 2025-26 term during **the 67th Governing Body Meeting**.

About Asian Productivity Organization (APO)

- It is an **intergovernmental organization** founded in 1961 **to promote productivity and economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region**.
- **Headquarters:** Based in **Tokyo, Japan**.
- India is a **founding member** and has actively contributed to APO's initiatives since its inception
- **APO Member Countries:** 21 countries- Bangladesh, Cambodia, Taiwan, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkiye, and Vietnam.
- In its Chairmanship role, India is committed to support the **APO's strategic goals**, including the **development and implementation of the APO Vision 2030** and expansion of the **Green Productivity 2.0 framework**.
 - **About APO Vision 2030:** It focuses on innovation driven, inclusive, and sustainable growth across **the Asia-Pacific region**.
 - **Green Productivity 2.0 framework:** This framework is an updated framework of GP 1 that focuses on enhancing productivity with environmental sustainability.

- **Main Roles and Functions of APO**

- **Supports Economic Growth:** Helps countries grow sustainably through higher productivity.
- **Policy Advisory:** Offers expert advice on productivity policies.
- **Think Tank:** Acts as **a center for research and ideas on productivity.**
- **Smart Initiatives:** Works in key sectors like industry, agriculture, services, and public administration.
Capacity Building: Trains institutions and helps create national productivity strategies.
- **Centers of Excellence:** Promotes research and best practices in member countries.