

9. Short News

1. Wassenaar Arrangement Reforms

Recently, concerns arose over Wassenaar Arrangement's inability to regulate cloud services and digital surveillance technologies effectively.

About Wassenaar Arrangement

Introduction – The Wassenaar Arrangement is a voluntary association (non-binding) of countries that promotes transparency and responsibility in the export of conventional arms and dual-use goods.

Origin – It was established in 1996 with its founding document called the Initial Elements.

Headquarters – Vienna, Austria.

Objective – To enhance regional and international security by promoting transparency and responsibility in transfers, and to prevent destabilising accumulations and terrorist access.

Control Lists – Covers Munitions List and the List of Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. It expanded in 2013 to include controls on "intrusion software" designed to bypass or defeat security protections and certain surveillance or cyber-surveillance systems.

Information Exchange – Provides procedures for sharing information on arms transfers, dual-use technologies, and general policy matters.

Participating States – The Arrangement has 42 Participating States including major powers such as the U.S., Russia, Japan, and EU members. India became a partner in 2017, incorporating its lists into the SCOMET (Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment, and Technologies) framework.

Decision-Making – Plenary is the main decision-making body, functioning on consensus, supported by subsidiary groups like the General Working Group and Experts Group.

Other Multilateral Export Control Regimes

Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) – Focuses on missile and unmanned aerial vehicle technology exports.

Australia Group (AG) – Focuses on chemical and biological weapon non-proliferation.

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) – Focuses on nuclear exports.

Zangger Committee (ZC) – It regulates nuclear exports, ensuring non-nuclear-weapon states comply with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). India is a member of MTCR, AG, and Wassenaar Arrangement, but is not part of NSG and ZC.

2. Acoustic Vehicle Alerting System (AVAS)

Recently, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways proposed mandatory acoustic vehicle alerting systems (AVAS) for all electric vehicles by October 2027 in draft notification. New EV models manufactured after October 2026 must be equipped with AVAS, while existing models must comply by October 2027.

About AVAS

It is a safety feature in electric vehicles (EVs) that emits an artificial sound to alert pedestrians and other road users of the vehicle's presence. The system ensures road users can detect approaching EVs, reducing the risk of accidents. Countries such as the United States, Japan, and several European Union nations have already mandated AVAS or similar systems in hybrid and electric vehicles to enhance pedestrian safety.

3. Bathukamma Festival

Bathukamma Festival in Hyderabad, Telangana set Two Guinness World Records. Largest Bathukamma floral decoration – 63.11 ft high, 11 ft wide, ~7 tonnes of flowers. Synchronised women's performance – 1,354 participants.

About Bathukamma Festival

"Bathukamma" means "Mother Goddess comes alive" and is dedicated to Goddess Parvati. It is a floral festival celebrated mainly by women during Navratri (Sept–Oct) in Telangana and parts of Andhra Pradesh. It was recognised as the State festival of Telangana (2014) after bifurcation. During

celebrations women arrange seasonal flowers in conical stacks, sing folk songs, and immerse Bathukamma in local water bodies on the final day ("Saddula Bathukamma").

About Guinness World Records

It is operated by Guinness World Records Ltd., headquartered in London. Guinness World Records is both an annual reference book and a global certification authority for extraordinary human achievements, skills, and natural phenomena. It was first published in 1955 in the United Kingdom, commissioned by the Guinness Brewery as a way to resolve debates in pubs about record facts.

4. SAHYOG Portal

The Karnataka High Court has dismissed X's (Twitter) petition against the Union govt's SAHYOG portal, calling it an "instrument of public good." HC ruled that "India cannot be treated as a playground for defiance of law."

About SAHYOG Portal

It was launched in 2024 and operated by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C). Nodal Ministry - Ministry of Home Affairs. The portal has been developed to automate the process of sending notices to intermediaries (Online Platforms/ by the appropriate government or its agency under IT Act, 2000. It facilitates the removal or disabling of access to any information, data or communication link being used to commit an unlawful act. It enforces Section 79(3)(b) of IT Act - intermediaries lose "safe harbour" if they ignore govt notices.

Significance - All Authorized Agencies of the country and all the intermediaries on one platform for ensuring immediate action against the unlawful online information. It creates an effective framework and ecosystem for the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of Cybercrime in the country.

Concerns and Criticism

There are concerns about government censorship control over online /social media platforms. It weakens reliance on Section 69A, which has stronger safeguards like hearings & review. It could set a precedent for regulation of digital platforms in India.