

1. Short News

Taiwan Strait Tensions

Context - The recent meeting between Cheng Li-wun of Taiwan's main opposition party, Kuomintang (KMT) and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing reflects renewed Chinese political engagement.

Significance of the Meeting

1. Policy Realisation and Outreach - China recognises its coercive approach strengthened pro-autonomy sentiment, aiding the Democratic Progressive Party, and it engages with the KMT to revive cross-strait linkages.
2. Electoral and Reunification Signal - Indicates peaceful reunification is more feasible under a KMT-led government in the 2028 elections.
3. Global Image Projection - Projects China as a proponent of peace and reconciliation amid rising tensions.
4. Strategic Timing and US Factor - Ahead of a potential summit with Donald Trump, it underscores the limits of US influence while advancing China's strategic interests.

Concerns Associated with China's Outreach to Taiwan's Opposition

1. Selective Engagement Issue - China's refusal to engage with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party undermines the credibility of peaceful dialogue.
2. Status Ambiguity Risk - Engagement risks creating ambiguity regarding Taiwan's sovereign status.
3. Political Polarisation - Intensifies domestic divide between Democratic Progressive Party and Kuomintang.
4. Perception within KMT - Raises concerns within KMT about being perceived as aligned with China.

About Taiwan

1. Location - Taiwan is an island in East Asia, located between the East and South China Seas in the western Pacific Ocean, close to China, Japan, and Philippines.
2. Taiwan Strait - The Taiwan Strait separates Taiwan from mainland China and is part of the South China Sea.
3. Political Status - China considers Taiwan a part of its territory under the One-China Policy and seeks eventual reunification.
 1. However, Taiwan functions as a de facto independent democratic entity with its own government, constitution, and military.
4. India's Stance - India has always maintained the One-China policy - which means Taiwan is part of China.
 1. India has a relationship with Taiwan that focuses on economic, technology and cultural ties.

Army Chief Inducted into US Army War College Hall of Fame

Context - Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of Army Staff, has been inducted into the International Hall of Fame of the US Army War College, in Pennsylvania, USA. It honours international military alumni who reached top positions in their armed forces or equivalent roles.

Key Highlights

1. Recognition - He is the third Indian Army Chief to receive this honour after V K Singh and Bikram Singh.
2. Symbol of Global Military Standing - The induction reflects the growing global recognition of Indian military leadership and professional excellence.
3. He participated in panel discussions, academic engagements, and reviewed research under the Scholars Program.
4. Educational Background - He is an alumnus of this US Army War College.

Sabastian Sawe

Context - Sabastian Sawe of Kenya became the first man to run a marathon under two hours in an official race, winning the London Marathon (2026).

Key Highlights

1. Historic Achievement – Sawe clocked 1 -59 -30, becoming the first to break the 2-hour barrier in competitive marathon conditions.
2. World Record Broken – Surpassed the previous record of 2 -00 -35 set by Kelvin Kiptum at the Chicago Marathon (2023).

About Marathon Race

1. Distance – A marathon is a long-distance race with a standard distance of 42.195 kilometres (26.2 miles).
2. Governing Body – It is governed internationally by World Athletics.
3. Nature – It is an endurance-intensive, requiring aerobic stamina and energy conservation.
4. Course Features – Route may include turns, elevation changes, and varying weather conditions.

RBI Cancels Banking Licence of Paytm Payments Bank

Context – Reserve Bank of India has cancelled the banking licence of Paytm Payments Bank Limited due to regulatory non-compliance despite earlier restrictions.

1. Earlier Actions – Action follows March 2022 directive to stop onboarding new customers and 2024 restrictions on deposits, credits, and top-ups.
2. Compliance Failures – Indicates continued non-compliance with regulatory norms, leading to escalation from restrictions to licence cancellation.
3. Customer Protection – RBI clarified that the bank has sufficient liquidity to repay all depositors during the winding-up process.

About the Payments Banks in India

1. Payments Banks are the specialised banks introduced by the RBI to provide basic banking and payment services to underserved populations.
2. Origin – Recommended by the Nachiket Mor Committee on Financial Inclusion.
3. Objective – Promote financial inclusion by enabling safe savings, remittances, and digital payments without offering full-fledged banking services.
4. Banking Functions – Can accept deposits (up to ₹2 lakh per customer) but cannot issue loans or credit cards.
5. Digital & Low-Cost Model – Operate mainly through mobile apps, internet banking, and agent networks, reducing operational costs.
6. Investment Norms – Required to invest 75% of deposits in government securities, ensuring high safety and liquidity.
7. Regulation – Regulated by the RBI.

Right to Safe Travel

Context – The Supreme Court has held that the safety of commuters against road accidents and the right to safe travel on highways are part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21.

Directions of the Supreme Court on Road Safety

1. Road Fatality Data – National Highways (only ~2% of road length) account for ~30% of road deaths, highlighting serious safety gaps of National Highways.
2. Directions on Highway Safety – Prohibition on the construction or operation of any new Dhaba, eatery, or commercial structure within the right-of-way of any National Highway

Prohibition on parking of heavy vehicles on highways, except in designated areas.

3. Removal of Illegal Structures – District authorities must demolish unauthorised constructions within 60 days to reduce accident risks.
4. Institutional Mechanism – Ordered creation of District Highway Safety Task Forces across India for monitoring and enforcement.

About the Right to Safe Travel

1. Positive State Obligation - The State must actively ensure safe roads, infrastructure, and traffic management, not merely avoid unlawful taking of life.
2. Safe Infrastructure Mandate - Includes removal of blackspots, potholes, illegal encroachments, and unsafe roadside activities.
3. Regulation of Highways - Requires strict control over parking, roadside establishments, and highway design standards.
4. Accountability & Governance - Authorities (NHAI, PWD, district administration) are legally accountable for preventable accidents.
5. Protection Against Avoidable Risks - Ensures citizens are safeguarded from man-made hazards like illegal parking, poor planning, and administrative lapses.

Expanding ambit of the Right to Life (Article 21)

1. Article 21 provides that *"No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law."*
2. The Supreme Court of India has progressively interpreted Article 21 to include a wide range of derivative rights, transforming it into a repository of human rights.
3. The Supreme Court of India has expanded Article 21 to include -
 1. Personal - Dignity, privacy (*K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*), fair trial
 2. Socio-economic - Livelihood (*Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*), health, education
 3. Environmental - Clean air & water
 4. Dignified death, limited internet rights etc.