

Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

❖ Context

- The upcoming **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** summit on 30 March is going to be **hosted by Sri Lanka**.
- It is the first in-person meeting to be held since the **last summit in Kathmandu in 2018**.

❖ Key Highlights

- The grouping will host its **fifth summit in the last 25 years since its formation**.
- The summit should see the approval of the :
 - **BIMSTEC Charter.**
 - **BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity.**
 - **BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters.**
- The **BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement** and the **Motor Vehicles Agreement** still await finalization.

❖ About BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC is an **economic bloc** that came into being on **6th June 1997** through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- BIMSTEC is an international **organization of seven South Asian and Southeast Asian nations**.
- It is **housing 1.73 billion people** and having a combined **gross domestic product of \$3.8 trillion (2021)**.
- **Members:**
 - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.
 - Its members **lie in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal** constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- **Headquarter:** Dhaka.
- **Aims:**
 - To **accelerate economic growth and social progress** among members across multiple sectors — trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries, agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change.
- **Meetings:**
 - The grouping holds **annual meetings** hosted by member states **based on alphabetical rotation**.



Microplastics in Human Blood

❖ Context

- A study by researchers from the Netherlands has **examined blood samples of 22 persons**, all anonymous donors and healthy adults, and **found plastic particles in 17 of them**.

❖ Key Highlights

- About half of these were **PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastics**, which is used to make food grade bottles.
- The **size of the particles** that the group looked for was as small as about **700 nanometres** (equal to 0.0007 millimeters).

❖ Key Findings of the Study

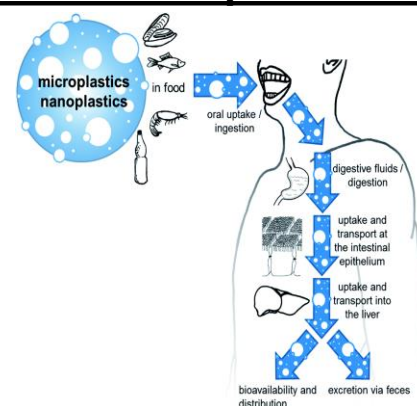
- The study found that **77% of tested people** (17 of the 22 persons) carried **various amounts of microplastics** above the limit of quantification.
- In 50% of the samples, the researchers detected **PET particles**.
- In 36%, they found the presence of **polystyrene**.
- 23% of polyethylene and 5% of **poly(methyl methacrylate)** were also found. However, **traces of poly propylene were not detected**.
- They found in each donor, **on average, 1.6 microgram of plastic particles per milliliter of blood sample**.

❖ Microplastics

- Microplastics are **tiny bits of various types of plastic** found in the environment.
- The name is used to differentiate them from **“macroplastics” such as bottles and bags** made of plastic.
- There is **no universal agreement on the size** that fits this bill - the U.S. NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and the European Chemical Agency **define microplastic as less than 5 mm in length**.
- However, for the purposes of this study, the authors have an upper limit on the size of the particles as 0.0007 millimeter.

❖ Health Impacts Due to Presence of Microplastics in blood

- It is **not yet clear** if these microplastics **can cross over from the bloodstream** to deposit in organs and cause diseases.
- The authors point out that the human placenta has shown to be permeable to tiny particles of polystyrene (50, 80 and 24 nanometre beads).



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The Criminal Procedure Identification Bill

❖ Context

- The Ministry of Home Affairs introduced the bill in Lok Sabha.

❖ Key Highlights

❖ Key provision

- The proposed law seeks to replace the **Identification of Persons Act 1920**.

Key provisions of the 1920 Act:

Applies on	Convicts and those who would serve prison sentence
Measurements	Finger impressions and footprint impressions
Authorises	Officers in charge of police stations or investigating officer or other not below the rank of Sub-Inspector

- The bill proposes to **allow the police and prison authorities to collect, store and analyse physical and biological samples**.
- The bill uses the term, “**measurement**”, to define and include:
 - **Impressions** : Finger, palm-print, footprint.
 - **Photographs**,
 - **Iris & retina scans**,
 - **Physical and biological samples & their analysis**.
 - **Behavioural attributes** : signatures and handwriting.
 - Any other examination referred to in Section 53 or 53A of CrPC. Section 53 relates to **medical examination** of a person arrested.

❖ Application & Authorization

- Categories of individuals** :
 - Convicted of an offence.
 - Arrested in connection with an offence.
 - Detained under preventive detention law including National Security Act or Public Safety Act.
 - Those ordered to give security for good behaviour or maintaining peace - “habitual offenders” or “suspected criminals”.
- Officers in charge of police stations or others not below Head Constable rank are authorised to collect measurements.



❖ Right of an individual under the bill

- A person accused of an offence can refuse to allow taking biological samples except when.
 - Offence committed against women or child.
 - Offence punishable with prison of not less than 7 years.
- Data collected from an accused can be destroyed.
 - After an accused is released without trial or discharged or acquitted by court.
 - Unless magistrate directs in writing otherwise.

❖ Function of NCRB & Storage

- NCRB will be entrusted to store, preserve and destroy the records of measurement at national level.
- It can collect the record of measurements from State/UT government or any other law enforcement agencies.
- It can share and disseminate record with law enforcement agency.
- The record will be stored for **75 years**.

❖ Concerns:

- In derogation to Fundamental Rights:**
 - **Article 20(3)** of Constitution - Right against Self-incrimination.
 - **Article 21** of Constitution - Right to privacy (*Puttaswamy vs UoI*), Right to be forgotten.
- Lack of Clarity:**
 - The word biological samples and their analysis could extend to narco analysis and brain mapping.
 - The “other persons” under the object of the bill are not defined.
- The **implied use of force** to take measurements violates the **right of prisoners** laid down in various SC judgements - A K Gopalan 1950, Kharak Singh 1964, Charles Shobraj 1978, Sheela Barse 1983, Pramod Kumar Saxena 2008.

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News in Between the Lines

Meghalaya's Living Root Bridges



❖ Context

- Recently, **Meghalaya's Living Root Bridges**, have been included in the tentative list of **World Heritage Sites of the UNESCO**, officials.

❖ About Living Root Bridge

- It is a type of **simple suspension bridge** formed by the method of **tree shaping to form living plant roots across a stream or river**.
- The roots are then allowed to grow and strengthen over time.
- Some of the bridges are believed to be **hundreds of years old**.
- Once mature, some bridges can have as many as **50 people crossing** them and **can last for over 150 years**.
- They are **locally known as jingkieng jri**.
- **Found in over 70 villages** in Meghalaya highlighting the socio-cultural, social and botanical links among people and nature.
- Villagers grow the living root-bridges by training the '**ficus elastica**' tree on both sides of water bodies over a period of about 10 to 15 years where the roots form the bridge. The **earliest written record** of Cherrapunji's bridges can be found in the **1844 Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal**.
- These bridges can **also be found in the state of Nagaland**.

PARAM Shakti



❖ Context

- Recently, **IIT Kharagpur** has launched supercomputer **PARAM Shakti**.

❖ Key Highlights

- PARAM Shakti was **developed under the National Supercomputing Mission**.
- **Significance:**
 - The supercomputing facility aims to **accelerate research and development activities** in multidisciplinary domains of computational and data sciences of IIT Kharagpur and other academic and research and development institutes.

❖ About National Supercomputing Mission

- The mission was **announced in 2015**.
- **Aim:**
 - NSM envisaged **setting up a network of 70 high-performance computing facilities** with an aim to connect national academic and R&D institutions across India over a seven-year period at an **estimated cost of Rs 4500 Crores**.
- **Implementing Body:**
 - **Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY)** and **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.
- **Nodal Agencies of NSM:** (C-DAC) and (IISc).

Darlong Community



❖ Context

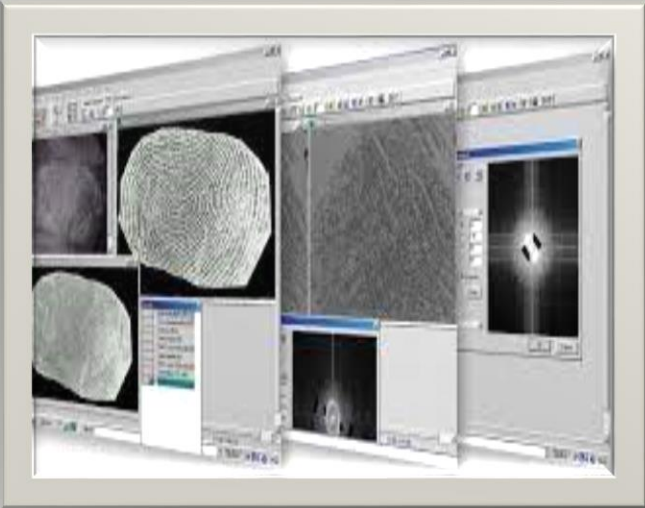

- Recently, the Lok Sabha passed a Bill to **include the Darlong community as a sub-tribe of the Kuki tribe** on the list of **Scheduled Tribes of Tripura**.

❖ About Darlong Community

- The Darlong are a **small tribe** and represent a **minority community** in Tripura.
- Traditionally, the Darlongs **adopt Jhum cultivation/shifting cultivation**.
- Today, **most of them have taken up agroforestry and horticultural plantation** or orchard development as their main livelihoods in addition to wet rice cultivation and seasonal vegetables cultivation.
- The Darlongs **have customary laws and practices** to govern them and dispense their own affairs.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darlong has a population of 11,000. • Despite its small population, the community has a high prevalence of education and cultural activities and members of the community serve in senior positions in the local administration. • For example, tribal musicologist and Rosem (a tribal instrument) maestro Thanga Darlong was awarded the prestigious Padma Shri a few years ago for his contributions to culture.
<p style="text-align: center;">NFIS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Ministry of Home Affairs is working on the integration of the fingerprint database of the Central Finger Print Bureau (CFPB) and get the NIST Fingerprint Image Software (NFIS). ❖ Key Highlights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The software or technology is used by United States FBI to match fingerprints. • The CFPB came into being in 1955 in Calcutta under administrative control of IB. It is currently under the control of National Crime Records Bureau. • The CFPB currently uses the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), also called FACTS, for fingerprint matching. The technology is said to be outdated, abandoned by FBI long time ago. • The government has been digitising fingerprints with a plan to integrate all fingerprints available under the Crime and Criminal Tracking Networking System (CCTNS), the national database on crimes and criminals and eventually store all data from crime scene investigations across the country. • The government is also working on scaling up the data collection from current 10 lakh fingerprints to 30 lakhs by connecting with state fingerprint bureaus. • The integration will boost the crime investigation capabilities of the police and help with the civilian verification.
<p style="text-align: center;">Fuel on the Move</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Indian Air Force (IAF), along with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL), has introduced a "Fleet Card- Fuel on the Move" for its varied fleet of vehicles. ❖ Key Highlights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAF procures fuel from various agencies and stores and distributes the same within the Air Force establishments. • Due to this, any mobility by road is constrained by the convoys having to necessarily stop at Air Force Stations for refuelling. • With the advent of the Fleet Cards, IAF will be able to utilise the vast network of retail fuel distributors across the country to refuel its vehicles on the move. • This in line with the Shekatkar Committee recommendations of improving the Teeth to Tail ratio with the armed forces. • The tooth-to-tail ratio (T3R), in military jargon, is the amount of military personnel it takes to supply and support ("tail") each combat soldier ("tooth"). • This move also has several indirect effects towards enhancing the combat potential and efficient logistic management within the IAF. • In addition, accounting of fuel will become much more efficient with paperwork being eliminated to a great extent and also reduce the IAF's carbon footprint.
<p style="text-align: center;">Preventing Elephant Deaths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Union Environment Ministry informed LS of various measures taken to prevent elephant deaths.

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❖ Key Highlights

- The Union Environment Ministry has constituted a “**permanent**” **coordination committee** that includes representatives of the **Ministries of Railways and Environment** to prevent elephant deaths on railway tracks.
- The **Wildlife Institute of India**, an autonomous body of the Environment Ministry, in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, NHAI, NTCA and World Bank Group, has published a document named “**Eco Friendly measures to mitigate impacts of linear infrastructure**” to assist project agencies in designing linear infrastructure, including railway lines, to reduce human-animal conflicts. Making **permanent and temporary speed restrictions** in identified elephant corridors and habitats.
- Making **underpasses and ramps** for movement of elephants at identified locations. Providing **fencing** at selected locations, **erecting signs** to warn train drivers about identified elephant corridors.
- **Sensitising train crew and station masters** to avoid train collisions with elephants and clearing vegetation on the sides of track within railway land.

Afghanistan’s Neighbours Meeting



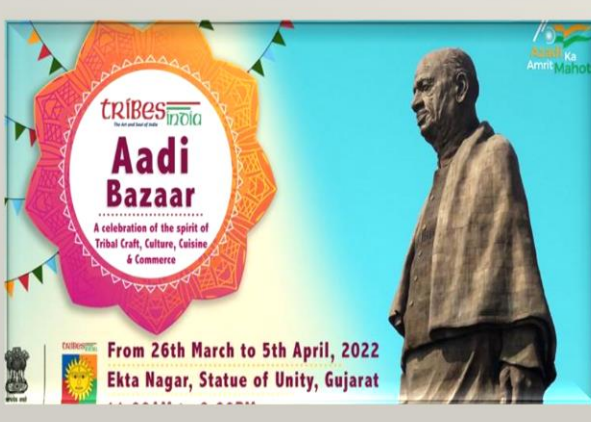
❖ Context

- China will host the third meeting of Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan’s neighbours.

❖ Key Highlights

- Pakistan had in September 2021 chaired the first meeting of this group, which was held virtually, with the second meeting hosted by Tehran the following month.
- Representatives from **Pakistan, Iran, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**, the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan’s Taliban government, will also attend the meeting India has not been invited to this grouping.

Aadi Bazaar



❖ Context

- A Celebration of the spirit of Tribal culture and cuisine inaugurated at Kevadia, Statue of Unity in Narmada district of Gujarat.

❖ Key Highlights

- Organised by **TRIFED of Ministry of Tribal Affairs**. The 11 day exhibition, beginning from 26th March and lasting till 5th April was inaugurated.
- “It was primarily due to the efforts of **Bharat Ratna Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, India’s **First Deputy Prime Minister**, that India exists in a unified manner. It was therefore one of his main aspirations for the country to be inclusive and united. This great monument, the **tallest statue in the world**, is a testament to the values - **national, spiritual and cultural**.”
- Aadi Bazaars which represent the basic ethos of tribal life are a part of TRIFED’s intensified efforts to improve the livelihoods of the underprivileged tribals, who have been majorly impacted in the past two years. The Aadi Bazaar is an initiative that helps enable the **economic welfare** of these communities and bring them closer towards mainstream development.

National Commission for Women (NCW) Launches Legal Aid Clinic



❖ Context

- NCW launches legal aid clinic to resolve women grievances.

❖ Key Highlights

- NCW has launched a legal aid clinic in collaboration with Delhi State Legal Services Authority which will act as a single-window facility for resolving grievances of women by offering them free legal assistance to women.
- Focus on protecting women’s rights and providing them with a one-stop centre for seeking legal counseling & help.
- Counseling will be provided for walk-in complainants, women in distress will be given legal assistance, advice and information on various schemes of the National Legal Services Authority.

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