

## India-Australia ECTA

### ❖ Context

- India and Australia signed an **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)**.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- **Australia** is currently **India's largest export destination** in the **Oceania region** and is among the top 15 export destinations.
- It is estimated that the agreement will help in:
  - **Doubling bilateral trade from \$27 BN to \$50 billion in five years.**
  - Easing movement of people, goods and services across borders.
  - **Creating 10 lakh additional jobs** in India over five years.
- This is the **first such pact signed by India with a developed country in a decade.**
- It will facilitate **zero duty access on over 96% of Indian exports**, including several labour-intensive industries.
- India will, in turn, offer **preferential access to Australia on over 70% of its tariff lines** on goods imports, which are primarily raw materials and intermediaries such as coal, mineral ores and wines, etc.
- Key commodities that are **exported to Australia include gold jewellery (plain and studded) and polished diamonds.** The main commodities **imported from Australia include precious metals — gold and silver bars.**
- India has however, **excluded** a number of Australian products, from tariff reductions, to protect **sensitive sectors, including dairy products, wheat, rice, chickpeas, beef, sugar, apples, toys, and iron ore.**

### Boosting ties

The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) seeks to encourage trade between the two countries. The agreement will benefit labour-intensive sectors, apart from increasing quotas for Indian chefs and yoga teachers in Australia



#### TRADE IN GOODS

- Labour-intensive Indian sectors such as textiles, gems and jewellery, leather, food and farm produce and automobiles to benefit
- Australian coal, mineral ores and wines to get easier entry
- Working group to explore market access issues for both sides in whisky and other alcoholic beverages



#### TRADE IN SERVICES

- Indian students in Australia to get work visas for two to four years
- Australian firms in business, communication, construction and engineering services to gain
- Fast track approval for patented, generic and biosimilar medicines



### APPAREL TO AVOCADOS: THE TRADE PACT

#### Zero duty access for India

- Engineering goods, gems and jewellery, leather, textiles, apparel, footwear

#### Zero duty access for Australia

- Coal, sheep meat, wool, LNG, alumina, metallic ores
- Avocados, onions, pistachios, blackberries, macadamias, cashews in shell, blueberries, raspberries\*

#### Reduced tariffs on Aus exports

- Wine, almonds, cotton, oranges, mandarins, lentils, pears, apricots, strawberries

#### Excluded sensitive products

- Dairy products, wheat, rice, sugar, chickpeas, beef, apples, toys, iron ore

\* products to benefit from zero duty access over seven years

- The agreement is expected to **come into force** after it is **ratified by the Australian Parliament.**
- In many labour intensive sectors, India face a tariff disadvantage of 4-5% to those competitors with which Australia have FTA - China, Thailand, Vietnam.
- In turn, **coal, which accounts for 74% of Australia's exports to India inviting tariff of 2.5%** will get **zero duty access** under the agreement.
- Besides, agreement includes **strict rules of origin and safeguard mechanism** to address any sudden surges in imports of a product
- **Australia also agreed** to amend local taxation laws to **stop the taxation of off-shore income of Indian IT firms** - a long standing concern.

## AFSPA Removed in Parts of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland

### ❖ Context

- Recently, in three Northeast states - **Assam, Nagaland and Manipur** - the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** has been decreased.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- Of all the 33 districts of Assam, AFSPA has been **completely removed from 23 districts and partially from one district** of the state.
- After the recent changes in the state, **9 districts and one district partially will continue to be under the ambit of AFSPA.**
- AFSPA has been **reduced partially from seven districts in Nagaland, six districts in Manipur.**
- It was **completely repealed in Meghalaya in 2018, Tripura in 2015, and Mizoram in the 1980s.**
- AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in **parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.**

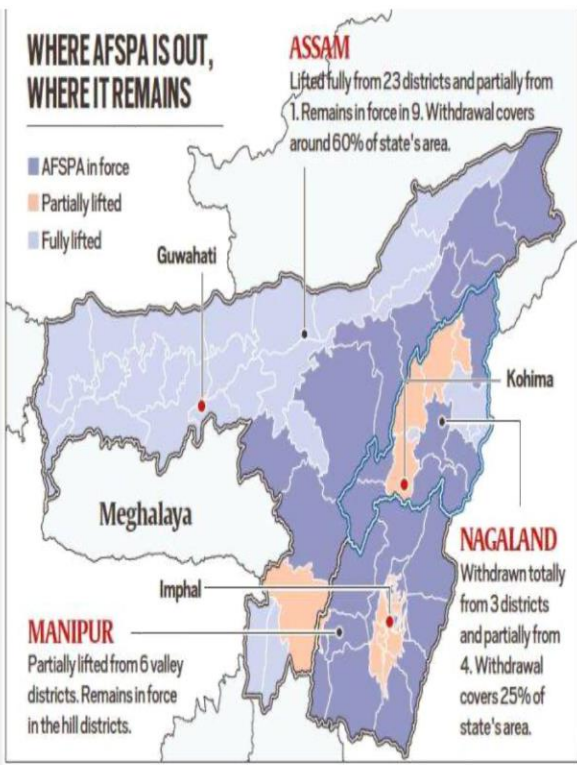
### ❖ Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

#### • Background:

- The Act in its original form was **promulgated by the British in response to the Quit India movement in 1942.**
- After Independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to retain the Act, which was first brought in as an **ordinance and then notified as an Act in 1958.**
- AFSPA has been **imposed on the Northeast states, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab during the militancy years.**

### Face to Face Centres





- **About the Act:**
  - AFSPA provides for special powers for the armed forces that can be imposed by the Center or the Governor of a state, on the state or parts of it, after it is declared “**disturbed**” under **Section 3**.
  - The Act defines these as areas that are “**disturbed or dangerous** conditions where the use of **armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary**”.
  - AFSPA has been used in areas where militancy has been prevalent.
- **Powers Given to Armed Forces:**
  - It gives sweeping powers to the armed forces.
  - It allows them to **open fire**, even causing death, against any person in contravention to the law or carrying arms and ammunition.
  - It gives them **powers to arrest individuals without warrants**, on the basis of “reasonable suspicion”, and also search premises without warrants.
  - The Act further provides **blanket impunity to security personnel** involved in such operations.
    - There can be **no prosecution or legal proceedings against them** without the prior approval of the Centre.

## Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED)

### Context

- Recently, the Chief Justice of India said there was an **immediate need for the creation of an independent umbrella institution**, so as to bring various central agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) under one roof.



### ❖ Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- The CBI is a **premier investigating police agency** in India.
- Recommended by the **Santhanam Committee** on Prevention of Corruption.
- It serves as the **main agency of the Central Government** and is responsible for a wide variety of criminal and national security matters.
- Provides **assistance to the Central Vigilance Commission and Lokpal**.
- Exempted from the provisions of the **Right to Information Act**.
- **Established on April 1, 1963**, and draws its power from the **Special Police Establishment (SPE) Act 1946**.
- Operating under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions (India)**.
- It is also the **Interpol agency** in India.
- **Headquarter : New Delhi.**
- **Functions:**
  - Investigation of **cases related to corruption, scams, and misbehavior** of central government officials.
  - Investigation of **serious crimes** having national and international ramifications.
  - **Maintaining crime statistics** and disseminating criminal information, etc.

### ❖ Enforcement Directorate (ED)

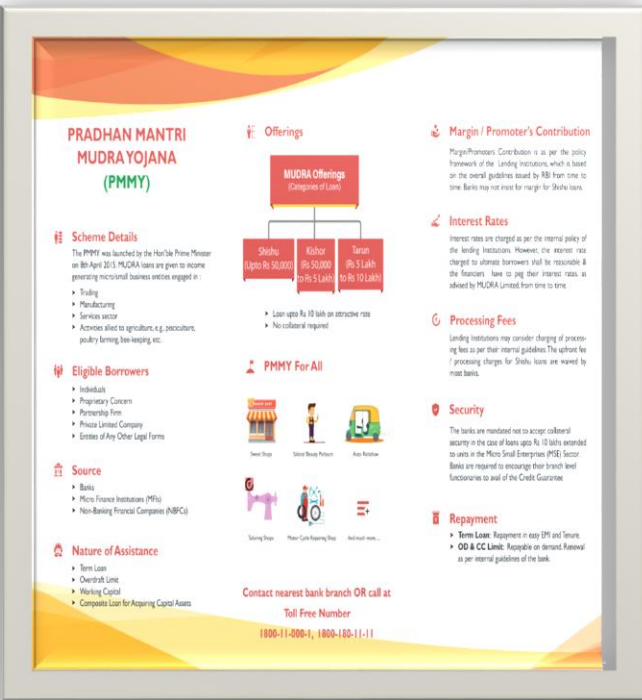
- ED is a **law enforcement agency and economic intelligence agency** responsible for enforcing economic laws and fighting economic crimes in India.
- **On 1st May 1956**, an ‘Enforcement Unit’ was formed, in the Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947.
  - In the year 1957, this **Unit was renamed as ‘Enforcement Directorate’**.
- **Functions:**
  - It enforces the following two laws.
    - **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)**.
    - **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**.
- **Parent Ministry:**
  - It is part of the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government Of India**.
- **Composition:**
  - It is **headed by the Director of Enforcement**, who is an **IRS officer** (Indian Revenue Service).
- **Headquarter:**
  - **New Delhi.**
  - It has many regional offices all over the country.

### Face to Face Centres



## News in Between the Lines

### MUDRA Scheme



#### ❖ Context

- Recently, Govt informed Rajya Sabha that **68% beneficiaries of the Rs 32 crore loans** given under the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) scheme are women, predominantly from SC and ST communities and minority families.

#### ❖ About MUDRA Scheme

- Mudra Yojana is a loan scheme to offer loan amounts up to Rs. 10 lakh at competitive interest rates to individuals, MSMEs and self-employed professionals.
- This has been achieved through the Commercial Banks, RRBs, Cooperative Banks, NBFC and MFI.
- It enables them to start their new business or for business expansion purposes, **without submitting any collateral or security** with the bank or any financial institution.
- MUDRA is a **wholly-owned subsidiary of SIDBI**.
- **Types of Loan Provided:**
  - Under **Shishu Scheme**: Up to Rs. 50,000.
  - Under **Kishor Scheme**: Rs. 50,001 – Rs. 5,00,000.
  - Under **Tarun Scheme**: Rs. 5,00,001 – Rs. 10,00,000.
- **Significance:**
  - Micro Enterprises include the enterprises specialized in manufacturing, trading, processing and services and are deemed to be the economic **bulwark of the country**.
  - The MUDRA scheme **aims to be an engine of transformation**, which makes the micro-enterprises of this nation a **potent instrument of employment and GDP growth**.
  - It further adds to the vision of **financial inclusion**.

### Olive Ridley Turtles



#### ❖ Context

- Recently, a record number of **4.92 lakh Olive Ridley turtles** have crawled to the Rushikulya coast in Odisha.
- Scientists have tagged more than 6,000 turtles to gather more information about their breeding behavior and migration.

#### ❖ Key Highlights

- They are the **smallest and most abundant** of all sea turtles found in the world.
- They are **carnivores** and get their name from their olive colored carapace.
- They are best known for their unique mass nesting called **Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- They can be found in warm waters of the **Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans** and the **Odisha's Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary** is known as the world's largest rookery (colony of breeding animals) of sea turtles.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972- Schedule 1.**
  - **IUCN Red List- Vulnerable.**
  - **CITES- Appendix I.**

### Kheta

#### ❖ Context

- The first-ever exhibition of the undocumented craft is currently on display at Delhi's National Crafts Museum.

#### ❖ Key Highlights

- The nearly **five centuries old embroidery craft** is practised by **Shershabadi women**.

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- According to oral history, Sher Shah Suri, who ousted the Mughals to establish the Suri Empire in 1540, conquered lands till the delta area of Bangladesh. The local Pashtun ruler gave some land near Malda district to his **Afghani foot soldiers** to celebrate his victory.
- After Sher Shah's death, the soldiers **got married to the local women and came to be called Shershabadis**. They were **not accepted by the Mughals or by the British army**.
- Marginalised and persecuted, they migrated westwards for centuries. For a long time they owned little land, but have **now settled in the floodplains of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha**.
- The most extraordinary fact about the kheta is that though the **stitch of the embroidery is linear** [the thread moves vertically] but the **patterns emerge diagonally**. This involves an **intuitive visual calculation**
- The most common designs drawn are **lahuri** (waves of river) and **kechuli** (earthworm). Some of the works include runners, throws and repurpose quilts.

## Prehistoric Settlement at Attappady



### ❖ Context

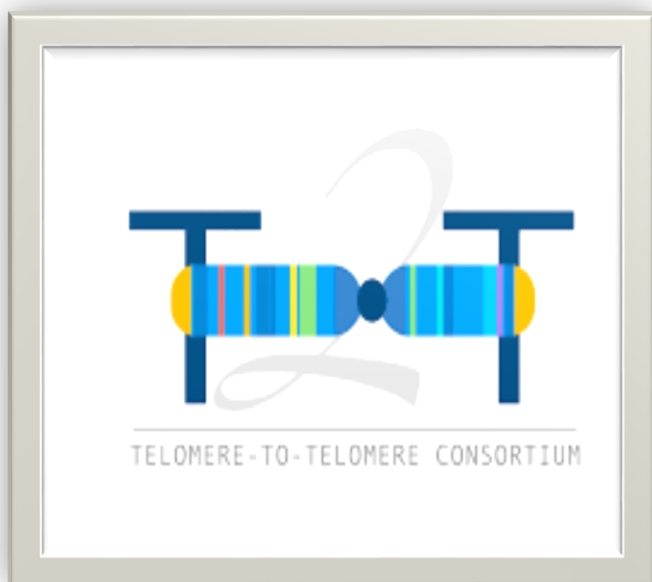
- The discovery of several prehistoric artefacts and archaeological remains along the banks of three rivers flowing through Attappady hills, straddling Kerala and Tamil Nadu, indicates the presence of a mature settlement.

### ❖ Key highlights.

- **Stone tools, inhabited caves, menhirs, cists or burial chambers, stone circles, burial urns, black and red ware pottery, terracotta images, stone carvings, and granite inscriptions.**
- The archaeological discoveries were made from different places along the banks of the **rivers Bhavani, Siruvani, and Kodumkara Pallam or Anakkatti**.
- **Kodumkara Pallam marks the border between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.**
- Local tribal people unaware of the significance of the remains had earlier damaged and destroyed prehistoric artefacts.



## Human Genome T2T Project



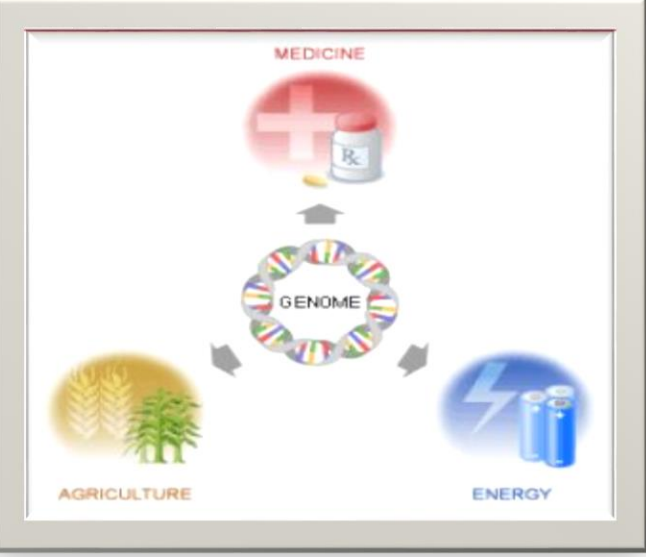
### ❖ Context

- Scientists published **the first complete human genome** filling in the gaps that remained after first human genome sequence was published in 2003 under Human Genome Project.

### ❖ About Human Genome Project

- A genome refers to **all of the genetic material** in an organism. **The human genome is mostly the same** in all people, but a **very small part** of the DNA does **vary** between one individual and another.
- A **complete human genome** makes it **easier to study genetic variation between individuals or between populations**.
- Human Genome Project was an international collaboration between 1990 and 2003. The reference genome that originated from the project is known as **Genome Reference Consortium build 38 (GRCh38)**.
- It contained information from a region of the human genome known as the **euchromatin** where the chromosome is rich in genes, and the DNA encodes for protein.
- About 8% of the human DNA, known as **heterochromatin**, had been left unsequenced because:
  - This is a smaller portion of the genome, and does not produce protein, thus thought to be a junk DNA.

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- Euchromatin genes that were simpler to sequence with the tools available at the time.
- ❖ **About T2T project**
  - Now, the fully sequenced genome is the result of the efforts of a global collaboration called the Telomere-2-Telomere (T2T) project.
  - The new reference genome, called **T2T-CHM13**, includes highly repetitive DNA sequences found in and around the **telomeres** (structures at the ends of chromosomes) and the **centromeres** (at the middle section of each chromosome).
- ❖ **Significance of the Findings**
  - **Long stretches of DNA** that are **uplicated** in the genome and are known to play **important roles in evolution and disease**.
  - Though every human has some repeats, **not everyone has the same number of them**. And the difference in the number of repeats is where most of human genetic variation is found.
  - Many of the newly revealed regions have important functions in the genome even if they do not include active genes.
  - The **T2T consortium** used the now-complete genome sequence as a reference to **discover more than 2 million additional variants** in the human genome.

## Ithaca



- ❖ **Context**
  - An **artificial intelligence (AI)** called Ithaca is able to **predict missing text in ancient Greek inscriptions**.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
  - Ithaca is trained on thousands of existing inscriptions to suggest text to fill the gaps in fragmented writing.
  - It even estimates the **time frame and geographical origin** of ancient inscriptions.
  - Its suggestions tend to match those previously made by academics.

## Launch of Rupay in Nepal



- ❖ **Context**
  - **Prime Minister of India** and **Nepalese Prime Minister** jointly launched several projects on the occasion.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
  - During the talks both sides shared perspectives on further strengthening the **friendly ties between the two nations**.
  - They flagged off the 35-kilometer **long cross-border passenger train services** between **Jaynagar of Bihar in India** and **Kurtha in Nepal**. Both the leaders also **jointly inaugurated Solu Corridor 132 KV Power Transmission Line** and Substation in Nepal built under the **Government of India's Line of Credit**.
  - The two Prime Ministers **launched RuPay Card in Nepal** will add a new chapter to our financial connectivity.
  - Four **MoUs** were signed in the presence of both Prime Ministers were:
    - **Positive, forward-looking**, and
    - Covered areas like **security, development, and trade**.
    - Give priority to **trade and cross-border connectivity initiatives** in all respects.
    - Cooperation between the **defence and security institutions** of the two countries.

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