



# Daily current affairs

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## **Haritha Haram**

- Haritha Haram is a large-scale tree-planting program implemented by the Government of Telangana to increase the amount of tree cover in the state from 24% to 33%. The program was launched by Telangana Chief Minister Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao on 3 July 2015.
  - It is one of the Telangana Flagship programmes to rejuvenate degraded forests, protecting these forests from threats such as smuggling, encroachment, fire and grazing. It adopted intensive soil and moisture conservation measures based on a watershed approach.
  - The Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SSCL) is protecting several species of trees as part of its plantation drive taken up under Haritha Haaram programme.
  - The Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) is a Government coal mining company jointly owned by the Government of Telangana and Government of India on a 51:49 equity basis.
  - The Singareni coal reserves stretch across 350 Km of the Pranahita - Godavari Valley of Telangana
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## **Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)**

- Looking to emulate the success of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in designing and launching satellites, the Centre has drawn up a five-year, Rs.8,000 crore plan to explore the deep recesses of the ocean.
- The Union Earth Sciences Ministry — tasked with coordinating the exercise — unveiled a blueprint of the 'Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)'.
- Among the key deliverables to achieve these goals are an offshore desalination plant that will work with tidal energy, and developing a submersible vehicle that can go to a depth of at least 6,000 metres with three people on board.
- The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean, similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago

India's share:

- India has been allotted a site of 1,50,000 sq. km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by the UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN). These are rocks scattered on the seabed containing iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.

- It is envisaged that 10% of recovery of that large reserve can meet the energy requirement of India for the next 100 years. It has been estimated that 380 million metric tonnes of polymetallic nodules are available at the bottom of the seas in the Central Indian Ocean
- India's Exclusive Economic Zone spreads over 2.2 million sq. km and in the deep sea, lies "unexplored and unutilised."

The focus will be on technologies for deep-sea mining, underwater vehicles, underwater robotics and ocean climate change advisory services, among other aspects.

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### **National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System**

- India is in talks with the U.S. to procure an advanced air defence system to defend the National Capital Region (NCR) from aerial attacks. The process for procuring the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II (NASAMS-II), estimated at \$1 billion, has been initiated.
- India is deploying a multi-tiered air defence network to fully secure its airspace from incoming fighter aircraft, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). This system would complement other systems such as the medium and long-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems under procurement.
- India is also in an advanced stage of talks with Russia for the procurement of very long range S-400 air defence systems.
- Apart from these imports, India is also developing an indigenous Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system.
- The NASAMS was developed by Raytheon in partnership with KONGSBERG Defence and Aerospace of Norway.
- NASAMS-II is an upgraded version of the NASAMS and features new 3D mobile surveillance radars and 12 missile launchers for quicker reaction.

India is going ahead with the procurement of the S-400 systems despite differing views of the U.S. over the sanctions against Russia and the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act

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### **Fast tag**

- Less than two years after the government introduced the radio frequency identification device (RFID)-based FASTag system for vehicles crossing toll gates on the country's highway network, 26 lakh cars and trucks now use the windscreen-mounted tags to shorten their journey time.
- According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways officials, FASTag users can experience 'near' non-stop movement at 405 of the 479 toll plazas on various national highways.
- This is how the device works - the tag with a quick response (QR) code and an identification number is affixed to the windscreen of a vehicle. The tag is linked to a user's FASTag account with the bank of his or her choice.
- Trucks and taxis account for the biggest users of FASTags unlike personal car owners

whose movement is most likely to be restricted to city limits.

- While the device was rolled out in April 2016, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways made it mandatory from December 1, 2017 for all new cars and trucks to be fitted with a FASTag before they were sold. But, the use of these smart cards is not mandatory yet.

The Ministry has also proposed to make FASTag compulsory for all commercial vehicles seeking a national permit.

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### **Gold council**

- The Centre has decided to set up a Domestic Council for Gold to aid exports of jewellery and to create an ecosystem to harness the true potential for jewellery-making in the country.
  - This council will represent all the jewellers of India who will be the electoral college. They will form different interest groups and elect those who will sit in the council, the council would provide domestic support for exports.
  - A Coordination Committee will be set up comprising senior officials of the Ministry and the gem and jewellery industry, who will meet monthly to ensure that industry concerns are addressed on priority. The first meeting of the committee will be held on August 1.
  - The Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) was set up by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India (GoI) in 1966. It was one of several Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) launched by the Indian Government, to boost the country's export thrust, when India's post-Independence economy began making forays in the international markets. Since 1998, the GJEPC has been granted autonomous status.
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