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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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TIMES OF INDIA

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Grant citizenship to daughter of OCI card-holders: HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi high court has asked the Centre to grant citizenship to a 17-year-old girl, raised in India to parents who held Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards and US citizenship at the time of her birth.

"The petitioner, despite having been born in India to two OCI card holders, educated in India and lived in India with her family, is unable to obtain a passport. These are clearly special circumstances as contemplated under Section 5(4) of the Act," Justice Prathiba M Singh noted while referring to provisions of the Citizenship Act of 1955 and the Passports Act of 1967.

Petitioner Rachita Francis Xavier had moved court challenging rejection of her plea for a passport. She informed the court that both her parents were earlier Indian citizens. However, they acquired US citizenship by 2005 and hence her parents were not Indian citizens on the date she was born.

The petitioner submitted that she is not an illegal migrant and qualified as a person of Indian origin entitling her to citizenship by registration. HC saw merit in the plea and noted that her circumstances would be covered under Explanation 2, as both parents of the petitioner were Indian citizens who had later obtained US citizenship.

The court pointed out that even OCI card holders are free to stay in India and can also rear their families, noting that in Xavier's case the parents were OCI card holders when she was born and she has continuously stayed in India since birth. She has been educated in India and now sought a passport, HC said.

It allowed the plea and permitted the girl to apply for registration as a citizen under Section 5 of the Citizenship Act.

OVERSEAS CITIZENSHIP OF INDIA

(Syllabus GS Paper 2 – Polity)

Context: The Delhi High Court has directed the Centre to grant citizenship to a 17-year-old girl who was born in India to parents holding Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards and US citizenship.

Overseas Citizens of India (OCI)

- **Constitutionality:** India does not allow holding Indian citizenship and Citizenship of a foreign country simultaneously.
- **History:** Based on the recommendation of the High Level committee on Indian Diaspora, the Government of India decided to grant Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI).
- **Amendment:** Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) of certain category as has been specified in the **Section 7A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 are eligible for registration as OCI.**
- **Key Features:**
  - **Limitations:** if the applicant had ever been a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh, he/she will not be eligible.
  - **Not been given any voting rights,** election to Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha/Legislative Assembly/Council, holding Constitutional posts such as President, Vice President, Judge of Supreme Court/High Court etc.
- **Benefits:**
  - Multiple entry, multi-purpose life long visa to visit India;
  - Exemption from reporting to Police authorities for any length of stay in India;
  - **Parity with NRIs in financial, economic and educational fields except in the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties.**
  - Registered Overseas Citizen of India shall be treated at par with Non-Resident Indian in the matter of inter-country adoption of Indian children.
  - Registered Overseas Citizens of India shall be treated at par with resident Indian nationals in the matter of tariffs in air fares in domestic sectors in India.
  - Registered Overseas Citizens of India shall be charged the same entry fee as domestic Indian visitors to visit national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in India

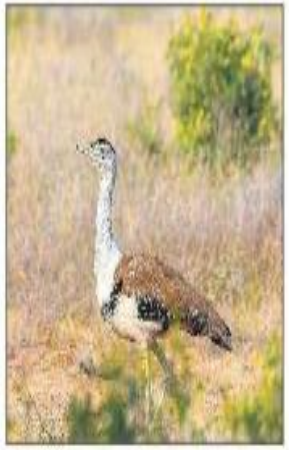
HINDUSTAN TIMES

Page 1

GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Environment)

Aviaries mimicking GIB habitat a last-ditch effort to save species



The GIB is found only in India. SHUTTERSTOCK

Mukesh Mathrani

letters@hindustantimes.com

BARMER: The Rajasthan government and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have come up with the idea of creating a tunnel-like aviary to mimic the natural landscape of the desert grassland that is their habitat to acclimatise Great Indian Bustard chicks being reared in captive breeding centres before their release. The aviaries are planned at Ramdevra in Jaisalmer, according to Ashish Vyas, district forest officer at the Desert National Park.

There are 34 bustards at the Sudasri and Ramdevra breeding centres, roughly a fourth of the population of around 140 of the species that remains. Over the decades, the numbers have decreased because such habitats are rarely recognised as areas where it is critical to preserve biodiversity. →P12

Context: The Rajasthan government, in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), has proposed an innovative solution to aid the conservation efforts of the **Great Indian Bustard.** They plan to establish tunnel-like aviaries that replicate the natural landscape of the desert grasslands, the native habitat of these birds.

Great Indian Bustard

- **About**: It is the State bird of Rajasthan and is considered India's most critically endangered bird.
- **Flagship species:** It is considered the flagship grassland species, **representing the health of the grassland ecology.**
- **Habitat**: Its population is **confined mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat.** Small populations occur in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Protection Status: IUCN:** Critically Endangered**, CITES**: Appendix 1**, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS):** Appendix 1**, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule 1
- **Concerns:** As Rajasthan shares the **international border with Pakistan**'s Sindh and Punjab provinces, the birds have **become easy prey for the gun-toting poachers.**

Initiatives taken to protect GIB

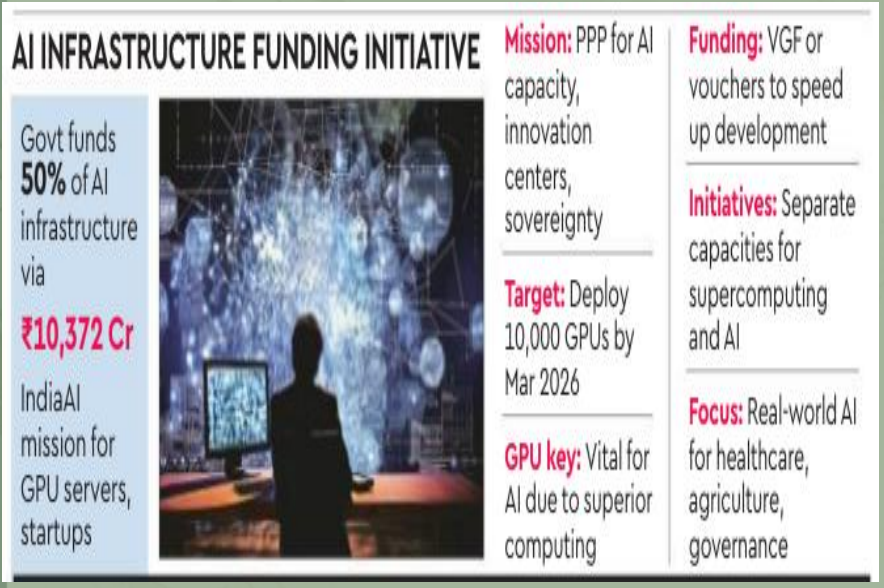
- **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats:** GIB is kept under the species recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- **Conservation Breeding Facility**: MoEF&CC, Rajasthan government and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have established a conservation breeding facility in Desert National Park at Jaisalmer in June 2019.
- **Project Great Indian Bustard**: It has been launched by the Rajasthan government with an aim of constructing breeding enclosures for the species and developing infrastructure to reduce human pressure on its habitats.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS
Page 4

INDIA AI MISSION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Science and Tech)

AI mission projects may get 50% subsidy, says MeitY secy



Context: In a bid to propel India's technological landscape into the future, the government has unveiled a series of ambitious **IndiaAI Mission** Projects, including upto 50% subsidy.

IndiaAI Mission:

- **Launched:** In 2024 for a period of 5 years.
- **Aim:** To ensure a structured implementation of the IndiaAI Mission through a public-private partnership model aimed at nurturing India's AI innovation ecosystem. Democratize the benefits of AI across all strata of society.
- **Objective:** To erect a cutting-edge, scalable AI computing infrastructure by deploying over 10,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs).
- **Key Components:** IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), IndiaAI Datasets Platform etc.
- **Fund allocation**: Over 10, 300 drore.

Use of Fund:

- To fortify the **IndiaAI Startup Financing mechanism**, facilitating streamlined access to funding for budding AI startups and catalyzing their journey from product development to commercialization.
- It will enable **IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC)** to spearhead the development and deployment of foundational models, with a specific emphasis on indigenous Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) and domain-specific models, leveraging edge and distributed computing for optimal efficiency.
- **IndiaAI Datasets Platform**, which will be developed by the Independent Business Division (IBD) of IndiaAI, is slated to receive a boost to enhance accessibility, quality, and utility of public sector datasets, in order to ensure data-driven governance and catalyzing AI-based innovation and research.
- **IndiaAI FutureSkills program** will focus on expanding the reach of AI education by increasing the accessibility of graduate and post-graduate AI programs.

LIVEMINT

EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

India, Eurasian Economic Union to begin FTA talks

This comes at a time when Russia is facing western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine.

Rhik Kundu & Dhirendra Kumar
NEW DELHI

India plans to begin negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which is expected to significantly increase trade between the regions, two people aware of the matter said, requesting anonymity.

The EEU, comprising five post-Soviet states—Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan—has exchanged trade data with the Indian side ahead of negotiations, one of the persons mentioned above said.

"Both sides haven't met yet. After the assimilation of data, the EEU and India are expected to meet for negotiations in the next stage to take the process forward," the person added.

There is a willingness from both the Russian and the Indian side to get the trade agreement done, the process for which will now likely kick off after the new government takes over, said the other person mentioned above.

"The FTA will improve trade between the Russian bloc and India," this person added.

Spokespersons of India's commerce ministry and the Russian embassy didn't respond to emailed queries.

Talks for an FTA between EEU and India come at a time when Russia is facing sanctions from major Western economies following its invasion of Ukraine.

These sanctions have impacted trade and subsequently economy of Russia, while cutting off access to prominent Western-backed financial systems.

The SWIFT ban against Russian banks is one of several international sanctions against the Russian regime imposed by the European Union and other western countries aimed at weakening Russia's economy.

The sanctions against have also led to an increase in local currency usage for settlement of trade between Russia and its trading partners, including India.

The trade deal between the EEU and India is also likely to improve Indian exports into Russia. At present, trade is skewed in favour of Russia.

During FY24, India's exports to Russia stood at $4.26 billion, while imports stood at $61.42 billion, up from $3.15 billion exports and $46.21 billion imports in the previous fiscal.

India's top imports from Russia include crude oil and petroleum products, coal, fertilizers, vegetable oil, pearl, iron & steel and newsprint.

Its top exports to Russia include pharma & drugs, iron & steel, processed minerals, marine products, telecom instruments and electronic machinery.

A recent report by economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) states that FTAs have emerged as the most important trade promotion tool for India.

"India targets of having an FTA with all major world economies in 2024-25. Beginning 2024, it is in the advanced stages of negotiating FTAs with the UK, Oman, USA, the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Russia, Sri Lanka and Peru," the GTRI report also said.

"This means by the end of 2024, India may have completed or nearing completion of an FTA with all major economies except China," it added.

Meanwhile, foreign minister S. Jaishankar on Friday said the rise in trade with Russia should not be seen as a temporary phenomenon as more economic opportunities are emerging between the nations.

"As that country turns eastwards, fresh economic opportunities are presenting themselves ... the spike in our trade and new areas of cooperation should not be regarded as a temporary phenomenon," he said at an industry event.

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The FTA is expected to improve trade between the Russian bloc and India. BLOOMBERG

$4.26 bn India's exports to Russia during FY24

$3.15 bn Exports registered in the previous fiscal year

Context: India plans to begin negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Russian-led **Eurasian Economic Union (EEU),** which is expected to significantly increase trade between the regions.

Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)

- **About**: It is an ambitious project for economic integration in the former Soviet region. Its formal objectives are to create a common market much like the European Union (EU).
- **Evolution:** Original proposal in 1994➔Economic community in 2000➔Eurasian customs union in 2010➔Eurasian Economic space in 2012➔EAEU treaty signed in 2014 which was established in 2015.
- **Members**: Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia.
- **Administrative centre**: Moscow, Russia.
- **Benefits for India after FTA with EEU**: The trade deal between the EEU and India is also likely to improve Indian exports into Russia.

India-Russia Trade:

- **Economic Trade**: At present, trade is skewed in favor of Russia. During FY24, India's exports to Russia stood at $4.26 billion, while imports stood at $61.42 billion.
- **India's imports:** Crude oil and petroleum products, coal, fertilizers, vegetable oil, pearl, iron & steel and newsprint.
- **India's exports: P**harma & drugs, iron & steel, processed minerals, marine products, telecom instruments and electronic machinery.
- **India's FTA Targets:** India targets of having an FTA with all major world economies in 2024-25. Beginning 2024, it is in the advanced stages of negotiating FTAs with the UK, Oman, USA, the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Russia, Sri Lanka and Peru

THE HINDU Page 11

INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

'Creditors realised only 4% of claims under IBC process'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Only 17% yielded a resolution plan with the remaining cases withdrawn post National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) admission as on March 31, and liquidation for 960 corporate debtors were completed where creditors realised only 4% of their total admitted claims under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), ICRA said in a study.

The NCLT approved a record 269 resolution plans under the IBC in FY24, surpassing FY23 record of 189 cases, but the rise in average duration of the resolution process has caused worries, ICRA said.

Creditor claims of ₹1.7 lakh crore were resolved through resolution plan approvals in FY24 against ₹1.5 lakh crore in FY23 and haircut by lenders rose to 73% from 64%, it added.

Average duration to close Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) rose to 843 days in FY24. The number of CIRPs closed through liquidation orders continued to outpace those yielding a resolution plan, ICRA said.

Abhishek Dafria, Group Head, Structured Finance Ratings at ICRA, said, "We continue to find creditors approaching the NCLT to admit a defaulting debtor with substantial delays."

Context: A recent study of Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency (ICRA) revealed that as of FY24, creditors realized only 4% of their claims under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).**

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

- **About:** India's bankruptcy law, designed to consolidate the existing framework by creating a comprehensive code for handling insolvency and bankruptcy cases.
- **Mechanism:**
  - **Initiation:** Filed by either the (financial or operational) to the NCLT. **debtor or creditors**
  - **Threshold:** Default amount must be at least ₹1 crore.
  - **Deadline:** 330 days for the completion of the resolution process
  - **NCLT Decision:** The tribunal has 14 days to accept or reject the application, providing reasons if rejected.
- **Interim Resolution Professional (IRP):** IRP is appointed by the NCLT to take control of the debtor's assets and operations.
  - **Duties:** Collects information, constitutes the Committee of Creditors CoC, and manages the company's affairs.
  - **CoC Powers:** Decides to continue with the IRP or appoint a new Insolvency Professional (IP).
- **Resolution Plan:** IP invites resolution plans from potential investors.
  - Approval: A plan needs a 66% vote in favor from the CoC members.
  - Submission to NCLT: The approved plan is submitted to the NCLT for final approval.
- **Liquidation:** If no resolution plan is approved within the stipulated timeframe or if the CoC decides so. The company's assets are sold off, and the proceeds are distributed among creditors.
- **The Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process ('CIRP')** is a recovery mechanism for the creditors of a corporate debtor. A corporate debtor means a company or Limited Liability Partnership ('LLP') that owes a debt to its creditors.

ML & AI TECHNOLOGY HUB (MATH)
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – S&T)

MATH — A centre of excellence dedicated to AI & ML

SMCC, CSIR-NIScPR

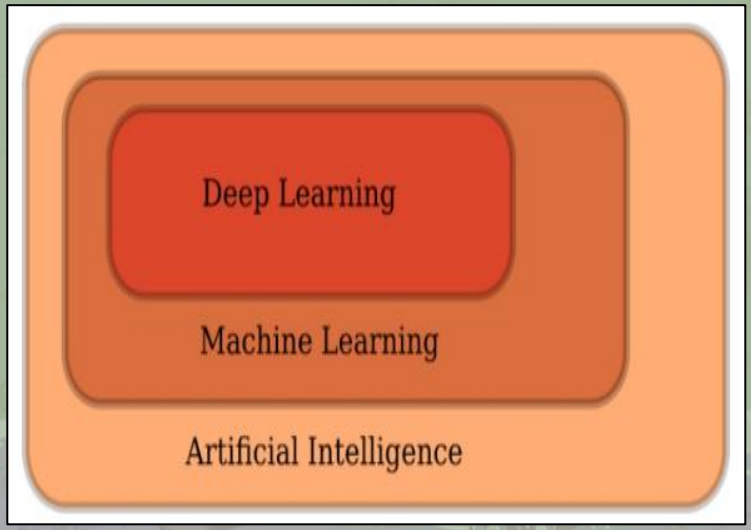
Context: The Department of Science and Technology (DST), under the Ministry of S&T, and T-Hub, a Hyderabad-based start-up incubator, inaugurated the **Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Technology Hub (MATH).**

Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Technology Hub (MATH)

- **About**: It is a centre of excellence, for boosting AI innovation and nurturing start-ups in India. This collaborative effort is a significant step towards harnessing the country's immense potential in the field of AI.
  - This initiative represents a convergence of government support, technological infrastructure, and entrepreneurial spirit aimed at propelling India to the forefront of global AI innovation.
  - It plans to incubate hundreds of AI-first startups in the next few years.
- **Facilities to be provided**: Funding, partnerships and mentorship for AI and machine learning startups across the country.
- **Key focus area**: Healthcare and clean tech among others.

Machine Learning:

- **About**: It is a branch of artificial intelligence (AI) and computer science that focuses on the using data and algorithms to enable AI to imitate the way that humans learn, gradually improving its accuracy.
  - It is a **self-adaptive algorithm** that gets better and better analysis and patterns with experience or with new added data.
  - **For e.g.** It processes all transactions happening on the digital platform, find patterns in the data set, and point out any anomaly detected by the pattern.



BUSINESS STANDARD

Page 1

INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)



FM: India must up its share in global manufacturing

Says private sector a partner in developing India

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said PLI scheme helped in transforming the mobile and electronics sectors PHOTO: PTI

RUCHIKA CHITRAVANSHI
New Delhi, 17 May

India must ramp up its manufacturing sector to increase its share in global value chains and become self-reliant with the help of government policies, Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman said on Friday.

"Much against the advice given by some economists that India should no longer be looking at manufacturing or ramping up manufacturing, I would like to highlight the fact that manufacturing must increase... We need to have greater sophistication in our product manufacturing," Sitharaman said at the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) Annual Business Summit here.

Some economists, including former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan, recently said India should focus on the services sector rather than manufacturing as it has missed that opportunity.

Sitharaman said the government was looking at the private sector as a partner in developing India and sees it playing a big role towards becoming a developed country by 2047. Turn to Page 6

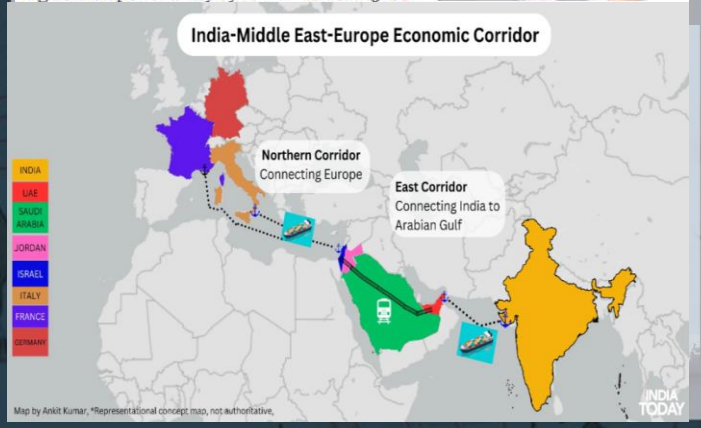
Dead serious about IMEC: Jaishankar

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY
New Delhi, 17 May

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said India was working to establish the India-Middle East- Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), passing through the Chabahar port, asserting that there is a need to re-engineer the global logistics map.

Speaking at the CII Annual Business Summit, Jaishankar said every member nation was determined to see the IMEC through, despite the challenging situation in West Asia.

"We are dead serious about it (IMEC) and have been talking to each other. Not everything has to fall in place for something to start. Wherever we can get moving, we will get moving," the minister said. Turn to Page 6



Context: External Affairs Minister of India recently said that India is working to establish the **India-Middle East- Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC),** passing through the Chabahar port, asserting that there is a need to re-engineer the global logistics map.

India-Middle East- Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

- **About**: It is a planned economic corridor that aims to bolster economic development by fostering connectivity and economic integration between Asia, the Persian Gulf and Europe.
- **The proposed route:** From India to Europe through the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Greece.
  - The IMEC will comprise of **two separate corridors:** The east corridor connecting India to the Gulf and northern corridor connecting Gulf to Europe.
- **Need:** To provide reliable and cost-effective cross-border ship to rail transit network to supplement existing maritime routes.
  - To increase efficiency, reduce costs, secure regional supply chains, increase trade accessibility, enhance economic cooperation, generate jobs and lower greenhouse gas emission, resulting in a transformative integration of Asia, Europe and the Middle East (West Asia).
- **Part of:** The project is a **part of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII).**
- **Countries involved:** India, USA, Saudi Arabia, UAE, European Union, Italy, France and Germany.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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NEW EV POLICY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Environment)

All auto companies can make investments under EV policy

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

AMID CONCERNS raised by automakers already operating in India that the new electric vehicle (EV) policy favours new entrants such as Tesla, a senior government official on Friday clarified that the union government will allow existing automakers to make greenfield investment commitments under the new policy.

The details will be part of the guidelines that are in the process of being finalised by the Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI), the official said, adding that the second round of consultations to roll out the guidelines is set to start soon. The first round of consultations saw Tesla representatives join the process for the first time.

"The government plans to allow all companies including existing automakers to make greenfield investments under the EV policy. The second round of industry consultations will start," the official said.

The clarification that addresses the level playing field concerns raised by a number of automobile companies comes a month after Tesla CEO Elon Musk postponed plans to visit India to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi but was seen in China barely a week later to push for the approval of full self-driving (FSD) cars.

Concerns over a level playing field comes as New Delhi after initial resistance conditionally eased duty norms for EVs under the new policy. The policy allows import of completely built-up (CBU) cars at a 15 per cent import duty from 100 per cent earlier for manufacturers setting up facilities in India with a minimum investment of Rs 4,150 crore.

Meanwhile, Tesla is 'silent' and yet to communicate its India plans to the government under the new EV policy, an official said as per *PTI*. This comes amid expectations that Musk would announce plans for Tesla to set up its manufacturing unit in India with an initial $2 billion investment in the country.

Notably, Musk scored a major victory during his China visit giving a much needed boost to its shares. Musk won approval for introducing Full Self-Driving (FSD) in China, clearing key administrative roadblocks in Beijing after meeting with top government officials.

Earlier, the Centre is learnt to have turned down China-based BYD's proposal to build a $1-billion EV plant in partnership with Hyderabad-based Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd in June last year. The rejection of the proposal was in line with India's broad policy to filter Chinese investments in crucial sectors in India.

Under the new EV policy, EV passenger cars (e-4W) can initially be imported with a minimum CIF value of $35,000, at a duty rate of 15 per cent for a period of 5 years from the date of issuance of approval letter by Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI). However, the maximum number of e-4W allowed to be imported at the reduced duty rate has been capped at 8,000 per year. The carryover of unutilised annual import limits would be permitted, the policy read.

India is currently the world's third largest automobile market and one of the fastest growing automotive markets in the world. The current market size of the automotive sector is Rs 12.5 lakh crore and the sector is expected to cross Rs 24.9 lakh crore by 2030. The automotive sector contributes over 7.1 per cent to the country's GDP.



The current market size of the automotive sector in India is Rs 12.5 lakh crore. Reuters

IMPORTING EVs

- The EV policy allows import of built-up cars at a 15 per cent import duty for manufacturers setting up facilities in India with an investment of Rs 4,150 crore
- Under the new EV policy, EV passenger cars can initially be imported with a minimum CIF value of $35,000, at a duty rate of 15 per cent for a period of 5 years

Context: Recently, centre government clarify that all auto companies can make investments under EV policy.

New Electric vehicle policy:

- **Aim:** To promote the country as a leading manufacturing destination for EVs and attract investments from global EV makers.
- **Provisions**:
  - **Three-Year Establishment Window**: A three-year grace period provided for establishing local manufacturing units for EVs. Currently, India imposes hefty taxes ranging from 70 per cent to 100 per cent on imported cars, depending on their value.
  - **Domestic Component Stipulation**: Requirement for at least 25% of components to be domestically sourced.
  - **Minimum Investment required**: Rs 4,150 crore ($500 million).
  - **Maximum Limit**: No limit on Investment.
  - **Timeline for manufacturing:** 3 years for setting up manufacturing facilities in India, and to start commercial production of e-vehicles, and reach 50 per cent domestic value addition (DVA) within 5 years at the maximum.
  - **Domestic value addition (DVA) during manufacturing**: A localisation level of 25 per cent by the 3rd year and 50 per cent by the 5th year will have to be achieved.
  - **Custom Duty Applicability:** 15 per cent (as applicable to CKD units) would be applicable for a period of 5 years.

Benefit of EV Policy

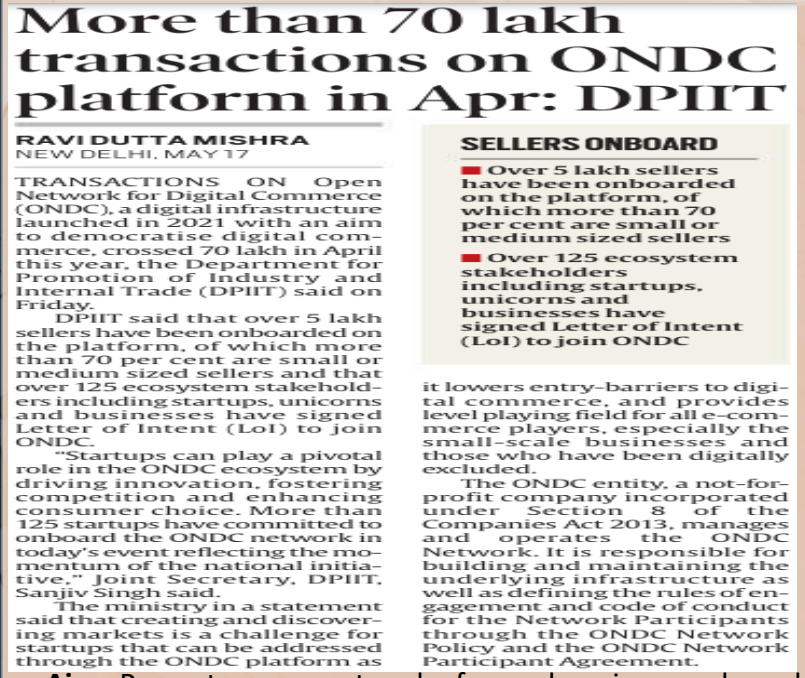
- **Attract manufacturers and investment:** The E-Vehicle Policy is poised to attract global EV manufacturers, fostering high volume production within India.
- **Economies of Scale and Affordability**: With increased production, economies of scale will drive down the cost of EVs, making them more affordable for Indian consumers.
- **Reduction of Air Pollution**: The widespread adoption of EVs will lead to a significant decrease in air pollution levels within cities, positively impacting public health and the environment

INDIAN EXPRESS

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OPEN NETWORK FOR DIGITAL COMMERCE

(Syllabus GS Paper 2 – Governance)



More than 70 lakh transactions on ONDC platform in Apr: DPIIT

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

TRANSACTIONS ON Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a digital infrastructure launched in 2021 with an aim to democratise digital commerce, crossed 70 lakh in April this year, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said on Friday.

DPIIT said that over 5 lakh sellers have been onboarded on the platform, of which more than 70 per cent are small or medium sized sellers and that over 125 ecosystem stakeholders including startups, unicorns and businesses have signed Letter of Intent (LoI) to join ONDC.

"Startups can play a pivotal role in the ONDC ecosystem by driving innovation, fostering competition and enhancing consumer choice. More than 125 startups have committed to onboard the ONDC network in today's event reflecting the momentum of the national initiative," Joint Secretary, DPIIT, Sanjiv Singh said.

The ministry in a statement said that creating and discovering markets is a challenge for startups that can be addressed through the ONDC platform as it lowers entry-barriers to digital commerce, and provides level playing field for all e-commerce players, especially the small-scale businesses and those who have been digitally excluded.

The ONDC entity, a not-for-profit company incorporated under Section 8 of the Companies Act 2013, manages and operates the ONDC Network. It is responsible for building and maintaining the underlying infrastructure as well as defining the rules of engagement and code of conduct for the Network Participants through the ONDC Network Policy and the ONDC Network Participant Agreement.

SELLERS ONBOARD

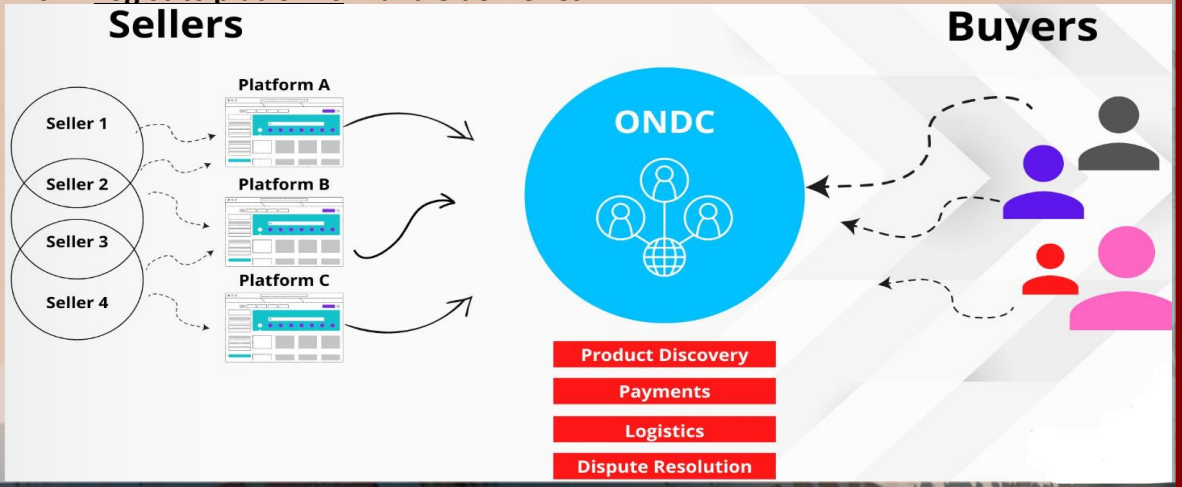
- Over 5 lakh sellers have been onboarded on the platform, of which more than 70 per cent are small or medium sized sellers
- Over 125 ecosystem stakeholders including startups, unicorns and businesses have signed Letter of Intent (LoI) to join ONDC

Context: Recently, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said transactions on **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC),** crossed 70 lakh in this year.

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC):

- **About:** The ONDC entity, a not-for-profit company incorporated under Section 8 of the Companies Act 2013, manages and operates the ONDC Network.
- **Responsibilities:** It is responsible for building and maintaining the underlying infrastructure as well as defining the rules of engagement and code of conduct for the Network Participants through the ONDC Network Policy and the ONDC Network Participant Agreement
- **Not Application:** ONDC is not an application, an intermediary, or software; it is a set of specifications designed to facilitate open interchange and connections between shoppers, technology platforms, and retailers.
- **Components:**
  - **Buyer-side apps:** Consumers place orders.
  - **Seller-side apps**: Merchants are onboarded and their listings displayed.
  - **Logistics platforms**: Handle deliveries.

- **Aim:** Promote open networks for exchanging goods and services digitally or electronically., Create new opportunities and curb digital monopolies., Support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and small traders to get online, Democratize digital commerce from a platform-centric model to an open-network.
- **Benefits:** Provides small retailers with an opportunity to offer services and goods nationwide through an e-commerce system, Enables merchants to save data to build credit history and reach consumers, Expected to digitize the entire value chain and promote the inclusion of suppliers, Enhances efficiencies in logistics and value for consumers



DTE May 17

INDIAN LEOPARD

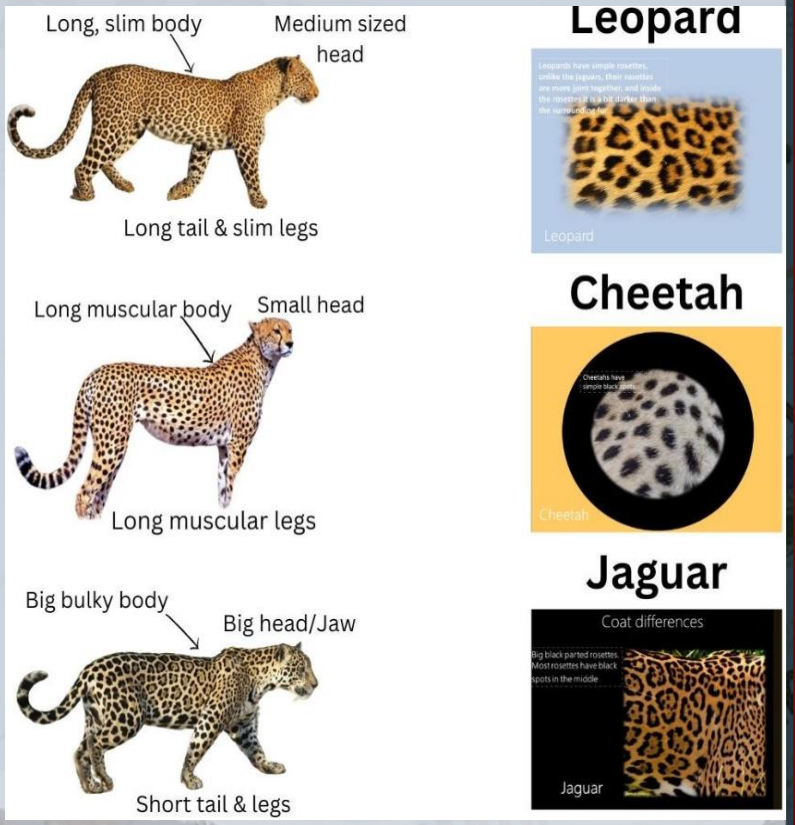
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Environment)

India's small cats have been ignored & overlooked, experts tell DTE as leopard cat spotted in Maharashtra's Pench

Context: Recently, Leopard cat spotted in Maharashtra's Pench, in what is being billed as Central India's first sighting of the species.

Indian leopard:

- **About:** A subspecies of the leopard (P. pardus) that is widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent. .
- **Habitat**: They are adaptable to a range of habitats, including the Himalayan foothills, Western Ghats, dry deciduous forests, and the northeastern regions of India.
- **Conservation status**:
  - IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
  - CITES: Appendix I
  - Wildlife (Protection) Act,1972: Schedule I
- **Behavioral pattern:**
  - **Elusiveness and Solitary Behaviour:** The leopard is characterized by its elusive nature, preferring solitude, and is primarily active during the night.
  - **Climbing Proficiency**: Known for its exceptional climbing abilities, the leopard has been observed resting on tree branches during the day.
  - **Tree-Associated Behaviours**: The leopard exhibits distinctive behaviours such as dragging its kills up trees and suspending them there. It is also capable of descending from trees headfirst.
- **Population and regional distribution:**
  - The leopard population in India witnessed an 8% rise from 12,852 in 2018 to 13,874 in 2022.
  - Madhya Pradesh reported the highest leopard count (3,907), followed by Maharashtra (1,985), Karnataka (1,879), and Tamil Nadu (1,070.
- **Human-Leopard Conflict:**
  - Leopards' adaptability leads to conflict, particularly in villages, as they are known to prey on cattle, resulting in higher mortality rates



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