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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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THE HINDU Page 12

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – International Relations)

What are the causes of the flare-up in eastern Congo?

What are the underlying reasons behind the renewed clashes between the Congolese army and the M23 rebels? How has the humanitarian crisis worsened as a result of the recent escalation in violence?

Sumeda

The story so far:

Renewed clashes in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have sparked global concern, worsening the humanitarian crisis. Fighting between the Congolese army and Rwandan-backed M23 group intensified around Sake and Nyanzale, resulting in deaths, displacements, and food security risks. The U.S. urged both countries to avoid war, calling for Rwanda to withdraw its personnel and missile systems. The United Nations and several Western countries have also denounced the attacks and called on the M23 rebels to cease their offensive.

What is the conflict?

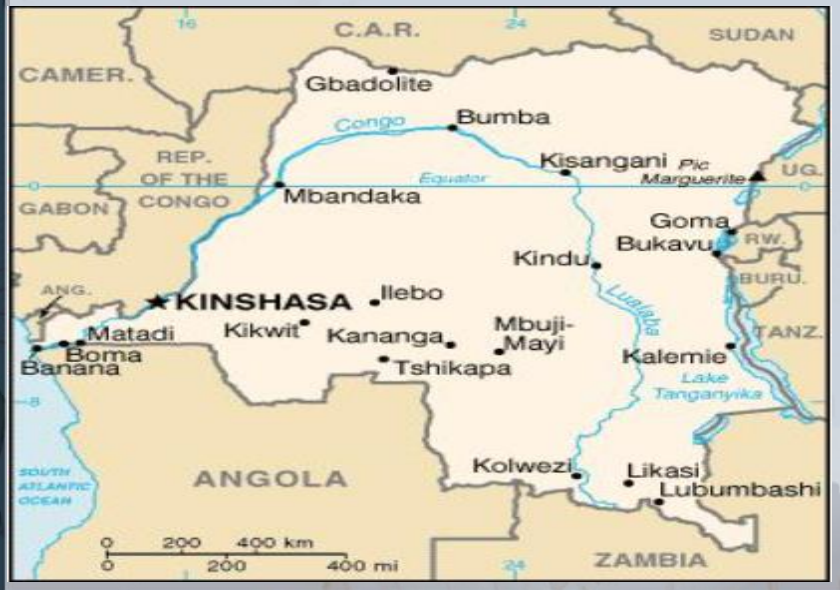
An unending cycle of violence has engulfed the eastern region of the central African country for decades, with the conflict originating in two civil wars. In 1994, an estimated eight lakh minority ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were killed by extremist Hutus in 100 days, in what is now known as the Rwandan genocide.

In the subsequent days, around two million people crossed the Congolese border (then known as Zaire) to settle in refugee camps in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu as a Tutsi government gained control of Rwanda.

Tutsi militias also banded together to fight extremist Hutus as tensions heightened between local Congolese and Rwandan emigrants. The ethnic tensions further set the stage for the First Congo War between the Zairean soldiers on one hand and the Tutsi militia and the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) on the other, with the backing of Rwanda and Uganda which wanted to root out the remaining perpetrators of the genocide. In 1997, the AFDL captured the capital Kinshasa and Zaire was renamed as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Another deadly war followed in 1998 after the new regime ordered Rwandan refugees and troops to leave the country. It feared that Rwanda would join forces with Uganda. The war that followed was dubbed 'Africa's world war.' A new Rwanda-backed rebel group, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), began invading parts of Congo. In response, Congolese President Laurent-Désiré Kabila allowed armed Hutu refugees to organise in the east to fight against Rwanda.

Since then, several agreements have been signed to put an end to what has



Context: Renewed clashes in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have triggered global alarm and exacerbated the already dire humanitarian crisis in the region.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- **About:** The DRC, often referred to as Congo-Kinshasa or simply the Congo is situated in Central Africa.
  - It ranks as the second-largest country in Africa in terms of land area and the 11th-largest globally.
- **Population**: With a population of approximately 112 million people, the DRC holds the distinction of being the most populous Francophone country worldwide.
- **Capital**: Kinshasa
- **Bordering Nations**: The DRC shares its borders with a multitude of nations, including the Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania (across Lake Tanganyika), Zambia, and Angola.
- **Marine Boundary**: it has a coastline along the South Atlantic Ocean.
- **River:** Congo River, or Zaire River
- **Highest Mountain:** Mount Stanley.

Roots of Conflict

- **About**: Originating in the 1990s, the conflict in the eastern region of the central African country stems from two civil wars, notably the Rwandan genocide in 1994 where extremist Hutus killed hundreds of thousands of minority ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates.

UNDP'S REPORT ON HDI
(Syllabus GS Paper 3 – Economy)

'Remarkable progress': UN hails India's progress in Human Development Index

Context: India has recently ascended a rank on the **global Human Development Index (HDI),** as per the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report 'Breaking the gridlock: Reimagining cooperation in a polarised world' released.

Highlight of the Report

- **India's Global Ranking Improvement:** India's global ranking improved marginally from 135 in 2021 to 134 in 2022, amidst a total of 193 ranked countries in 2022 and 191 in 2021.
- **Regional Disparities in Human Development**: India lags behind its southern neighbor Sri Lanka (78) and China (75) in the High Human Development category, while also falling below Bhutan (125) and Bangladesh (129) in the Medium Human Development category. Switzerland holds the top position.
- **Comparison with Neighboring Nations**: India outperforms Nepal (146) and Pakistan (164) in global rankings.
- **Life Expectancy Improvement**: India's life expectancy at birth saw a slight increase from 67.2 years in 2021 to 67.7 years in 2022.
- **Enhancement in Expected Years of Schooling (EYS)**: There is an overall increase (5.88%) in expected years of schooling (EYS) from 11.9 years to 12.6 years, resulting in an improvement of 18 places in rankings when considering the EYS aspect.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

- **About**: The UNDP's mandate encompasses ending poverty, fostering democratic governance, advancing the rule of law, and establishing inclusive institutions.
- **Objective**: It serves as an advocate for change and facilitates connections between countries, offering access to knowledge, experience, and resources to improve people's lives.
- **Establishment:** In 1966 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the UNDP has been actively engaged in global development efforts for decades.
- **Focus Areas**: UNDP's work is concentrated in three primary areas: Sustainable development, Democratic governance and peace building, and Climate and disaster resilience.
- **Funding**: The UNDP operates on voluntary contributions from member nations, relying entirely on their financial support to carry out its mission.
- **Headquarters**: New York, USA.

INDIA TODAY Mar 14

ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

'One Nation One Election in 2029': Ram Nath Kovind-led panel submits report



Context: Recently, the Kovind panel submitted its report on "One nation, one election" to the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Kovind Committee Recommendation

- **Fundamental Transformation in Governance**: Simultaneous elections recommended by the Ram Nath Kovind-led committee would fundamentally transform the electoral process and governance structure.
- **Constitutional Amendment Proposal:** The committee proposed amending the Constitution to enable simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and local bodies by 2029.
- **Unanimous Consensus**: Recommendations stemmed from unanimous opinions gathered from political parties, experts, and stakeholders, emphasizing the necessity for simultaneous elections.
- **Enabling Legal Mechanism**: The report urged the development of a legally tenable mechanism by the Centre to restore the cycle of simultaneous elections.
- **Mitigation of Governance Disruptions**: Simultaneous elections aim to reduce disruptions to governance and policy paralysis caused by the Model Code of Conduct, potentially boosting economic growth.
- **Adjustment of Legislative Assembly Terms**: Recommendations include adjusting the terms of legislative assemblies in three phases over the next five years.

Simultaneous Elections

- **About**: Simultaneous elections, or "One Nation, One Election," entail holding elections for Lok Sabha, all state Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies (municipalities and panchayats) concurrently.
- **Historical Precedent:** Simultaneous elections were first conducted in seven states—Bihar, Bombay, Madras, Mysore, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal—in 1957.
- **Subsequent Changes**: Despite initial success, simultaneous elections fell out of practice after the fourth general elections of 1967.

NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Mar 14

LYME DISEASE

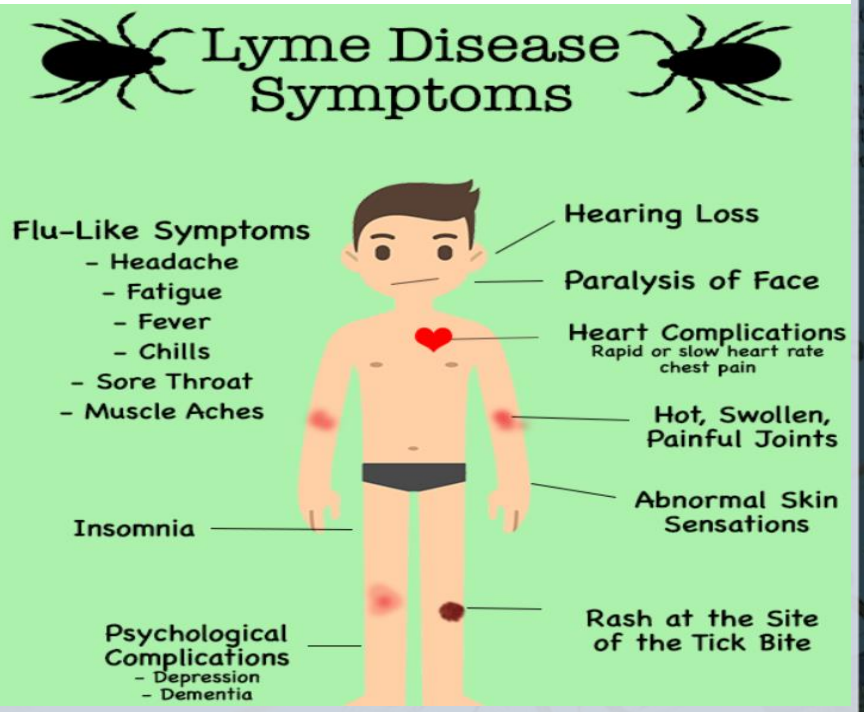
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Kochi: Lyme disease confirmed in 56-yr-old from Koovappady

Context: A case of Lyme disease has been recently reported in the Ernakulam district of Kerala.

Lyme Disease

- **About**: It is a vector-borne infectious disease caused by the bacterium Borrelia burgdorferi.
- **Transmission:** Primarily transmitted through the bite of infected black-legged ticks, also known as deer ticks.
- **Lyme Disease Cannot Spread**:
  - **Human-to-Human Transmission**: It does not spread between humans.
  - **Pet-to-Human Transmission**: It cannot be transmitted from pets to humans.
  - **Air, Food, or Wate**r: It doesn't spread through air, food, or water.
  - **Not Transmitted by Other Insects**: Lice, mosquitoes, fleas, and flies do not transmit Lyme disease.
- **Symptoms**: Early symptoms typically appear 3 to 30 days after an infected tick bite.
  - Manifestations include fever, headache, fatigue, and the distinctive "bull's-eye" red rash called erythema migrans (EM).
  - EM serves as a crucial sign for early diagnosis and management.



- **Treatment**:
  - **Standard Antibiotic Treatment**: Antibiotics such as doxycycline or amoxicillin are standard treatments, especially in early stages.
- **Advanced Cases**: Intravenous antibiotics may be required in later stages.

PIB

Mar 14

PMJVK SCHEME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt Scheme)

Ministry of Minority Affairs approves projects under PMJVK Scheme for 'Establishment of Centre for Jain Studies in Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya (DAVV), Indore Campus

Context: The Ministry of Minority Affairs inspired by 'Panch Pran' of Honourable Prime Minister has approved projects under PMJVK Scheme for 'Establishment of Centre for Jain Studies in Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya (DAVV), Indore Campus with the total estimated cost of Rs. 25.Cr.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)

- **About:** It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) aimed at developing community infrastructure and basic amenities in identified areas.
- **Implementation Structure**: Implemented under State Governments/Union Territory (UT) Administrations with fund sharing, managed by respective State/UT Governments.
- **Inclusive Infrastructure**: Infrastructure developed benefits all residents of the designated areas, focusing on socio-economic improvement.
- **Restructuring and Scope**: Restructured in May 2018 to address socio-economic gaps in 1300 identified areas, now extended to all districts during the 15th Finance Commission Cycle.
- **Approval Process:** Proposals vetted by State Level Committee (SLC) led by Chief Secretary, further approved by the Empowered Committee (EC) in consultation with Central Ministries.
- **Funding Arrangement:** Funding shared between Centre and State/UT, varying from 90:10 for North East States to 60:40 for other States/UTs, with full support for UTs without Legislature and Central Government Organisations.
- **Priority Sectors and Projects**: Emphasis on education, health, skill development, and women-oriented projects, including construction of educational facilities, healthcare centers, skill training institutes, and public amenities like toilets and sports facilities.

LIVEMINT

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ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)



Ex-IAS officers Sandhu and Kumar are appointed as ECs

Six names of former bureaucrats came up before the selection panel chaired by PM

PTI
feedback@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Former IAS officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu were on Thursday appointed as election commissioners (ECs). The law ministry issued a notification announcing the appointments.

A selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met earlier in the day to recommend their names. The vacancies had come up in the Election Commission after the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey on 14 February and the sudden resignation of Arun Goel on 8 March.

The selection panel is chaired by the prime minister. It has as its members one Union minister—home minister Amit Shah—as nominated by the government and the leader of the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury of the Congress.

Chowdhury, however, gave his dissent note on the selection, raising questions over the procedure. He said he had sought the names of the shortlisted candidates for the posts but was provided 212 names the night before the committee met. Addressing reporters at his residence soon after the meeting ended, Chowdhury said six names came up before the panel for the selection of the two election commissioners and the names of Sandhu and Kumar were finalized by a majority of members of the high-powered panel.

The six names shortlisted were: Utpal Kumar Singh, Pradeep Kumar Tripathi, Gyanesh Kumar, Indevar Pandey, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, and Sudhir Kumar Gangadhar Rahate, all former bureaucrats.

He said, "I did not have information about the background, experience and integrity of these people and I did not like the procedural lacunae" but the appointments were made.

> The vacancies had come up in the Election Commission after Anup Chandra Pandey's retirement and the sudden resignation of Arun Goel

Kumar and Sandhu are 1988-batch IAS officers from the Kerala and Uttarakhand cadres, respectively.

During his tenure in the home ministry, Kumar oversaw the abrogation of the Constitution's Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Sandhu, a former chief secretary of Uttarakhand, is learnt to have overseen the ideation for the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code in the state.

Context: A committee headed by Prime Minister of India has picked two retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers – Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar – as election commissioners (ECs).

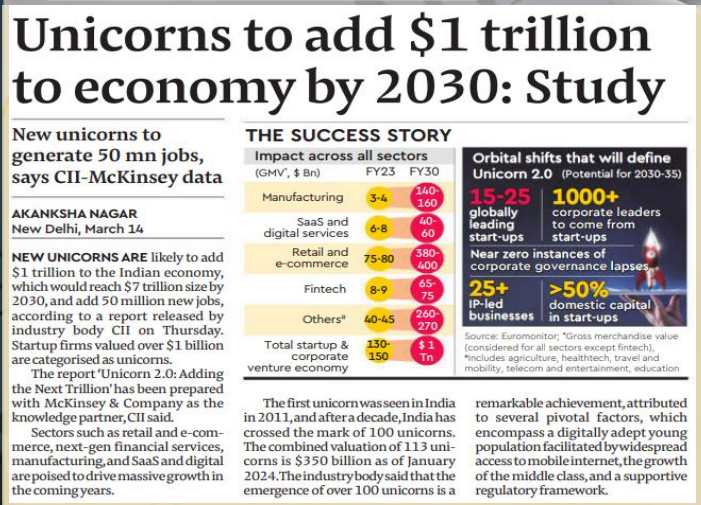
Election Commission of India

- **Status:** Constitutional Body established on 25th January 1950 .
- **Aim:** To administer elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
- **Composition**: The election commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and a such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the **president may from time to time fix**.
- **Current Process of Appointment:**
  - **Article 324(2):** The appointment of Election Commissioners are done as per the **CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.**
  - **Current Method:** It is done by the President on recommendations of a committee comprising Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition , and a Union minister.
- **Tenure:** Fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- **Removal:** They can resign anytime or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.
  - The CEC can be removed from office only through a process of removal similar to that of a SC judge by Parliament.
  - Other member of the commission can be removed only on the recommendation of the CEC.

- **Powers and functions of the Election Commission of India**
- **Administrative:**
  - Powers for determining the territorial areas of the electoral constituencies.
  - Preparing electoral rolls.
  - Notifying the dates and schedules of elections.
  - Granting recognition to political parties, allotting election symbols to parties, determine the code of conduct in times of elections etc.
- **Advisory:**
  - Advise the President and Governor on matters relating to the disqualifications of the members of Parliament and state legislature respectively.
  - To advise the president whether elections can be held in a state under president's rule in order to extend the period of emergency after one year.

UNICORN 2.0

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)



Unicorns to add $1 trillion to economy by 2030: Study

New unicorns to generate 50 mn jobs, says CII-McKinsey data

AKANKSHA NAGAR
New Delhi, March 14

NEW UNICORNS ARE likely to add $1 trillion to the Indian economy, which would reach $7 trillion size by 2030, and add 50 million new jobs, according to a report released by industry body CII on Thursday. Startup firms valued over $1 billion are categorised as unicorns.

The report 'Unicorn 2.0: Adding the Next Trillion' has been prepared with McKinsey & Company as the knowledge partner, CII said.

Sectors such as retail and e-commerce, next-gen financial services, manufacturing, and SaaS and digital are poised to drive massive growth in the coming years.

THE SUCCESS STORY

Impact across all sectors

(GMV*, $ Bn)	FY23	FY30
Manufacturing	3-4	140-160
SaaS and digital services	6-8	40-60
Retail and e-commerce	75-80	380-400
Fintech	8-9	65-75
Others*	40-45	260-270
Total startup & corporate venture economy	130-150	$1 Tn

Orbital shifts that will define Unicorn 2.0 (Potential for 2030-35)

- 15-25 globally leading start-ups
- 1000+ corporate leaders to come from start-ups
- Near zero instances of corporate governance lapses
- 25+ IP-led businesses
- >50% domestic capital in start-ups

Source: Euromonitor; *Gross merchandise value (considered for all sectors except fintech), *includes agriculture, healthtech, travel and mobility, telecom and entertainment, education

The first unicorn was seen in India in 2011, and after a decade, India has crossed the mark of 100 unicorns. The combined valuation of 113 unicorns is $350 billion as of January 2024. The industry body said that the emergence of over 100 unicorns is a remarkable achievement, attributed to several pivotal factors, which encompass a digitally adept young population facilitated by widespread access to mobile internet, the growth of the middle class, and a supportive regulatory framework.

Context: According to a report recently released by industry body CII, new unicorns are expected to contribute to the Indian economy by adding $1 trillion, potentially propelling it to a $7 trillion size by 2030, while also generating 50 million new jobs.

Highlights of Study

- **Name of Report:** Unicorn 2.0: Adding the Next Trillion
- **Emergence of Unicorns:** The first unicorn sighting in India occurred in 2011, marking the beginning of a transformative era.
- **Rapid Expansion:** Within a decade, India has surged past the milestone of 100 unicorns, showcasing remarkable growth and innovation.
- **Collective Valuation**: As of January 2024, the combined valuation of these 113 unicorns stands impressively at $350 billion, signifying their substantial economic impact.
- **Catalyst for Economic Growth:** Startups have become integral to India's economy, particularly in nine key sectors ranging from manufacturing to education, fueling growth and dynamism.
- **India's economy across 9 sunrise sectors**: Manufacturing; IT and digital services; agricultural ecosystems; healthcare services; travel and tourism, modern retail and e-commerce; next-generation financial services; communication, media and entertainment; and skills and education.
- **CII Insights**: According to the CII report, India's unicorns and startups have significantly bolstered GDP growth, accounting for 10-15% between 2016 and 2023, underlining their pivotal role in shaping India's economic trajectory.

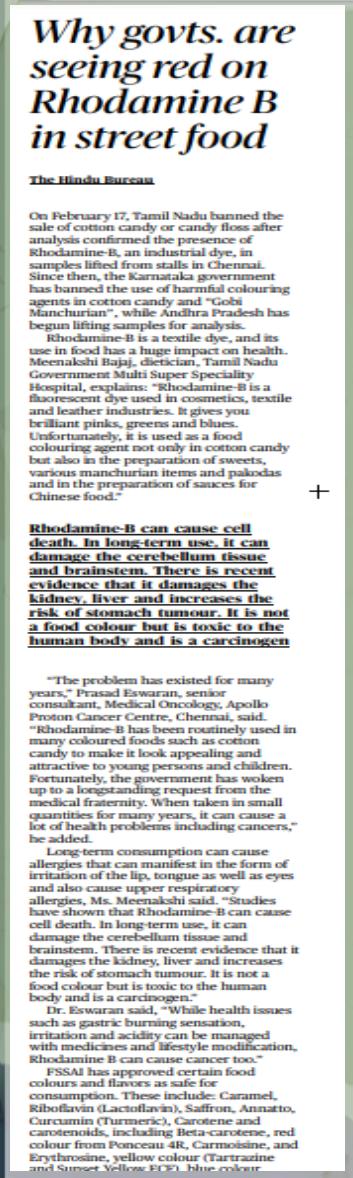
Unicorn startup

- **About:** Unicorns are privately held, venture-capital backed startups that have reached a value of $1 billion.
- **The term was first popularised by:** Venture capitalist Aileen Lee.
- **Very rare and require innovation**: Because of their sheer size, unicorn investors tend to be private investors or venture capitalists, which means they are out of the reach of retail investors.
- **Based on growth potential:** The valuation of unicorns is not expressly linked to their current financial performance, but largely based on their growth potential as perceived by investors and venture capitalists who have taken part in various funding rounds.

THE HINDU

Science

RHODAMINE B
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)



Why govts. are seeing red on Rhodamine B in street food

The Hindu Bureau

On February 17, Tamil Nadu banned the sale of cotton candy or candy floss after analysis confirmed the presence of Rhodamine-B, an industrial dye, in samples lifted from stalls in Chennai. Since then, the Karnataka government has banned the use of harmful colouring agents in cotton candy and "Gobi Manchurian", while Andhra Pradesh has begun lifting samples for analysis.

Rhodamine-B is a textile dye, and its use in food has a huge impact on health. Meenakshi Bajaj, dietician, Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital, explains: "Rhodamine-B is a fluorescent dye used in cosmetics, textile and leather industries. It gives you brilliant pinks, greens and blues. Unfortunately, it is used as a food colouring agent not only in cotton candy but also in the preparation of sweets, various manchurian items and pakodas and in the preparation of sauces for Chinese food."

Rhodamine-B can cause cell death. In long-term use, it can damage the cerebellum tissue and brainstem. There is recent evidence that it damages the kidney, liver and increases the risk of stomach tumour. It is not a food colour but is toxic to the human body and is a carcinogen

"The problem has existed for many years," Prasad Eswaran, senior consultant, Medical Oncology, Apollo Proton Cancer Centre, Chennai, said. "Rhodamine-B has been routinely used in many coloured foods such as cotton candy to make it look appealing and attractive to young persons and children. Fortunately, the government has woken up to a longstanding request from the medical fraternity. When taken in small quantities for many years, it can cause a lot of health problems including cancers," he added.

Long-term consumption can cause allergies that can manifest in the form of irritation of the lip, tongue as well as eyes and also cause upper respiratory allergies, Ms. Meenakshi said. "Studies have shown that Rhodamine-B can cause cell death. In long-term use, it can damage the cerebellum tissue and brainstem. There is recent evidence that it damages the kidney, liver and increases the risk of stomach tumour. It is not a food colour but is toxic to the human body and is a carcinogen."

Dr. Eswaran said, "While health issues such as gastric burning sensation, irritation and acidity can be managed with medicines and lifestyle modification, Rhodamine B can cause cancer too."

FSSAI has approved certain food colours and flavors as safe for consumption. These include- Caramel, Riboflavin (Lactoflavin), Saffron, Annatto, Curcumin (Turmeric), Carotene and carotenoids, including Beta-carotene, red colour from Ponceau 4R, Carmoisine, and Erythrosine, yellow colour (Tartrazine and Sunset Yellow FCF), blue colour

Context: Recently, Tamil Nadu govt prohibited the sale of cotton candy or candy floss after discovering the presence of Rhodamine-B, an industrial dye, in samples collected from stalls in Chennai.

Rhodamine B

- **About:** It is a chemical compound widely utilized in synthetic dyes across various industries, including textiles, cosmetics, plastics, and food coloring.
- **Potential Health Hazards**: Despite its prevalent use in food coloring, Rhodamine B has been associated with health concerns such as skin and eye irritation, respiratory issues, and debates regarding its carcinogenic properties.
- **Carcinogenicity Classification**: The United States' National Library of Medicine has not classified Rhodamine B as carcinogenic to humans, but concerns persist regarding its safety.
- **Reasons for Ban**: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) prohibits the addition of colorants to food unless explicitly permitted by regulations. Rhodamine B is not among the permitted synthetic colorants listed in the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulation, 2011.
  - **Red** - Ponceau 4R, Carmoisine, Erythrosine
  - **Yellow** - Tartrazine, Sunset Yellow FCF
  - **Blue** - Indigo Carmine, Brilliant Blue FCF
  - **Green** - Fast Green FCF
- **Cell Death Induction**: Rhodamine-B has the potential to induce cell death within the body.
- **Neurological Damage:** Prolonged usage of Rhodamine-B can lead to damage to cerebellum tissue and the brainstem.
- **Organ Damage**: Recent evidence suggests that Rhodamine-B can harm the kidneys and liver, while also increasing the risk of stomach tumors.
- **Non-Food Colorant and Carcinogenicity:** Despite its use as a colorant, Rhodamine-B is not suitable for consumption and is toxic to the human body, being classified as a carcinogen.

HINDUSTAN TIMES Page 5

PM-SVANIDHI

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt Scheme)

SVANidhi scheme proven lifeline for vendors: Modi

Soumya Chatterjee
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the two new Delhi Metro corridors and handed cheques to five beneficiaries of the PM-SVANidhi scheme at a public event held at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Thursday evening.

As part of the event just ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, 100,000 more loans under the scheme implemented by the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) were disbursed on Thursday nationwide. The two new Delhi Metro corridors—one from Lajpat Nagar to Saket G-Block in the south and the other from Inderlok in the northwest to Indraprastha in central Delhi — were approved only on Wednesday by the Union Cabinet.

Hitting out the INDIA alliance, the PM said they were guided by "corruption, misgovernance and fueling anti-national agenda" while he was interested in the welfare of all for the benefit of the nation. "Previous governments did not pay any heed to the needs of street vendors, nor did they make any effort to tackle their issues," Modi said to the gathering that included beneficiaries of PM-SVANidhi, a microcredit facility for street vendors.

"This servant of yours has come out of poverty. I have lived in poverty. That is why those who have not been cared for by anyone were not only cared for but have been worshipped by Modi," he added.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi hands over a cheque to a beneficiary of SVANidhi scheme. ARVIND YADAV/HT

The PM said that those who did not have anything to give as collateral were assured of "Modi's guarantee" referring to the collateral-free nature of PM-SVANidhi. To date, 6.2 million beneficiaries have received assistance worth Rs 11,000 crores, with more than half of them being women.

Modi said that not only did the scheme bring financial inclusion to the street vendors, it also introduced them to 'SVANidhi se Samriddhi Yojana' through which they got benefits from other welfare schemes run by different ministries. He mentioned free ration, free medical treatment and free gas connections introduced by the government. He also highlighted the transformative approach of the 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme, which allows availing free ration from anywhere in the country.

The PM said 10 million houses have been allotted to the urban poor across India, of which 3,000 houses have already been completed in Delhi and another 3,500 houses are about to be completed.

"The Metro network in Delhi has expanded two times in the last 10 years," he said, adding that Delhi Metro is among the most extensive networks among the select few cities in the world.

He also mentioned NaMo Bharat Rapid Rail connectivity between Delhi and the National Capital Region. "The Central Government is running more than 1,000 electric buses in Delhi to curb pollution in the city."

The PM SVANidhi scheme rolled out in June 2020 during the first wave of Covid-19 is a microcredit facility with which collateral-free loans up to ₹50,000 are given to street vendors. The beneficiaries can avail ₹10,000 as the first tranche, and upon successful repayment, they are eligible for a loan of ₹20,000 and a third tranche of ₹50,000 upon repayment of the second loan. Under the scheme, regular repayments are incentivised with a 7% interest subsidy, and digital transactions are rewarded with cashback up to ₹1,200 per year.

Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri, who heads the MoHUA, lieutenant-governor of Delhi VK Saxena, and minister of state for finance Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad were also present at the event.

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone for two new Delhi Metro corridors and distributed cheques to five beneficiaries of the PM-SVANidhi scheme.

PM-SVANidhi

- **About:** It is a central sector scheme to provide to provide a small working capital loan a scheme for street vendors.
- **Launched:** June 01, 2020
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- **Implementing Agency**: Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
- **Objective**:
  - To facilitate and provide working capital loans up to Rs.10,000 at a subsidised rate of interest,
  - To incentivise regular repayment of the loan, and
  - To reward digital transactions.
  - Introduction of 3rd term loan of up to ₹50,000 in addition to 1st & 2nd loans of ₹10,000 and ₹20,000 respectively.
- **Lending Agencies:** Microfinance Institutions, Non-Banking Financial Companies, Self Help Groups
- **Eligible for the Loan**: Vendors with vending experience dating back to or **before March 24, 2020**, and possessing a vending certificate are eligible for the loan.
- **The Street Vendors Act 2014:** It mandates Town Vending Committees, consisting of local authorities and area vendors, to issue vending certificates following a comprehensive survey of all vendors.
- **Funding:** It is a Central Sector Scheme.
- **A recent study**: SBI has hailed the performance of the scheme stating that 43% beneficiaries are women street vendors. Moreover 44% of the PM SVANidhi beneficiaries belong to OBC category, while Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes account for 22%.

PROJECT SOORYA
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

SOORYA: Project Team For Rocket To Build Space Station Ready; 3rd Launch Pad At Sriharikota To Come Up

Context: ISRO has formalised a project team, internally named 'SOORYA', to start **building the New Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV).**

Project SOORYA

- **About:** Establishing a 3rd launch pad at Sriharikota is essential due to the differing configuration of the NGLV compared to current rockets.
- **Multi-stage Launch Capability**: NGLV boasts a 3-stage launch vehicle design, enhancing its efficiency and adaptability for various missions.
- **Environmentally Friendly Fuel Options**: Utilizes green fuel combinations like methane-liquid oxygen or kerosene-liquid oxygen, ensuring reduced environmental impact during launches.
- **Enhanced Payload Capacity**: Offers a payload capacity of up to 10 tonnes to Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO), more than doubling the capability of India's current heaviest rocket, the LVM-3.
- **Reusability for Cost Efficiency**: Features recoverable parts, enabling reusability and significantly reducing launch costs to around $1,900 per kg to Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- **Cost-Competitive Solution:** With its reusability, NGLV provides a cost-effective alternative with a lower launch cost compared to expendable configurations, contributing to economic viability.
- **Aligning with India's Space Vision 2047:** Supports the national goal of establishing a space station by 2035 and eventual lunar exploration by Indian astronauts, in line with India's Space Vision 2047.

Next Generation Launch Vehicle

- **About:** The Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), formerly known as the Unified Launch Vehicle (ULV), is a project led by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- **Features**: The NGLV is envisaged as a three-stage rocket with partial reusability, a departure from the current operational systems like PSLV, GSLV, and LVM3.
- **Purpose and Objective**: Designed with the aim to modernize and enhance India's space launch capabilities, the NGLV seeks to replace existing launch platforms, ensuring better efficiency and adaptability.

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