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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Dec 21

RAMP PROGRAMME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

MSME Ministry launches 3 sub-schemes under RAMP programme; makes ZED scheme free for women

Context: Recently, the union Minister for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched three sub-schemes under the aegis of the **RAMP (Raising and Accelerating MSME Productivity)** programme.

Sub Schemes under RAMP

- **MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme (MSE GIFT Scheme)**: It will help enterprises adopt green technology with interest subvention and credit guarantee support
- **MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme)**: It is the first-ever scheme in the government to support circular economy projects which will be done through credit subsidy and support MSME sector towards zero emissions by 2070.
- **MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments**: It is a first-of-its-kind scheme to synergise legal support with modern IT tools and artificial intelligence in order to address the issue of delayed payments for micro and small enterprises.

RAMP Programme

- **About:** The RAMP scheme is a comprehensive and ambitious initiative that has the potential to make a major impact on the Indian MSME sector.
- **Launched:** 2022
- **Aim**: To strengthen institutions and governance structures at both central and state levels.
- Center-State Linkages and Partnerships
- **Objective**
  - Improving access to market and credit for MSMEs
  - Strengthening institutions and governance at the central and state levels
  - Improving center-state linkages and partnerships
  - Addressing issues of delayed payments
  - Greening of MSMEs

THE HINDU

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NAMDAPHA FLYING SQUIRREL

Syllabus GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Missing for 42 years, Namdapha flying squirrel resurfaces in Arunachal Pradesh

The arboreal mammal shares habitat with the similar red giant flying squirrel for which it could have been mistaken; a team from Assam conservation group sighted the squirrel in April 2022

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

A nocturnal flying squirrel has resurfaced in Arunachal Pradesh after going missing for 42 years.

The Namdapha flying squirrel (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*) was last described in 1981 based on a single individual found in the 1,985 sq. km. Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district.

The failure of zoologists to locate the arboreal mammal during several expeditions thereafter generated two theories – that it could have been mistaken for the very similar red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) sharing the same ecosystem or worse, become history.



Sighted finally: A picture of the Namdapha flying squirrel. It was last found in the reserve in Arunachal Pradesh. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ten of these expeditions were by teams from Aaranyak, an Assam-based biodiversity conservation group, for a total of 79 days in 2021. A team from the group finally sighted the Namdapha flying squirrel in April 2022.

The team led by Firoz Ahmed included Sourav Gupta, a field researcher, and Sourav Mardi, a volunteer. Tajum Yomcha, a research officer with the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department, aided the search for the elusive species.

"We sighted a small reddish and grizzled furry mammal high up on a tree. After months of scrutiny of the photographic evidence we gathered, experts are pretty much sure that the animal is the Namdapha flying squirrel," Mr. Ahmed said.

Study to collect DNA

The team members said they are designing a study to collect DNA samples of the squirrel in the field for comparing the genetic material with the DNA of the individual collected in 1981, stored at the Zoological Survey of India in Kolkata.

"If the animal sighted during our last expedition is established as the Namdapha flying squirrel, it will be a powerful flagship for conservation for both the tiger reserve and other wildlife species found here," Mr. Ahmed said.

Context: A nocturnal flying squirrel has resurfaced in Arunachal Pradesh after going missing for 42 years.

Namdapha Flying Squirrel

- **About:** It is an arboreal, nocturnal flying squirrel endemic to Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India,
- **Last Seen**: In 1981 based on a single individual found in Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district.
- **Appearance**: It has reddish, grizzled fur with white above. Its crown is pale grey, its patagium is orangish and its underparts are white. Flying squirrels are not capable of flight like birds or bats; instead, they glide between trees.
- **IUCN Status**: Critically Endangered
- **Threatened by**: Poaching of animals for food from within the park, and possibly by habitat destruction.

Namdapha Tiger Reserve

- **Location:** Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh
- **Declared as**: the 15th Tiger Project (1983) of the country with a core area of 1985.245 Sq.Km and a buffer area of 245 Sq.Km.
- It was declared a **Wildlife Sanctuary under the Assam Forest Regulation 1891** on 2nd Oct.'1972.
- It was later **declared a National Park on 12th May 1983**, under Wildlife (Protection) Act1972.

PIB Dec 21

SIMILIPAL TIGER RESERVE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Protection of Black Tiger

Context: Melanistic tigers have been recorded only in the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Odisha.

Similipal Tiger Reserve

- **About**: Similipal is a tiger reserve in the Mayurbhanj district in the Indian state of Odisha covering 2,750 km2 (1,060 sq mi).
- **Located**: In the Mayurbhanj District of Odisha's northernmost region.
- **Declared as**: Tiger Reserve in the year 1956 under Project Tiger in May 1973.
- **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**: Declared in 1994 by the government of India
- **Fauna**: Sambar, Chital, Barking deer, Leopard cat, Fishing Cat, Jungle Cat, Flying squirrel, Mongoose, and Pangolin
- **Flora**: Eastern Highlands moist deciduous forests ecoregion, tropical moist broadleaf forest and tropical moist deciduous forests with dry deciduous hill forest and high-level Sal forests
- **River**: Budhabalanga, Salandi, and many tributaries of the Baitarani river
- **Other Tiger Reserve**: Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Bhubaneswar

Black Tiger

- **About:** A black tiger is a rare colour variant of the tiger, and is not a distinct species or geographic subspecies.
- **Reason of black colour:** So-called black tigers are due to pseudo-melanism. Pseudo-melanistic tigers have thick stripes so close together that the tawny background is barely visible between stripes.
- **Presence:** Melanistic tigers have been recorded only in the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Odisha. As per the 2022 cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation, 16 individuals were recorded at Similipal Tiger Reserve, out of which 10 were melanistic.

INDIA TODAY Dec 21

POLAR STRATOSPHERIC CLOUDS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geography)

Rare phenomena make the sky glow in Arctic. It's not aurora

Context: Recently, weather watchers have captured images of rare **Polar stratospheric clouds** over Scotland, northern England and the West Midland.

Polar Stratospheric clouds (PSC)

- **Known as**: Nacreous clouds or mother of pearl
- **Formation**: The stratosphere is very dry; unlike the troposphere, it rarely allows clouds to form.
- **Characteristics**: Due to their high altitude and the curvature of the surface of the Earth, these clouds will receive sunlight from below the horizon and reflect it to the ground, shining brightly well before dawn or after dusk.
    - PSCs form at very low temperatures, below −78 °C (−108 °F). These temperatures can occur in the lower stratosphere in polar winter.
- **It causes ozone depletion**: PSCs play important roles in stratospheric ozone depletion at high latitudes during winter and spring (e.g., the Antarctic ozone hole). PSC particles serve as sites for heterogeneous reactions that convert stable chlorine reservoir species to radicals that catalytically destroy ozone.

Types of PSC

- **Type I Clouds** contain water, nitric acid and/or sulphuric acid and they are a source of polar ozone depletion. They form when temperatures drop to -78°C or lower.
    - **Type Ia Clouds** consist of large, aspherical particles, consisting of nitric acid trihydrate (NAT).
    - **Type Ib Clouds** contain small, spherical particles (non-depolarising), of a liquid supercooled ternary solution (STS) of sulphuric acid, nitric acid and water.
    - **Type Ic Clouds** consist of metastable water-rich nitric acid in a solid phase.
- **Type II Clouds**, which are very rarely observed in the Arctic, consist of water ice only. They need temperatures of -83°C or lower to form.

DRAFT NORMS FOR SROs

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

RBI seeks to audit SROs for regulated entities

SRO to inform the central bank on breach of norms by members

MANOJIT SAHA
Mumbai, 21 December

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday announced draft omnibus norms for setting up self-regulatory organisations (SROs) by its regulated entities and in those it has proposed to audit the books of such institutions.

The framework prescribes the broad objectives, functions, eligibility criteria, and governance standards, which will be common for all SROs irrespective of sectors they belong to.

The framework lays down the broad membership criteria and other terms and conditions to be followed by SROs for grant of recognition by the regulator.

"Reserve Bank may inspect the books of the SRO or arrange to have the books inspected by an audit firm. The SRO shall be obligated to provide the required information to the inspection team for the purpose of conduct of inspection," the draft norms said, adding the expenses of such inspection shall be borne by the SRO.

The draft norms said SROs should have strong governance mechanisms, including a focus on an independent board, transparency, and adherence to well-defined processes. The draft norms said the objectives of SROs should be to create a culture of compliance among their members by promoting progressive practices and conventions and there should be special attention to extending guidance and support, particularly to smaller entities within the sector, and sharing best practices aligned with statutory and regulatory policies.

It proposed that SROs devise and implement standardised procedures for handling disputes among members, including processes to resolve these disputes through a transparent and consistent dispute resolution/arbitration mechanism. "The SRO should have suitable surveillance methods for effective monitoring of the sector," the norms said.

"For this purpose, the SRO should frame and implement a comprehensive code of conduct for its members."

SROs should monitor adherence to the code by their members.

One of the main objectives of SROs would be to collect and share relevant sectoral information to the RBI to aid in policymaking.

The primary responsibility of an SRO towards its members is to promote best business practices, and it should establish minimum benchmarks and conventions for professional market conduct among its members, the regulator said.

An SRO should develop a uniform, reasonable and non-discriminatory membership fee structure, it said.

SROs have also been asked to establish grievance redress and dispute resolution/arbitration frameworks for their members and offer counsel on restrictive, unhealthy and such other practices which may be detrimental to the growth of the sector.

The RBI has said SROs should keep the regulator informed about developments in the sector, and promptly inform it about any violation of norms by a member. "The SRO should submit its Annual Report to the Reserve Bank, within three months of completion of the accounting year," the norms said.

The norms proposed SROs be set up as not-for-profit companies under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013. The applicant must have adequate networth and should possess or have the ability to create infrastructure to enable it to discharge responsibilities of an SRO on a continuing basis, it said.

"The applicant must represent the sector and have the specified membership or should have submitted roadmap for attaining specified membership within a reasonable timeline," the draft norms said.

SROs must satisfy fit and proper criteria. It is mandated that at least one-third of the members on the board of directors of an SRO, including the chairperson, shall be independent and without any active association with the category/class of regulated entities for which the SRO is established. "Any change in the directorship or any adverse information about any Director, shall be immediately reported to the Reserve Bank," the norms said.

Feedback on the draft omnibus framework can be submitted by January 25 next year. The RBI said it would issue a separate notification inviting applications for SROs for a category/class of its regulated entities, within the broad contours of the final omnibus framework.



ILLUSTRATION: AJAYA MOHANTY

SRO PROPOSALS

- Strong governance mechanisms, focus on independent board
- Suitable surveillance methods for effective monitoring of respective sector
- Set up a grievance redress and dispute resolution mechanism
- At least one-third members in the board of directors to be independent

Context: The Reserve Bank of India **(RBI) announced draft omnibus norms for setting up self-regulatory organisations (SROs)** by its regulated entities and in those it has proposed to audit the books of such institutions.

Self Regulatory Organisation

- **About**: An SRO is a non-governmental organisation that sets and enforces rules and standards relating to the conduct of entities in the industry (members).
- **Aim**: To protect the customer and promoting ethics, equality, and professionalism.

Draft Norms for SROs

- **About**: The draft norms emphasize the importance of robust governance mechanisms for Self-Regulatory Organizations (SROs), with a specific focus on:
- **Independent Board**: Advocating the establishment of an independent board for effective governance.
- **Transparency**: Highlighting the need for transparency within the organizational framework.
- **Adherence to Processes**: Emphasizing the significance of following well-defined processes.
- **Objectives of SROs**
    - **Promotion of Progressive Practices**: Encouraging the adoption of progressive practices and conventions.
    - **Guidance and Support**: Providing special attention to offering guidance and support, especially to smaller entities in the sector.
- **Sharing Best Practices**: Promoting the sharing of best practices aligned with statutory and regulatory policies.
- **Dispute Resolution Procedures**: The draft suggests that SROs should establish standardized procedures for handling disputes among members.

ECONOMIC TIMES

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PRB BILL 2023
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

IT SEEMS LESS OF REGISTRATION BUT MORE OF REGULATION: LONE OPPN MP JALEEL

Parliament Okays Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill

Replaces law of Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867

Our Political Bureau

Bill reflects yet another step of Modi government towards jettisoning mentality of slavery and bringing new laws

ANURAG THAKUR
I&B Minister

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, with a single Opposition MP present in the House. The bill, which replaces the colonial-era law of the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, has been passed by the Rajya Sabha in the monsoon session.

Replying to a discussion in the Lok Sabha, information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur said: "The bill reflects yet another step of the Modi government towards jettisoning the mentality of slavery and bringing new laws for new India." Thakur said.

Thakur said the title registration process, which sometimes took 2-3 years, would now be done in 60 days.

Earlier, participating in the discussion, AIMIM MP Syed Imtiaz Jaleel, the only Opposition MP present in the House following mass suspension of Opposition members, said: "We should first see what the people who are directly affected by this bill have to say about it. The Editors Guild of India has expressed concerns and said there are draconian provisions which can have adverse impact on freedom of press." He said that it seemed "less of registration but more of regulation" by the government. He raised the issue of Urdu newspapers and said that they have been the worst hit in the post-Covid times. "We have started linking languages with a particular religion," said Jaleel, alluding to Urdu. He also said the bill was an attempt to finish press freedom.

Thakur denied all charges and said the Modi government was about opportunity and not regulation.

Context: Recently, the Lok Sabha approved the 'Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023,' as passed by the Parliament.

Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023

- **It repeals:** The Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867.

Key provisions of the Bill

- **Registration of Periodicals**: The Act provides for the registration of newspapers, periodicals, and books.
  - The Bill **provides for the registration of periodicals,** which include any publication containing public news or comments on public news. Periodicals do **not include books or scientific and academic journals**.
- **Foreign Periodicals**: An exact reproduction of a foreign periodical may be printed in India only with the prior approval of the central government.
- **Press Registrar General**: The Act provides for the central government to appoint a Press Registrar who maintains a register of newspapers.
- **Registration of a Printing Press:** The Act requires a **printing press to be declared before the DM.** The Bill allows for information regarding printing presses to be submitted to the Press Registrar General through an online portal.
- **Suspension and Cancellation of Registration**: The Bill allows the Press Registrar General to suspend a periodical's registration for a minimum period of 30 days which can extend to 180 days.
- **The registration may be suspended due to**: (i) registration obtained by furnishing false information, (ii) failure to publish periodicals continuously, and (iii) giving false particulars in annual statements.
- **The Press Registrar General may cancel the registration** for a minimum period of 30 days which can extend to 180 days.
- **Penalties and appeal:** The Bill empowers the Press Registrar General to impose penalties for: (i) publishing periodicals without registration (up to five lakh rupees), (ii) failing to furnish annual statement within the specified time (up to Rs 20,000 on first default).

ALL INDIA RADIO

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ANGANWADI-CUM-CRECHES
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt Schemes)

Union Minister Smriti Irani inaugurates National Programme on Anganwadi-cum-Crèches in New Delhi

Context: Women and Child Development Minister inaugurated National Programme on Anganwadi-cum-Crèches in New Delhi.

Anganwadi-cum-Crèches

- **About**: This initiative under the Palna Scheme underwent revisions and was included as part of the Samarthya sub-component of Mission Shakti, starting from April 2022.
- **Nodal Ministry**: Women and Child Development and Minority Affairs
- **Aim**: To facilitate their entry into the workforce, there is a need for quality childcare services.
- **Objective**: to provide quality Crèche facilities in a safe and secure environment for children aged between 6 months to 6 years, nutritional support, health and cognitive development of children, growth monitoring, immunization, education etc.

Palna Scheme

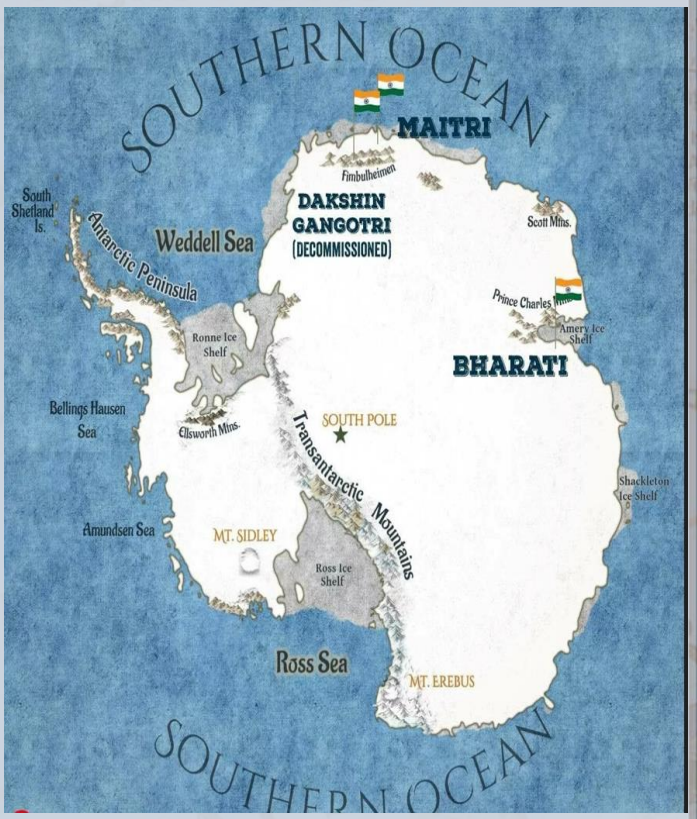
- **About:** It is a sub-scheme under Mission Shakti, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- **Implemented for**: All States and UTs from 1st April 2022 to provide daycare facilities and protection to children.
- **Funding Pattern**: A funding ratio of 60:40 between Centre Government and States
- **Objective:**
  - Quality crèche care facility by providing a safe and secure environment for children
  - To support nutritional, health and cognitive development of children
  - Enable mothers to take up gainful employment

PIB Dec 21

MAITRI-II STATION
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

OPERATIONALISATION OF MAITRI – II STATION IN ANTARCTICA

Context: The government of India intends to operationalize a new research station in East Antarctica, near existing Indian research base Maitri.



Maitri – II Station in Antarctica

- **About**: The Maitri Research Centre stands as the second permanent research site of the Indian Antarctic Program, located in Antarctica.
- **Establishment**: In December 1984.
- **Early Operations**: The Indian Expedition marked the initiation of work at the Maitri Research Center, becoming the first crew to engage in research at this site.
  - The initial shelters were constructed by the IV. Antarctic Expedition, completing the task in 1989. Unfortunately, the preceding station, Dakshin Gangotri, faced burial in ice and subsequent abandonment in 1990/91.
- **Geographical Setting:** Situated in the rugged and hilly terrain of the Schirmacher Oasis, Maitri is strategically positioned, providing a conducive environment for scientific endeavors. Notably, it is **located a mere 5 kilometers away from Russia's Novolasarevskaya station**.

India's Research Stations

- **In Arctic: Himadri** - located at Spitsbergen Island, Norway, **IndARC** - India's first underwater observatory at Svalbard, Norway.
- **In Antarctic:** Two operational research stations - **Maitri** (Commissioned in 1989) and **Bharati** (Commissioned in 2012)

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RAFALE MARINE JETS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

India receives price bids for 26 Rafale jets, 3 submarines

Ministry sets up committee to benchmark submarine deal, after which the commercial bid will be opened; the first of the new submarines, with integrated indigenous features, to arrive in 2031

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

India has received price bids from France for the purchase of 26 Rafale-M carrier-based fighters as well as three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines.

While the Rafale-M is being processed through an Inter-governmental agreement, the submarine deal is a follow-on to the earlier contract with Naval Group, under which Mazagon Dockyard Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai manufactured six submarines in India. The Defence Ministry has already set up a committee to arrive at the benchmark price for the submarine deal, sources said.



Aiming high: The Indian Air Force operates 36 Rafale jets customised for Indian requirements. FILE PHOTO

Letter of Acceptance

In response to India's request, France submitted a Letter of Acceptance earlier this week, outlining the pricing and other details of its offer for 26 Rafale-M jets which are meant to operate from the Navy's two aircraft carriers, sources confirmed. Meanwhile, MDL has submitted its commercial offer for three more Scorpenes to the Indian Navy on December 11, it has been learnt.

For the Scorpene deal, Defence Ministry has formed a costing committee for internal benchmarking of the deal value and the commercial offer from MDL would be opened after the internal benchmarking is complete, sources stated.

While the formal procurement process has now commenced for the Rafale deal following receipt of the bid, it is not yet clear if a costing committee would be set up. The price and other terms of purchase will be negotiated with the French Government after taking into account all relevant aspects, including "comparative procurement price of similar aircraft by other countries," the Defence Ministry had stated earlier.

On July 13, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi was enroute to Paris, the Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh accorded its Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the procurement of the 26 Rafale-M fighters and three additional Scorpene-class diesel-electric submarines from France. The deal includes 22 single-seater Rafale-M fighters and four twin-seater Rafale trainers (which are not carrier compatible).

Filling the gaps

The 26 jets are meant to fill the gap in the numbers till the indigenous Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter, still under development, is inducted into service.

The Navy currently operates two aircraft carriers, the *INS Vikramaditya* and the indigenously built *INS Vikrant*.

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, both the contracts are expected to be concluded by end-2024 and delivery of the submarines is likely to begin in 2031. The major difference between the existing Scorpenes and the new ones is their integrated combat system (ICS), sources explained.

The earlier submarines had systems from France, while the new ones will have indigenous ICS, with significant localised solutions provided by Bharat Electronics Limited in collaboration with French suppliers, a source said.

Context: Recently, India has received price bids from France for the purchase of 26 Rafale-M carrier-based fighters, along with three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines.

Rafale Marine Jets

- **Naval Variant**: The Rafale Marine fighters represent the naval iteration of the Rafale jets, and India currently operates 36 of them within the Indian Air Force.
- **Advanced Multirole Fighters**: Dassault Aviation (France) manufactures the Rafales, which are advanced twin-engine, multirole fighter jets. They come equipped with cutting-edge sensors, radar, and the latest weapon systems.
- **India-Specific Enhancements**: These jets have undergone enhancements tailored specifically for India, endowing them with the capability to execute a diverse range of missions.
- **Anti-ship Strike Mechanism**: The Rafale M is set to feature the AM39 Exocet missile, enhancing its capability for anti-ship strikes.
- **Payload Capacity**: With a capacity to carry up to 9.5 tonnes of weaponry, fuel tanks, and pods on 13 external hardpoints (14 for the air force variant), the Rafale M demonstrates proficiency in low-level, high-speed penetrations for evading enemy radar.
- **Expanded Weapon Capabilities**: Rafale Marine jets boast an extended arsenal, capable of carrying a broader range of weapons, including anti-ship and air-to-surface missiles.

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UNESCO ASIA PACIFIC AWARDS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – International Organization)

UNESCO awards Rambagh Gate & Ramparts project highest honor, Award of Excellence for inclusivity & access to broader community

Context: UNESCO has awarded the resilient urban revitalisation of **Rambagh Gate and Ramparts in Punjab,** as well as the heritage conservation projects related to **Haryana's Church of Epiphany and Delhi's Bikaner House**.

- The Rambagh Gate and Ramparts project received the **highest honor, the 'Award of Excellence**,' for its inclusivity and access to the broader community.
- Three projects, including the Church of Epiphany and Bikaner House, received an **'Award of Merit.'**

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation

- **About**: Since 2000, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation honors private individuals and organizations for preserving heritage structures.
- **Promoting Conservation Efforts**: The Awards program acknowledges and promotes p**rivate initiatives in restoring and transforming historic buildings**, inspiring conservation projects in communities.
- **Innovation in Recognition**: In 2020, **UNESCO introduced the category 'Special Recognition for Sustainable Development**' to highlight the role of cultural heritage in contributing to sustainable development aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda.
- **Preservation Success Stories:** The awarded projects demonstrate the successful preservation of cultural heritage while integrating it into local development strategies.
- **Selection Criteria:** Award winners are chosen **based on criteria like capturing the spirit of the place, technical excellence, appropriate use or adaptation,** community engagement, and contributions to environmental sustainability.

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