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Single Use Plastics

The Centre writes to the States to phase out the Single Use Plastic (SUP).

- SUPs, or disposable plastics, are those plastic products that have a one-time use before they are thrown away or recycled.
- These items are things like plastic bags, straws, coffee stirrers, soda and water bottles and most food packaging.
- Often these kinds of plastic are not disposed of properly, therefore not recycled.

World-wide only 10-13% of plastic items are recycled.

- Nature of **petroleum based disposable plastic** makes it difficult to recycle and they have to add new virgin materials and chemicals to it to do so.
- Additionally, there are a limited number of items that recycled plastic can be used.
- **Problem** - Petroleum based plastic is not biodegradable and usually goes into a landfill where it is buried or it gets into the water and finds its way into the ocean.
- Although plastic will not biodegrade, it will degrade into tiny particles after many years.
- In the process of breaking down, it **releases toxic chemicals** (additives that were used to shape and harden the plastic) which make their way into our food and water supply.
- These toxic chemicals are now being found in our bloodstream and they disrupt the Endocrine system which can cause cancer, infertility, birth defects, impaired immunity and many other ailments.

Three-stage Ban

A government committee has proposed a 3-stage ban of the SUP items to be banned based on an index of their utility and environmental impact.

Category for Phasing Out	Items
First category	Plastic sticks used in balloons, flags, candy, ice-cream and ear buds, and thermocol used in decorations.
Second category (to be banned from July 1, 2022)	Plates, cups, glasses and cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straws, trays; wrapping and packing films used in sweet boxes; invitation cards; cigarette packets; stirrers and plastic banners that are less than 100 microns in thickness.
Third category (to be banned from September, 2022)	Non-woven bags below 240 microns in thickness.

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1831098

2. https://www.cnbctv18.com/environment/india-to-ban-single-use-plastic-items-from-july-1-but-will-it-work-1301986htm
3. http://www.plasticfreechallenge.org/what-is-single-use-plastic

'Public Interest' Standard

Indian government endorsed a "public interest" standard with South Africa in order to reduce the impact of monopolies on the availability, supply, and access of medicines, vaccines, and other essential medical products.

- This "public interest" standard was endorsed by submitting to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) a waiver of monopolies based on a combo of patents, preventive tools in the pandemic across the world, etc.,
- This is a '**Waiver' proposal** that calls for specific provisions of the agreement on Trade-related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to be waived temporarily by WTO member.
- Intellectual property (IP) systems should **balance** the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights **(IPR) with public interest** considerations.
- **Article 7** of the TRIPS Agreement recognises this balance, providing that the protection and enforcement of IP rights should contribute
    1. To the promotion of technological innovation and
    2. To the transfer and dissemination of technology,
    3. To the mutual advantage of producers and users of technological knowledge and
    4. In a manner conducive to social and economic welfare, and
    5. To a balance of rights and obligations.
- **Article 8** allows members to adopt measures necessary to promote the public interest, including protecting public health - as long as those measures are consistent with the TRIPS Agreement.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-sci-tech-and-agri/indias-role-in-global-health-diplomacy-is-at-stake/article65495758.ece
2. https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/trips_and_public_interest_e.htm

Agni-4 Missile

India has successfully tested the Agni-4 Missile from APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha. This successful test reaffirms India's policy of having a 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' Capability.

- Agni-4, earlier known as Agni II prime, is an Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM).
- It is one of many in the Agni series (I to V) of strategic missiles.
- It is a 2-stage, surface-to-surface missile that is 20 metres long and weighs 17 tonnes. It has a range of over 3,500 km.
- It was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- **Related Links** - Agni-5, India's Nuclear Arsenal

Tri-Service Strategic Forces Command (SFC) has the Prithvi-II (350-km), Agni-I (700-km), Agni-II (2,000-km), Agni-III (3,000-km) and Agni-IV missile units.

But the induction of the country's first intercontinental ballistic missile Agni-V (over 5,000-km) is currently in an advanced stage.

Reference

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2. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/strategic-missile-agni-4-successfully-test-fired/article65502188.ece
3. https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/nuclear-capable-agni-iv-ballistic-missile-successfully-tested-3043500
4. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-tests-nuclear-capable-agni-iv-ballistic-missile/articleshow/92043716.cms

Yankti Kuti Valley

Multiple events of glacial advances have been witnessed from the Yankti Kuti valley situated in Uttarakhand, since 52 thousand years (MIS 3) that synchronises with climate variability, according to a new study.

- Yankti Kuti valley is a **Himalayan valley** situated in the extreme eastern part of Pithoragarh district, **Uttarakhand**.
- Located in the **Kumaon region**, the Kuti Valley is the last valley before the border with Tibet.
- This valley runs along a North-West to South-East axis, formed by the river Kuti Yankti.
- [Kuthi Yankti is one of the two headwaters of the Kali River, the other being the Kalapani River that flows down from the Lipulekh Pass.]
- It is mainly dominated by **Byansis**, one of the 4 Bhotiya communities of Kumaon, with the others being Johar, Darmiya and Chaudansi.
- **Claims** - In 2020, Nepal laid claim to the northeastern half of the valley, claiming that Kuthi Yanki represented the Kali River and it was meant to be Nepal's border by the 1816 Sugauli Treaty.
- India said that the claim was not based on historical facts and evidence.
- **Related Links -** Mahakali River

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1831530
2. https://dst.gov.in/glacial-advances-yankti-kuti-valley-synchronizes-climate-variability
3. https://worddisk.com/wiki/Kuthi_Valley/

Sant Kabir

Indian President inaugurated the Sant Kabir Academy and Research Centre Swadesh Darshan Yojana and paid tribute to the Bhakti saint Kabir at Maghar (Uttar Pradesh).

- Sant Kabir was born in **Varanasi** and lived between the years 1398 and 1448, or till the year 1518.
- He was from a community of 'lower caste' **weavers** of the Julaha caste, a group that had recently converted to Islam.
- He was a member of the **Nirguni tradition**, a school within the Bhakti movement. In this tradition, God was understood to be a universal and formless being.

- Kabir is also believed to be a disciple of the famous guru Ramananda, a 14th century Vaishnava poet-saint.
- **Beliefs** - Kabir is in modern times portrayed as a figure that synthesized Islam and Hinduism.
- Kabir's beliefs were **deeply radical**, and he was known for his intense and outspoken voice which he used to attack the dominant religions and entrenched caste systems of the time.
- Instead of God being an external entity that resided in temples or mosques, Kabir argued that God existed inside everyone.
- In many of his verses, Kabir proclaimed that people of all castes have the right to salvation through the bhakti tradition.
- In the Sikh tradition he is seen to have influenced Guru Nanak, for Hindus he is a Vaishnavite, and is revered by Muslims as a Sufi saint.
- **Compositions** - Kabir's compositions can be classified into 3 literary forms
    1. Dohas (short 2 liners),
    2. Ramanas (rhymed 4 liners),
    3. Sung compositions of varying length, known as padas (verses) and sabdas (words).
- He composed his verses orally and is generally assumed to be illiterate.
- Kabir's own humble origins and his radical message of egalitarianism fostered a community of his followers called the **Kabir Panth**.
- According to legends, Kabir is said to have departed the mortal world in Maghar.

Bhakti Movement

- The Bhakti movement, which began in the 7th century in South India, had begun to spread across north India in the 14th and 15th centuries.
- The movement was characterized by popular poet-saints who sang devotional songs to God in vernacular languages.
- Many preached for abolishing the Varna system and some kind of Hindu-Muslim unity.
- They emphasized an intense emotional attachment with God.
- Many of the saints of the Bhakti movement came from the ranks of the lower to middle artisanal classes.
- Kabir was a 'low caste' weaver; Raidas was a leather worker and Dadu a cotton carder.
- Their radical dissent against orthodoxy and rejection of caste made these poet-saints extremely popular among the masses and their ideology of egalitarianism spread across India.

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2. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sant-kabir-extraordinary-poet-saint-bhakti-movement-7955452/
3. http://indianculture.gov.in/stories/life-sant-kabir-das

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