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PM-STIAC

Recently, the 25th Prime Minister's Science, Technology & Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC), held in New Delhi.

- **Aim-** To discuss robust policy formulation for effective ***Carbon Capture Utilisation & Storage (CCUS)*** and carbon credits in India.

  CCUS involves the capture of CO2, generally from large point sources like power generation or industrial facilities that use either fossil fuels or biomass as fuel.

- **About-** The PM-STIAC serves as an ***overarching council*** to assess
  - The status of various science and technology-related matters,
  - Comprehend challenges,
  - Formulate interventions,
  - Develop a futuristic roadmap, and advise the prime minister accordingly.
- **Formed in-** August 2018.
- **Nodal Agency-** Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.
- **Function-** It ***oversees the implementation of such interventions*** by concerned S&T Departments, agencies and other government Ministries.
- **Objectives of PM-STIAC**
  - Synergize collaborative research in science and technology across central and state governments.
  - Facilitate preparedness for emerging science and technology domains.
  - Formulate and coordinate major inter-ministerial science and technology missions.
  - Ensure an enabling ecosystem for technology-led innovations and entrepreneurship.
  - Address socio-economic challenges for sustainable growth through innovations and technology-based solutions.

- Foster effective public-private linkages to drive research and innovation.
- Develop innovation clusters with academia, industry, and government.
- Enhance skills in current and futuristic technologies.

- **Agenda of meeting-** The meeting also discussed India's carbon market and ***carbon credit scheme*** to reduce emissions, pursue a low-carbon path, and provide market support for ***mitigation methods and technologies.***
- **Emission reduction targets-** India has set a target to achieve a ***45% reduction in emission intensity by 2030*** and is aiming for ***Net Zero by 2070.***



- **Science and Technology Missions of PM-STIAC**
  - Natural Language Translation
  - Quantum Frontier
  - Artificial Intelligence
  - National Biodiversity Mission
  - Electric Vehicles (EV)
  - Bioscience for Human Health
  - Waste to Wealth
  - Deep Ocean Exploration
  - AGNIi (Accelerating Growth of New India's Innovations)

- **TIME-** The ***Indian Museum of The Earth (TIME)*** is one of the initiatives proposed by the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).
- TIME is envisioned as a world-class institution dedicated to the ***study and exhibition of Earth's history and its future***.

References

1. PIB | PM-STIAC
2. Invest India | About PM-STIAC

Financial Inclusion Index

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India released its Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) for FY24.

- **About-** It is a comprehensive index detailing ***banking, investments, insurance, postal, and pension sectors***, created in consultation with the government and sectoral regulators.
- **Released by -** Reserve Bank of India.
- **Year of operation-** 2021, without any 'base year'.
- **Publication duration-** In July every year.
- **Finding-** The financial inclusion across the country, stood at ***64.2 in March 2024 from 60.1 in March 2023.***
- The improvement in the index was due to growth witnessed across all sub-indices.
- **Parameters-** The index captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging ***between 0 and 100,*** where ***0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100*** indicates full financial inclusion.
- **Parameters-** It comprises of 3 broad parameters i.e. ***Access (35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%)*** with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on a number of indicators.
- The Index is responsive to ease of access, availability and usage of services, and quality of services, comprising in all 97 indicators.

Global Financial Inclusion Index

• It is a database compiled by the ***World Bank*** that measures the extent to which individuals around the world have access to and use financial services.
• It provides data on how people save, borrow, make payments, and manage risks.
• The Global Findex database is based on surveys conducted in more than 150 countries, covering over 99% of the world's adult population.
• It is a widely referenced tool for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners interested in understanding and promoting financial inclusion globally.

References

1. The Hindu | Financial Inclusion-Index
2. Indian Express | Financial Inclusion-Index

Ibiza wall lizard

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has issued a stark warning about the threats posed by invasive species to several island reptiles.

- The Ibiza wall lizard (Podarcis pityusensis) has been ***reclassified as endangered*** due to a ***50% population decline*** since 2010.
- **Reasons-** Mainly due to the invasive ***horseshoe whip snake (Hemorrhois hippocrepis).***

  The horseshoe whip snake (Hemorrhois hippocrepis) is a species of snake in the family Colubridae which is native to southwestern Europe and northern Africa.



- **Scientific name-** Podarcis pityusensis
- **Body-** Small to medium-sized lizard with a typical length ranging from ***5 to 7 cm***, excluding the tail.
- **Coloration-** From gray to brown with darker patterns and sometimes a greenish hue.
- **Habitat-** This species is largely found in vegetated areas, such as cultivated land and gardens, close to and around human habitation.
- It also occurs in ***rocky areas***, especially in coastal regions.
- **Behaviour-** Diurnal (active during the day)
- **Food pattern-** The primarily feeds on ***insects, spiders, and other small invertebrates.***
- It is known for its agile movements and ability to quickly escape into crevices when threatened.
- **Other Endangered species-** The ***Gran Canaria giant lizard*** (Gallotia stehlini) and the ***Gran Canaria skink*** (Chalcides sexlineatus) are now endangered.
- **Reasons-** Due to the introduction of the California kingsnake (Lampropeltis californiae) in 1998, which has caused their populations to decline by more than 50% since 2014.
- The IUCN also highlighted the illegal trade of ornamental cacti, particularly Copiapoa species endemic to Chile’s Atacama Desert.
- Currently, 82% of these cacti are critically endangered, a sharp increase from 55% in 2013.
- The demand for these plants, driven by their popularity in Europe and Asia, is exacerbated by illegal trade via social media.

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Red Data List

• **About -** International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a membership organization that works to protect nature and natural resources.
• **Established in -** 1948 in Fontainebleau, France.
• It was originally called the International Union for the Protection of Nature and later known as the World Conservation Union.
• **Functions -** It provides public, private, and non-governmental organizations with the knowledge and tools to achieve sustainable development.

Red Data List

• **About -** The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, also known as the Red Data Book, is a list of the global conservation status and extinction risk of biological species.
• **Founded in** - 1964
• It is the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, backed by 1,300 member organisations and 16,000 experts.
• It describes itself as the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.
• **Functions -** It provides information about range, population size, habitat and ecology, use and/or trade, threats, and conservation actions that will help inform necessary conservation decisions.

References

1. Down to Earth | Ibiza wall lizard

2. UNEP | IUCN

Expunction Powers in Parliament

The first special session of the 18th Lok Sabha culminated in a dispute about expunging the remarks of the Opposition leader from the record.

- **Authority** - The ***Speaker (Lok Sabha)*** and ***Chairman (Rajya Sabha)*** have the authority to expunge remarks.
- **Rules for Expunction** - The Chairman and Speaker are vested with the power to order the expunction of remarks under ***Rule 261, and Rule 380 and 381*** of the Rules of Procedure of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, respectively.
- **Rule 261** - If the Chairman deems any words used in debate to be objectionable or offensive, they can direct that such words be expunged from the proceedings.

- **Rule 380** - If the Speaker finds words used in debate to be defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary, or undignified, they may order such words to be expunged from the proceedings.
- **Privileges** - ***Article 105*** of the Constitution confers certain privileges and freedom of speech in Parliament on MPs, it is subject to other provisions of the Constitution and the rules of the House.
- **Criteria** - Remarks can be expunged if they are considered ***unparliamentary, defamatory, indecent, or offensive***.
- **Certain instances**
  - National interest or detrimental to maintaining friendly relations with a foreign State.
  - Derogatory to dignitaries.
  - Likely to offend national sentiments or affect the religious susceptibilities of a section of the community.
  - Likely to discredit the Army, and not in good taste or otherwise objectionable.
  - Continuous interruptions during speeches may also be expunged at the Speaker's discretion.
- **Purpose** - The decision to expunge is discretionary and made to ***maintain decorum*** and respect within parliamentary proceedings.
- **Effect** - Expunged remarks are ***removed from the official records***, and any publication of the proceedings must exclude these remarks.
- Anyone who publishes them thereafter is liable to face charges for ***breach of privilege of the House***.
- **No debate** - The decision to expunge is ***final and not subject to debate*** or challenge on the floor of the House.

References

The Hindu | Expunction powers

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