Daily Current Affairs : 29 December 2023

Press and Periodicals Bill 2023

- Recently, the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, was passed in the Lok Sabha on December 21.
- It was passed in the Rajya Sabha on August 3 amid uproar from the Opposition.

❖ Key Highlights

- It seeks to repeal the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867.
- The Bill contains a unique provision disallowing persons convicted of terrorist acts or unlawful activities, or those who have acted against state security, from publishing periodicals.
- A periodical means any publication, barring books or journals, that is printed at regular intervals and contains public news or comments on public news.
- **It has been passed for three reasons**
  - **Ease of doing business.**
    - The title registration process, which sometimes took 2-3 years, will now be done in 60 days.
  - It intends to **remove "unnecessary procedural obstacles"** for publishers.
  - It seeks to **"unburden" the publishers** and **printing press owners** from furnishing a declaration before the District Magistrate (DM) and filing a revised declaration every time there's a change in its particulars.
- **Differences from the 1867 Act**
  - **Books**
    - The 1867 Act was enacted for the regulation of printing presses and newspapers, the preservation of copies of books and newspapers printed in India, and their registration.
    - However, the 2023 Bill removes books from its ambit as they are under the HRD Ministry.
  - **Penalties**
    - The 2023 Bill seeks to decriminalise the colonial-era statute by replacing jail terms with fines, and providing for an appellate mechanism headed by the Chairman of the Press Council of India.
    - The Appellate Board (Press and Registration Appellate Board) will comprise, alongside the PCI chairman, two PCI members.
    - It will hear appeals against refusal of registration, imposition of penalties, suspension, or cancellation of registration.
  - **Shift in Power**
    - The new Bill shifts all the power from the DM's hands to the Press Registrar General, a newly created position.
    - Although the 1867 Act included a "Press Registrar" or a "Registrar of newspapers for India" appointed by the Centre, its powers were limited, unlike the PRG's under the new law.

Pegasus Spyware and Zero-Click Exploit

- Recently, a joint investigation by Amnesty International and The Washington Post has revealed that the Indian government has targeted high-profile journalists in India with the infamous Pegasus software.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Pegasus spyware, created by Israeli firm NSO Group, is used to gain access to someone's phone messages and emails, peruse photos, eavesdrop on calls, track locations and even film the owner with the camera.
- Notably, the Pegasus spyware is only sold to governments or security agencies.
- The investigation revealed that the Pegasus spyware had been extensively used against journalists and activists in dozens of countries, including India.
- Pegasus has evolved its method by using **'zero-click attacks',** which do not require any action from the phone's user.

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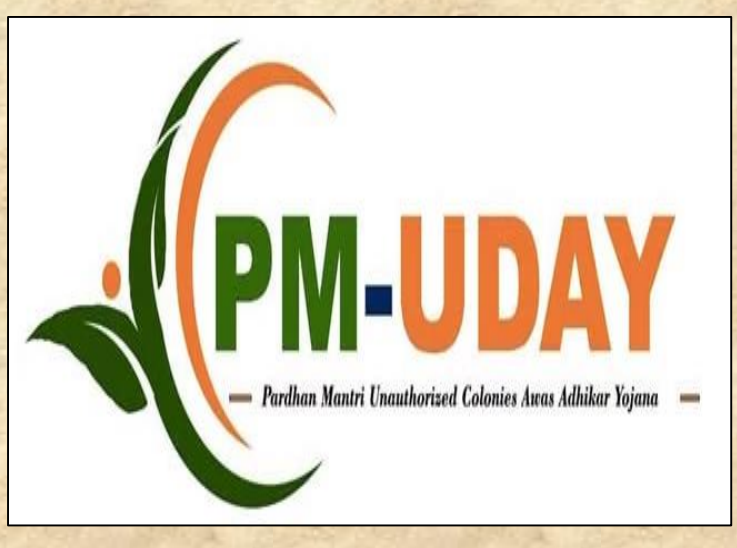
❖ About Zero-Click Exploit

- ❑ A zero-click exploit is malicious software that allows spyware to be installed on a device without the device owner's consent.
- ❑ More importantly, it doesn't require the device owner to perform any actions to initiate or complete the installation.
- ❑ To compare, regular apps may require a user to click 'install', 'confirm', etc. to complete an installation.

PM-UDAY Scheme

- ➢ The Union Urban Affairs Ministry said that it was in the process of conferring ownership rights to residents of 1,731 unauthorised colonies of Delhi under the PM-UDAY scheme

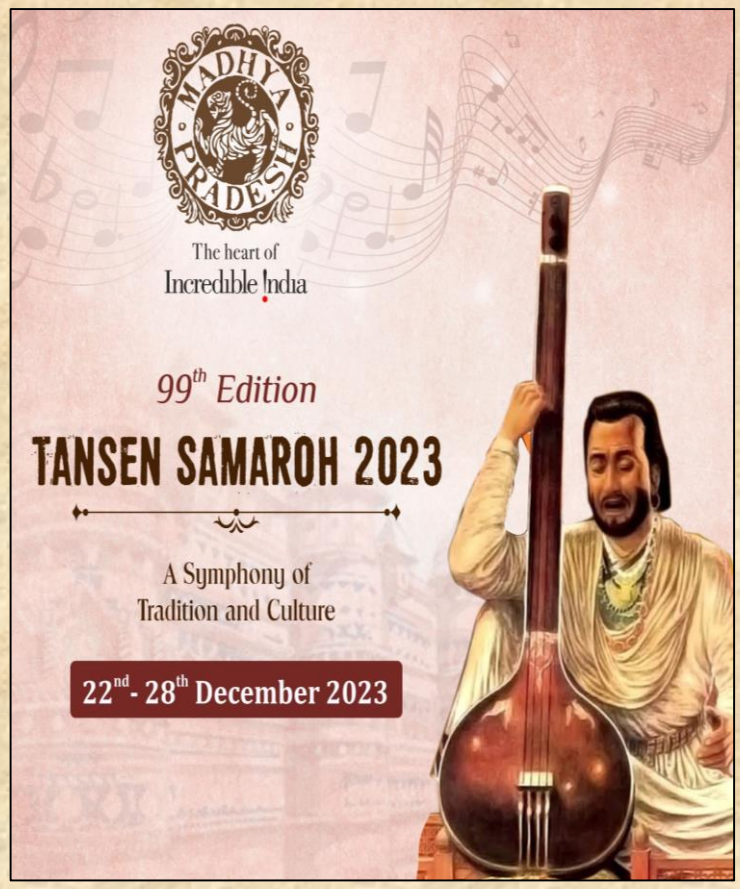


❖ About PM-UDAY Scheme

- ❑ Pradhan Mantri Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana (PM-UDAY) is established to regularise unauthorised areas in Delhi.
- ❑ PM-UDAY was enacted under the National Capital Territory of Delhi (Recognition of Property Rights of Residents in Unauthorized Colonies) Act, 2019, to allow registration of properties in these colonies.
- ❑ This was established to help over 40 Lakh people living in unauthorised colonies in Delhi.
- ❑ Benefits
  - Residents can legally sell/buy their properties.
  - Residents can avail loans from banks, or financial institutions against their properties.
  - Residents can get building plans approved.

Tansen Festival

- ➢ Recently, the Prime Minister of India commended the exceptional performance of 1,282 tabla players during the ongoing 'Tansen Festival' in Madhya Pradesh, recognizing their entry into the Guinness Book of World Records.



❖ Details about the Tansen Festival

- ❑ The Tansen Festival is a distinctive four-to-five-day celebration dedicated to the eminent figure of Indian music, the legendary Tansen.
- ❑ This annual event takes place at Tansen's tomb in the village of Behat, Gwalior, and is initiated by the Department of Culture in collaboration with the Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- ❑ The festival's primary objective is to honor the renowned Indian classical music maestro, Mian Tansen. 'Tansen Samaroh' stands out as one of the most prestigious events in the country within the realm of Indian classical music.

❖ Insights into Tansen's Legacy

- ❑ Tansen, a multifaceted artist, excelled as a vocalist, instrumentalist, and music composer.
- ❑ Credited as the pioneer of Hindustani classical music, he held a prominent position as one of the Navratnas (Nine gems) in Emperor Akbar's court.
- ❑ Akbar bestowed upon him the title of Mian, an honorific that signified a learned man.
- ❑ Tansen is remembered for his profound contributions, including epic Dhrupad compositions, the creation of numerous ragas, and the authorship of two classical books on music—Sri Ganesh Stotra and Sangita Sara.

Electronic Soil' (eSoil)

- ➢ Researchers introduced a ground-breaking study on "electronic soil" (eSoil) in hydroponics, offering the potential for sustainable urban agriculture and food security.

❖ About eSoil

- ❑ In hydroponic environments, eSoil is a low-power bioelectronic growth substrate that can electrically stimulate the root system and growth environment of plants.

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- This novel substrate is not only environmentally friendly, being derived from cellulose and a conductive polymer called PEDOT, but also offers a low energy, safe alternative to previous methods that required high voltage and non-biodegradable materials.
- eSoil uses low energy and minimises resource consumption. Its active material is an organic mixed-ionic electronic conductor.

❖ Hydroponic

- It is the technique of growing plants using a water-based nutrient solution rather than soil.
- It can include an aggregate substrate or growing media, such as vermiculite, mineral wool, coconut coir, or perlite. It is already being used to cultivate crops like lettuce, herbs, and certain vegetables. This method is particularly advantageous in areas with limited arable land or harsh environmental conditions.

Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM)

- On December 25, Japan's Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) spacecraft entered into orbit around the moon after a months-long journey, and ahead of its planned moon-landing attempt on January 19, 2024.

❖ Key Highlights

- If the attempt succeeds, Japan will become only the fifth country to soft-land a robotic craft on the natural satellite, months after India succeeded with its Chandrayaan 3 mission in August 2023.
- Perhaps more importantly, SLIM's success or failure will also affect the upcoming Chandrayaan 4 mission.
- SLIM will also mark the second Japanese attempt this year to soft-land on the moon: the HAKUTO-R M1 lander, built by Japanese company ispace, crashed in late April after its engines shut down too soon during the landing.

❖ About SLIM

- SLIM is a spacecraft built and launched by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) on September 7, 2023, from the Tanegashima spaceport.
- It weighed only 590 kg at launch, which is almost one-seventh of Chandrayaan 3, which weighed 3,900 kg at launch.
- It was launched together with XRISM, a next-generation X-ray space telescope, onboard an H-2A rocket.
- It entered into an elliptical orbit around the moon over three minutes or so. Its apogee (farthest point) in this orbit is 4,000 km and perigee (closest point) is 600 km above the lunar surface.

❖ Objectives

- Just before it lands, SLIM will deploy two small rovers called Lunar Excursion Vehicle (LEV) 1 and 2.
- LEV-1, LEV-2, and SLIM will together study the lunar surface near the landing point, collect temperature and radiation readings, and attempt to study the moon's mantle.

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