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National and International News

Paul Lynch wins 2023 Booker Prize



Context

- Irish author **Paul Lynch, 46**, won the 2023 Booker Prize for Fiction for his novel "**Prophet Song**."

Key points

- Lynch is the **fifth Irish writer** to win this prestigious literary award.
- Previous winners include Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood, and Hilary Mantel.
- The award includes **£50,000 (around \$63,000)** and significantly boosts Lynch's profile.
- "**Prophet Song**" is set in a near-future Dublin, portraying a mother's struggle to protect her family from totalitarianism.

Booker Prize Details:

- The Booker Prize is open to fiction by writers of any nationality, **written in English and published in the U.K. or Ireland**.
- The 2023 shortlist included two Americans, a Canadian, a Kenyan, and another Irish author.
- The Booker Prize, **first awarded in 1969**, has a legacy of recognizing outstanding fiction.
- Previous Irish winners include Iris Murdoch, John Banville, Roddy Doyle, and Anne Enright.

Trapped Workers in Uttarakhand Tunnel

Context:

41 construction workers building a tunnel for a road widening project in Uttarakhand got trapped, and it has been two weeks since the incident.

Key Points:

- **The Silkyara Bend Tunnel is part of the Char Dham Pariyojana** in Uttarakhand, aiming to improve connectivity to pilgrimage sites. The trapped workers were extending National Highway 134 to reduce travel time.
- **Concerns Raised:**
 - Even before the mishap, environmentalists, scientists, and locals criticized the **Char Dham Pariyojana**.
 - The 900 km road widening project through the Himalayas raised concerns about landslides and disasters.
- **Approval Controversy:** Despite Supreme Court approval for "**national security**" reasons, the project avoided a **comprehensive environment impact assessment (EIA)**, leading to criticism.



Way forward:

- The Silkyara tunnel disaster highlights the need for better scrutiny, expertise, and monitoring in infrastructure development in fragile terrains, emphasizing the importance of weighing risks against benefits in future projects.

Time to revamp the structure of the Supreme Court

Context

Understanding the Supreme Court of India:

Jurisdictions:

- Original, appellate, and advisory are the three jurisdictions of the Supreme Court.
- Acts as a **Constitutional Court** and Court of Appeal.

Benches:

- Constitution Benches (five, seven, or nine judges) decide on constitutional issues according **Article 145(3)**.
- Division Benches (two judges) and full Benches (three judges) handle various topics.

Pending Cases:

- Presently, **79,813** cases are pending before 34 judges, prompting discussions on structural changes.

Historical Background:

- Established on January 28, 1950, under **Article 124** of the Constitution.
- Evolved from three Supreme Courts during colonial times to the current structure.

Current Challenges:

- Overburdened court with a backlog of cases.
- Calls for a **Final Court of Appeal and a permanent Constitution Bench for greater consistency**.

Dollarisation

Hyperinflation Solution:

- Dollarisation can help stop hyperinflation by replacing the local currency with dollars.
- This change **breaks the link between rising prices and the government printing more money**.
- This prevents political interests from using excessive money for their benefit.

Positive Impact on Growth:

- Dollarisation encourages the economy to focus on **exports and attract foreign investment**.
- Access to dollars becomes limited to foreign trade and capital inflows.
- A stable dollar value encourages long-term planning for both local and foreign economic activities.



Potential Problems:

- Adopting the dollar means **losing control over local monetary policy**.
- Countries can't use **depreciation** to boost exports, relying solely on export promotion.
- This loss of policy leverage can be seen as positive, pushing governments to boost productivity during economic downturns instead of changing exchange rates.

Do you know?

- Three fully dollarised economies are **Ecuador, Panama and El Salvador** have had successful economic outcomes following dollarisation.

Fibre optic cables

What is an Optical Fibre?

Composition:

- Optical fibres are **slender strands** made of glass, similar in diameter to a human hair.

Functionality:

- These fibres transport various digital information forms, including text, images, videos, and phone calls, over long distances at nearly the speed of light.

Durability:

- Despite their **thin appearance**, properly manufactured optical fibres, when encased in protective layers, are robust, lightweight, and flexible.
- They can be **buried, submerged, or coiled without damage**.

Historical Significance:

- **Physicist Charles Kao's** vision, proposed almost 60 years ago, foresaw glass fibres replacing copper wires for telecommunication.
- Today, his foresight is a reality, recognized with a **Nobel Prize in physics in 2009**.

How do Optical Fibres Work?

Light Behavior:

- Light, an **electromagnetic wave**, can be guided through optical fibres.
- When light hits a glass surface, it partially passes through and partially reflects.

Total Internal Reflection:

- The **refractive index** difference between glass and air enables total internal reflection.



- This phenomenon allows light to traverse long distances within the glass without significant power loss.

Fibre Optic Communication System:

- Comprising a **transmitter** (encodes information), an optical fibre (transports signals), and a **receiver** (reproduces information), this system achieves high data-transmission rates (**terabits per second**) with resistance to external interference.

Advantages:

- Optical fibres, unlike traditional communication mediums, are **unaffected by weather and external disturbances, making them highly reliable for data transmission.**

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