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National and International News

<p>Access to high-speed Internet</p>	<p>Context Prime Minister hailed telecom operators' progress in spreading 5G coverage in urban centres, saying that over 80% of India's urban population now had access to the high-speed technology.</p> <p>Key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within a year of 5G launch, about 4 lakh 5G base stations have been built in India • India is exporting about ₹2 lakh crore in electronics manufacturing • India is not only rapidly expanding 5G in India, but are also moving towards becoming a leader in the field of 6G.
<p>7.5% dip in active workforce under MGNREGS, says study</p>	<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of active workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has dipped by 7.5%, according to a data analysis for the period April to September 2023 by LibTech India, a consortium of academics and activists. • The workforce has reduced from 15.49 crore in the previous financial year to 14.33 crore, as per data available till October 6, 2023.
<p>Thallium as a murder weapon</p>	<p>Context In Mahagaon village in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, two women allegedly killed five family members by lacing their food with poison in the form of thallium.</p> <p>About thallium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a chemical element with the atomic number 81, was discovered by Sir William Crookes in 1861. • It is a soft, heavy, inelastic metal. • Thallium is tasteless and odourless and has been used by murderers as a difficult-to-detect poison. • Appearance:A soft, silvery-white metal that tarnishes easily. <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is found in trace amounts in the earth's crust. • It is found in several ores. One of these is pyrites, which is used to produce sulfuric acid.



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Some thallium is obtained from pyrites, but it is mainly obtained as a by-product of copper, zinc and lead refining.

Thallium

atomic number — 81 [204.382, 204.385] — atomic weight

symbol — **Tl** — acid-base properties of higher-valence oxides

electron configuration — [Xe]4f¹⁴d¹⁰s²p¹ — crystal structure

name — thallium — physical state at 20 °C (68 °F)

Other metals	Solid
Hexagonal	Weakly basic

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Uses of Thallium

- Thallium's utilization is restricted due to its **toxic nature**.
- **Thallium sulfate**, once a rodent killer, is now banned for household use in many developed nations.
- It finds application in the **electronics industry for photoelectric cells**.
- Thallium oxide is used to create **high-refraction glass and low-melting glass**.
- It is also used in the manufacturing of **low temperature thermometers, and imitation jewels**.

Health Hazards:

- Thallium can damage the nervous system causing headaches, weakness, and irritability. Repeated exposures can cause tremors, hallucinations, coma and death.

A new mushroom species named Candolleomyces albosquamosus

Context

- A new mushroom species named **Candolleomyces albosquamosus** has been discovered in the **Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI)** at Palode, Thiruvananthapuram.

Key Details about the New Species:

- **Physical Characteristics:** The mushroom has a **delicate, fragile** appearance with a honey-yellow cap.
- **Distinctive Feature:** It is identified by the presence of **white woolly scale-like**



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structures on its cap, leading to the name 'albosquamosus.'

- **Size:** The mushroom is **small**, reaching a **height** of about **58 mm**.

Genus and Taxonomic Information:

- Genus: Belongs to the **genus Candolleomyces**.
- Previous Understanding: **Seven species** previously categorized **under the genus Psathyrella in India** are now **recognized as Candolleomyces**.
- **Global Significance:** The discovery is notable because there are **only 35 known species in the Candolleomyces genus worldwide**.

Significance:

- The discovery adds momentum to the study of **fungus diversity in the Western Ghats region**, emphasizing its ecological importance and uniqueness in the realm of biodiversity.

Electoral bonds

How An Electoral Bond Works

- 01 Notified banks are chosen
- 02 The notified bank issues electoral bonds
- 03 The donor buys an electoral bond using a cheque/digital payment
- 04 The donor gives the party of his/her choice the bond within the specified timeframe
- 05 The party deposits the bond in an account, the details of which are with the Electoral Commission

Context

A **five-judge bench of the Supreme Court** is hearing petitions **challenging the constitutional validity of the electoral bonds scheme**.

Key facts about Electoral Bonds

- **Implemented in 2018 to reduce the influence of black money in politics.**
- Provided a legal and transparent mechanism for contributions to political parties.
- **Donors' identities remain confidential**, reducing the risk of retaliation.

Do you know

There is a **criticism** regarding Electoral bonds because

- **Lack of transparency** regarding the source of funds.
- Concerns about **potential misuse, including laundering illicit money.**
- Reports indicate a **significant** portion of political **funding comes from electoral bonds.**

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