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PARAKH RASHTRIYA SARVEKSHAN 2024



The National Achievement Survey (NAS), a nationwide survey meant to assess students' learning progress, will be held on December 4 this year under a new name – PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024.

- The introduction of PARAKH aims to create a broader understanding of the educational landscape in India.
- A sample of school students from government, government-aided and private schools from each district in the country take the assessment, which is in the form of multiple-choice questions across different subjects.
- It will cover students from Grades 3, 6, and 9 across key subjects like Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and "The World Around Us."
- It will evaluate the overall effectiveness of schools across multiple districts. By using a combination of paper-based assessments and Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) technology, PARAKH introduces a more streamlined method of data collection and analysis.
- It collects performance data along with contextual data (school, teacher, and pupil questionnaires).
- It will evaluate entire schools as entities, providing a system-level assessment of education across districts. This change aligns more closely with international surveys such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
- Its approach is system-level, focusing on foundational, preparatory, and middle stages of education as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- It provides report cards at the national level, the state level and the district level.
- It is managed by the National Assessment Center, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), which is located within the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and under supervision of the Ministry of Education (MoE).

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NAMO DRONE DIDI SCHEME



- The scheme aims to provide drones to 14500 selected Women SHGs during the period from 2024-25 to 2025-2026 for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purposes (application of liquid fertilizers and pesticides for the present).

Components of the operational guidelines are

- The Scheme will be governed at the Central level by the Empowered Committee of the Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Department of Rural Development, Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- The Implementation and Monitoring Committee headed by the Additional Secretary, Department of Rural Development and having representation from all other stakeholders will be responsible for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of the scheme.
- Financial Assistance: Central Financial Assistance @ 80% of the cost of drone and accessories/ancillary charges up to a maximum of ₹ 8.0 lakhs will be provided to the women SHGs for the purchase of drones as a package.
- The Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) of SHGs/SHGs may raise the balance amount (total cost of procurement minus subsidy) as a loan under the National Agriculture Infra Financing Facility (AIF).
- Interest subvention @ 3% on the AIF loan will be provided to the CLFs/SHGs.
- The CLFs/SHGs shall also have the option to access loans from other sources/programmes/schemes of the Ministry of Rural Development.
- One of the members of the women SHGs will be selected for 15-day training comprising mandatory drone pilot training and additional training for agriculture purposes for nutrient and pesticide application.

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- The Lead Fertilizer Companies (LFCs) responsible for the States will be the implementing agencies of the scheme at the State level.
 - The drones will be procured by the LFCs through a fair and transparent process and the ownership of drones will be placed with the CLF of SHGs or SHGs.
 - The State Departments of Agriculture & State Mission Directors of DAY-NRLM will have a very strong convergence and they will take ownership of the scheme for its successful implementation at the ground level with the help of the State Level Committee.
 - The scheme will be monitored through an IT-based Management Information System (MIS) i.e. Drone Portal which will act as end-to-end software for service delivery and monitoring, funds flow and disbursement of funds.
 - Significance: It is envisaged that the initiatives under the scheme will provide sustainable business and livelihood support to SHGs and they would be able to earn additional income for them.
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PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT

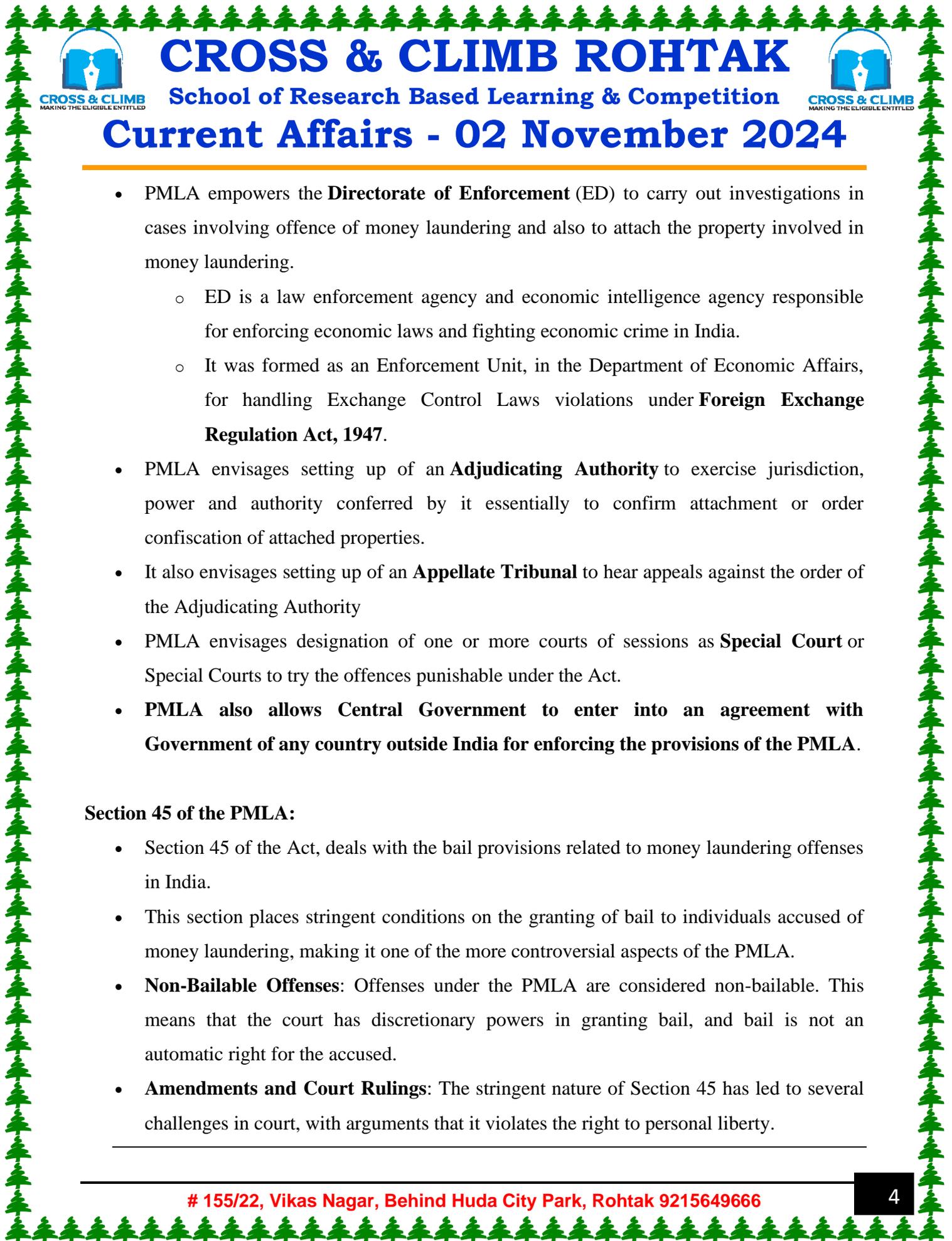
- The Supreme Court has highlighted that sickness and infirmity of an accused are grounds for bail even under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

About Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002:

- The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 was enacted in January, 2003.
- **The Act seeks to combat money laundering in India and has three main objectives:**
 - To prevent and control money laundering
 - To confiscate and seize the property obtained from the laundered money; and
 - To deal with any other issue connected with money laundering in India.

Major Provisions of the Act:

- The Act prescribes obligation of banking companies, financial institutions and intermediaries for verification and maintenance of records of the identity of all its clients and also of all transactions.



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- PMLA empowers the **Directorate of Enforcement (ED)** to carry out investigations in cases involving offence of money laundering and also to attach the property involved in money laundering.
 - ED is a law enforcement agency and economic intelligence agency responsible for enforcing economic laws and fighting economic crime in India.
 - It was formed as an Enforcement Unit, in the Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under **Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947**.
- PMLA envisages setting up of an **Adjudicating Authority** to exercise jurisdiction, power and authority conferred by it essentially to confirm attachment or order confiscation of attached properties.
- It also envisages setting up of an **Appellate Tribunal** to hear appeals against the order of the Adjudicating Authority
- PMLA envisages designation of one or more courts of sessions as **Special Court** or Special Courts to try the offences punishable under the Act.
- **PMLA also allows Central Government to enter into an agreement with Government of any country outside India for enforcing the provisions of the PMLA.**

Section 45 of the PMLA:

- Section 45 of the Act, deals with the bail provisions related to money laundering offenses in India.
 - This section places stringent conditions on the granting of bail to individuals accused of money laundering, making it one of the more controversial aspects of the PMLA.
 - **Non-Bailable Offenses:** Offenses under the PMLA are considered non-bailable. This means that the court has discretionary powers in granting bail, and bail is not an automatic right for the accused.
 - **Amendments and Court Rulings:** The stringent nature of Section 45 has led to several challenges in court, with arguments that it violates the right to personal liberty.
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US CRACKS DOWN ON INDIAN COMPANIES FOR SUPPLIES TO RUSSIAN FIRMS

The U.S. recently sanctioned around 400 entities and individuals, including 19 Indian firms and two Indian nationals, over links to Russia's war efforts in Ukraine.

Sanctions typically restrict trade, investment, and financial transactions with targeted entities, aiming to curb their economic and operational activities by cutting off access to U.S.-based resources and systems.

Economic sanctions

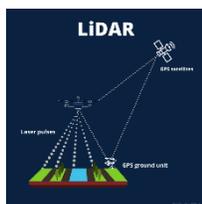
- Sanctions aim to restrict or end economic ties between the sanctioning entity and the target, taking forms such as import/export bans, trade restrictions, asset freezes, and exclusion from banking systems.
- Sanctions may be:
 - **Comprehensive:** Affecting entire countries, such as the U.S. embargo on Cuba.
 - **Targeted:** Directed at specific entities, groups, or individuals, as with U.S. sanctions on Russian firms.
- **Global Mechanisms for Sanctions**
 - Sanctions are imposed by individual countries, such as the U.S. on nations like Iran, North Korea, and Russia, which has become the world's most sanctioned country post-Ukraine war.
- **Efficacy and Criticisms of Sanctions**
 - While intended to apply economic pressure, the effectiveness of sanctions is debated.
 - Targets can find ways to bypass restrictions, and enforcing sanctions can impact both the sanctioning country and its industries reliant on sanctioned imports.
 - For instance, despite extensive Western sanctions, Russia's economy remains resilient with ongoing trade with countries like India and China.

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Possible Impact on India

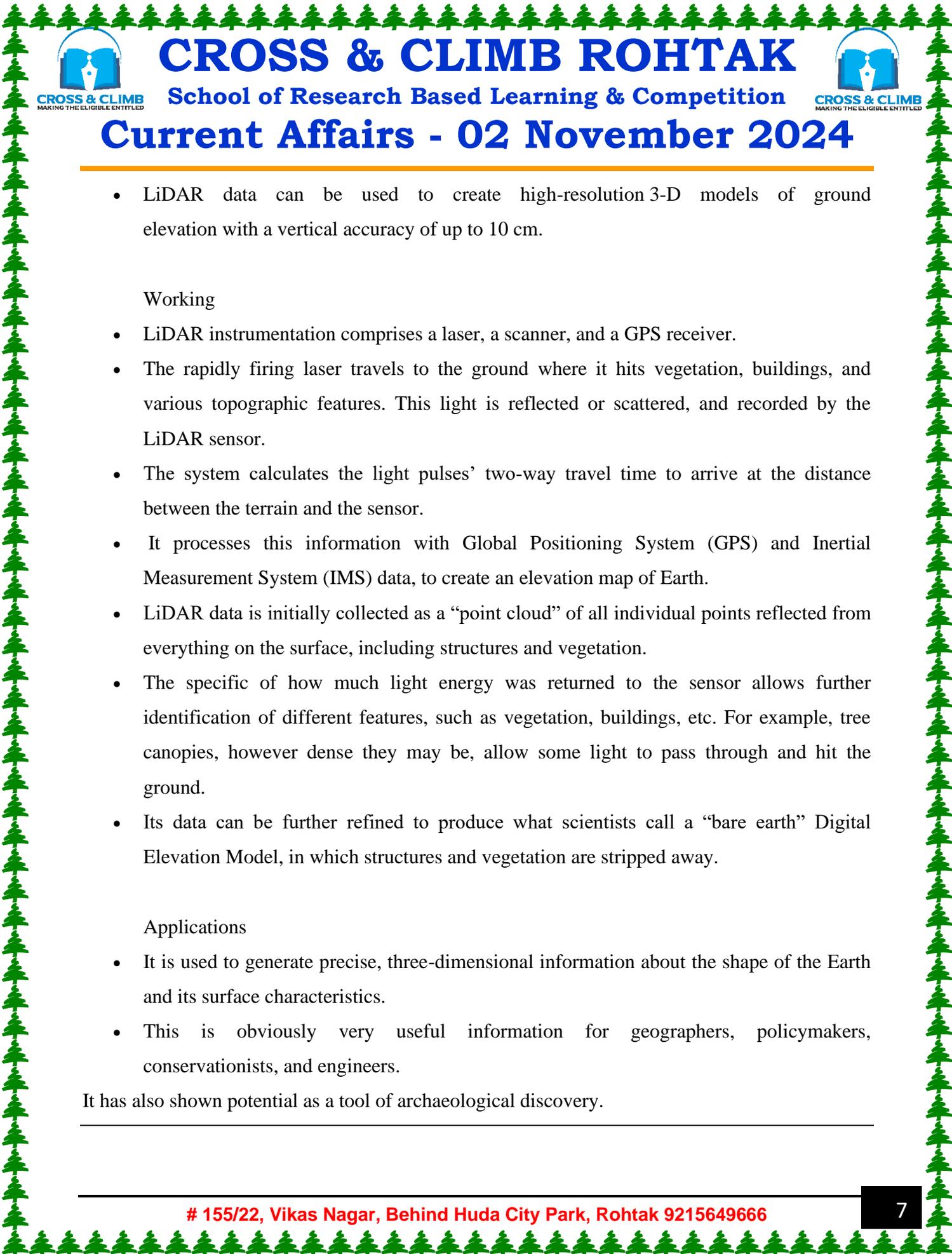
- **Impact on Indian Defence Sector**
 - The U.S. sanctions, aimed at restricting supply of dual-use items to Russia, are expected to have minimal impact on India's defense ecosystem.
 - Most sanctioned companies have no significant ties to major defense projects, with only **RRG Engineering** involved in limited work with the **DRDO** and the Indian armed forces.
 - **Trading Activities and Foreign Connections**
 - Many of the sanctioned entities appear to be engaged in trading, importing Western electronics for resale to sanctioned Russian companies. For example:
 - **Denvas Services:** Supplies digital kiosks and has Russian nationals among its directors and shareholders. It has been accused of procuring U.S.-origin microelectronics for Russia's conventional weapons.
 - **RRG Engineering:** The only company with limited defense ties, accused of sending microelectronics to Russia-based Arteks Limited Company. It has previously supported DRDO projects with manpower and provided non-critical supplies like NBC warfare detectors and satcom stations.
 - **Availability of Equipment in India**
 - Industry experts believe the sanctioned equipment, such as microelectronics and NBC detectors, is easily available within India and can be sourced when required, mitigating potential disruptions from these sanctions.
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WHAT IS LIDAR?



Recently, scientists have detected a lost Mayan city, hidden for centuries in the dense Mexican jungle, using LiDAR.

- Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is a remote sensing technology that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges (or variable distances) of a sensor, usually mounted aboard an aircraft, to Earth's surface.



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- LiDAR data can be used to create high-resolution 3-D models of ground elevation with a vertical accuracy of up to 10 cm.

Working

- LiDAR instrumentation comprises a laser, a scanner, and a GPS receiver.
- The rapidly firing laser travels to the ground where it hits vegetation, buildings, and various topographic features. This light is reflected or scattered, and recorded by the LiDAR sensor.
- The system calculates the light pulses' two-way travel time to arrive at the distance between the terrain and the sensor.
- It processes this information with Global Positioning System (GPS) and Inertial Measurement System (IMS) data, to create an elevation map of Earth.
- LiDAR data is initially collected as a "point cloud" of all individual points reflected from everything on the surface, including structures and vegetation.
- The specific of how much light energy was returned to the sensor allows further identification of different features, such as vegetation, buildings, etc. For example, tree canopies, however dense they may be, allow some light to pass through and hit the ground.
- Its data can be further refined to produce what scientists call a "bare earth" Digital Elevation Model, in which structures and vegetation are stripped away.

Applications

- It is used to generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics.
- This is obviously very useful information for geographers, policymakers, conservationists, and engineers.

It has also shown potential as a tool of archaeological discovery.



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ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE PRIME MINISTER (EAC-PM)



- It is an independent body constituted to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.

The Terms of Reference of EAC-PM include:

- Analysing any issue, economic or otherwise, referred to it by the Prime Minister and advising him thereon.
- Addressing issues of macroeconomic importance and presenting views thereon to the Prime Minister. These could be either suo-motu or on reference from the Prime Minister or anyone else.
- Attending to any other task as may be desired by the Prime Minister from time to time.
- The role of EAC-PM is advisory in nature and not binding on the Government.
- In addition to its advisory role, the EAC-PM also plays an important role in fostering greater economic understanding and awareness among the public. The council regularly interacts with stakeholders and the public and communicates its findings and recommendations through reports, presentations, and public events.

Composition:

- EAC-PM is headed by a chairperson and consists of eminent economists as members.
- It is supported in its functions by a team of officials and administrators.
- There is no fixed definition of the exact number of members and staff of the EAC-PM.
- It is common for the Council to be reconstituted time and again with different organizational structures headed by various economists who are of recognized international eminence.
- For administrative, logistic, planning, and budgeting purposes, the NITI Aayog serves as the nodal agency for the EAC-PM.

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WHY POST-DIWALI DELHI AIR WAS CLEANER THIS YEAR

Air Quality Index (AQI)

- The AQI was launched by the Indian government in 2014 as part of the Swachh Bharat campaign to provide a simplified understanding of air pollution.
- An expert group, including medical professionals and air quality experts, collaborated with IIT Kanpur to develop the AQI scheme.

Reasons behind low pollution level in Delhi after Diwali

- **Warmer Temperatures**
 - This year, Delhi experienced the warmest October in 73 years, with average temperatures of **35.1°C (maximum)** and **21.2°C (minimum)**.
 - In contrast, Diwali last year took place in November, with cooler temperatures averaging **27.8°C** and **13°C**.
 - Cooler weather typically worsens pollution due to a lower inversion height, which traps pollutants closer to the ground.
 - The warmer October temperatures this year **helped reduce pollution dispersion**, contributing to relatively improved air quality post-Diwali despite higher pollution levels on the festival day.
- **Strong winds**
 - High wind speeds significantly improved the dispersal of pollution in Delhi following Diwali.
 - India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported westerly winds starting at 3-7 kmph, increasing to 10 kmph by 9 AM and reaching 15 kmph by noon.
 - This wind speed aided in reducing levels of PM2.5 and PM10, which had spiked due to firecracker use and stubble burning in nearby states.
 - Despite air quality remaining 'poor' to 'very poor' throughout Diwali, these wind conditions ultimately facilitated a reduction in pollution levels the following day.