



Current Affairs of the Day

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- U.S. extends New START nuclear treaty with Russia

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- HAL gets a contract for 83 LCAs in ₹48,000 cr. deal
- Plea seeks probe into the role of RBI officials in bank scams
- 'Collection of DNA samples will lead to misuse'



U.S. extends New START nuclear treaty with Russia

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration on Wednesday extended the New START nuclear treaty with Russia by five years, saying it hoped to prevent an arms race despite rising tensions with Moscow.

Highlights:

1. President Biden pledged to keep the American people safe from nuclear threats by restoring U.S. leadership on arms control and nonproliferation.
2. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed off on legislation extending the accord on Friday, meaning that the treaty — signed by then-President Barack Obama in 2010 — will run until February 5, 2026.
3. The last remaining arms reduction pact between the former Cold War rivals, New START caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads that can be deployed by Moscow and Washington.
4. **China's arsenal:** Former President Donald Trump's administration tore up previous agreements with Moscow and unsuccessfully sought to expand New START to cover China.

HAL gets a contract for 83 LCAs in ₹48,000 cr. deal

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has been awarded the contract to manufacture 83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas for the Indian Air Force (IAF) at an estimated cost of ₹48,000 crores.

Highlights:

The government plans to spend \$130 bn on military modernization in the next 7-8 years. It has invited the global defence companies to set up manufacturing units.

The HAL Tejas

The HAL Tejas is an Indian single-engine, fourth-generation, multirole light fighter designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) in collaboration with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force and Indian Navy. It came from the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters. In 2003, the LCA was officially named "Tejas". It is the smallest and lightest in its class of contemporary supersonic combat aircraft. The Tejas is the second supersonic fighter developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) after the HAL HF-24 Marut.



Plea seeks probe into the role of RBI officials in bank scams

BJP leader and MP Subramanian Swamy on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the role played by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials in various banking scams that plague the country's economy, causing prejudice to the public interest.

Allegation:

1. The alleged involvement of RBI officials in scams involving various entities, including Kingfisher, Bank of Maharashtra, an Uttar Pradesh-based private sugar organisation, Nirav Modi, Rotomac Global, Lakshmi Vilas Bank, IL&FS, PMC Bank, Yes Bank and First Leasing Company of India, had not been investigated.
2. The petition alleged that the RBI officials had acted in “demonstrable active connivance” in direct violation of statutes, including the Reserve Bank of India Act, Banking Regulation Act, State Bank of India Act, Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act and the Nationalised Bank (Management and Miscellaneous Provisions) Scheme, 1980.
3. It said information procured through the Right to Information (RTI) Act revealed that “no officer of the Reserve Bank of India has ever been held accountable for any dereliction of duty in case of any fraud reported by any bank. This is in sharp contrast to the number of frauds exploding in the banking sector in India aggregating to in excess of over ₹3 lakh crore”.
4. This lapse has occurred despite RBI retaining the power to monitor, regulate, supervise, audit and direct the functioning of banking companies in the country.
5. The scheme of the Banking Regulation Act makes the Reserve Bank of India the alter ego of the bank management, more so in the case of public sector banks.
6. Yet, in none of the high-profile banking scams, the Central Bureau of Investigation investigating these scams has not even sought to examine at a cursory the role of officials of RBI.



'Collection of DNA samples will lead to misuse'

Allowing investigating agencies to collect DNA samples from “suspects”, as laid down in the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019, will give them “unbridled power that is easily capable of misuse and abuse” and amount to a “threat to the life, liberty, dignity and privacy of a person”.

DNA Testing in India

DNA testing is currently being done on an extremely limited scale in India, with approximately 30-40 DNA experts in 15-18 laboratories undertaking fewer than 3,000 cases a year. The standards of the laboratories are not monitored or regulated. The Bill aims to introduce the regulation of the entire process from collection to storage.

The Bill

The Bill proposes DNA technology for the purposes of establishing the identity of certain categories of persons, including the victims, offenders, suspects, undertrials, missing persons and unknown deceased persons.

Detecting fake encounters

Its use in recent months has exposed a false encounter in which innocents were killed contradicting initial claims made that they were militants. It pointed to the encounter at Shopian in Kashmir last September, where the Army had killed three men claiming to be unidentified terrorists. The DNA sample from the three dead men matched with their families, confirming it to be a fake encounter.

Misuse:

1. Justice Lokur has questioned the need to collect DNA of a “suspect”. In his submission, he argued that in a blind crime or a crime involving a large number of persons (such as a riot), everybody is a suspect without any real basis. This would mean that thousands of persons could be subjected to DNA profiling on mere suspicion.
2. Such an unbridled power is easily capable of misuse and abuse by targeting innocents, against whom there is not a shred of evidence.
3. Such an unbridled police power ought not to be conferred on anybody or any agency as it would amount to a threat to the life, liberty, dignity and privacy of a person.



4. Many members of the Parliamentary standing committee, too, had expressed concern over including “suspects” in this list, flagging that it could lead to misuse and targeting certain categories of people.

Conclusion:

These fears are not entirely unfounded and have to be addressed by the government and by Parliament as well. At the same time, it does not negate the need for such legislation, especially when DNA technology was in use already.