

NEW START NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL TREATY

United States has extended the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) nuclear arms control treaty with Russia for five years.

About:

- President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin reportedly discussed it by phone a week ago, and subsequently Mr Putin signed it into law on Friday.
- The treaty had been set to lapse on 5 February, as the Trump administration had refused to approve the extension. Now the pact has been extended to 5th February 2026.
- The treaty, which first went into effect in 2011, limits the United States and Russia to deploying no more than 1,550 strategic nuclear warheads each and imposes restrictions on the land- and submarine-based missiles and bombers to deliver them.

ERO-INDIA 2021

The Inaugural ceremony for Aero India 2021, Asia's largest Aerospace and Defence Exhibition is being held at Air Force Station, Yelahanka, Bengaluru between February 03-05, 2021.

About:

- Aero India is a biennial air show and aviation exhibition held in Bengaluru, India at the Yelahanka Air Force Station.
- It is organised by the Defence Exhibition Organisation, Ministry of Defence.
- The first edition of the air show was held in 1996.
- Aero India 2021 is the 13th edition of Aero India. This year Aero India 2021 has been organised in hybrid mode with a concurrent virtual exhibition to encourage maximum participation.

METRONEO

By making a sizeable budgetary allocation for MetroNeo in the Union Budget, the central government has paved the way for the innovative system of mass transport, which could soon be replicated across the country.

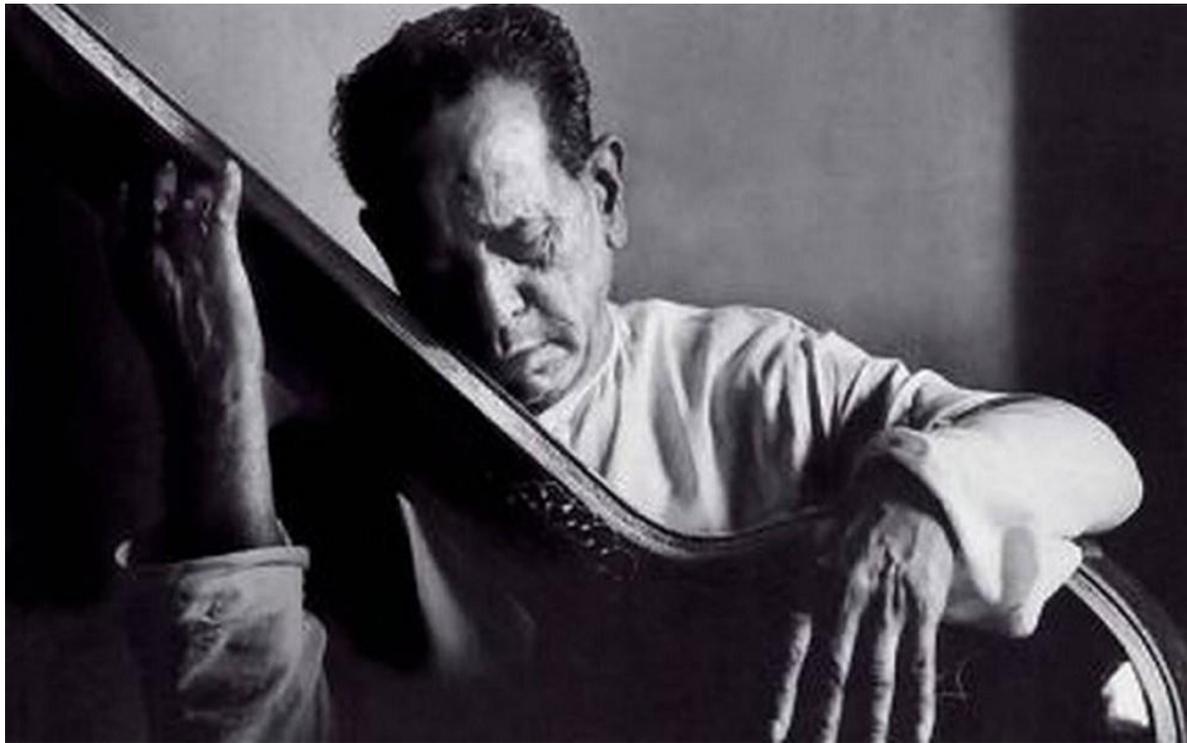
About:

- To be adopted for the first time in the country in Maharashtra's Nashik, MetroNeo is a comfortable, rapid, energy-efficient and less noisy transport medium.

- The central government recently urged all state governments to consider using MetroNeo technology in their tier-2 and tier-3 cities.
- The MetroNeo service consists of electric bus coaches – their lengths varying from 18 to 25 metres – with a carrying capacity of 200 to 300 passengers at a time.
- The buses will have rubber tyres and draw power from an overhead electric wire with 600-750 V DC supply, similar to railways or trams.
- The buses will be air-conditioned, with automatic door closing system, level boarding, comfortable seats, passenger announcement system, and an information system with electronic display. The stations will be similar to other Metro rail stations.

BHIMSEN JOSHI

The year-long Birth Centenary celebrations of doyen of music Pandit Bhimsen Joshi will began on February 4, 2021.



About:

- Pandit Bhimsen Gururaj Joshi (1922 –2011) was an Indian vocalist from Karnataka, in the Hindustani classical tradition.
- He is known for the khayal form of singing, as well as for his popular renditions of devotional music (bhajans and abhangs).
- Bhimsen Joshi belongs to the Kirana gharana tradition of Hindustani Classical Music.
- Bhimsen Joshi was instrumental in organising the Sawai Gandharva Music Festival annually, as homage to his guru, Pandit Sawai Gandharva.

GROUNDHOG

On February 2, the United States and Canada marked Groundhog Day, an annual tradition in which a groundhog predicts whether winter will continue or give way to spring soon. This year, the groundhog, called “Punxsutawney Phil”, has predicted a longer winter.



About:

- The groundhog (*Marmota monax*) is also known as a woodchuck.
- It is a rodent of the family Sciuridae, belonging to the group of large ground squirrels known as marmots.
- It is native to North America.
- **IUCN Status:** Least Concern.

SOUTH AFRICAN COVID VARIANT



The WHO has identified three new variants of coronavirus originating in the UK, Brazil and now in South Africa.

About:

- Of the three, the latest South African variant known as 20H/501Y.V2 or B.1.351 appears to be more infectious than the original virus.
- This potentially more concerning variant, which has been spotted since December 22 last year and spread to nearly 40 countries including the United States.
- The South African variant carries a mutation called N501Y that appears to make it more contagious or easy to spread. this variant “is less susceptible to antibody neutralisation” than previous variants.
- This South African variant has become a major cause of worry because of its unusually large number of mutations, especially in the spike protein, which the virus uses to gain entry into the cells within the human body.

‘WALKING WHILE TRANS’ BAN

New York Governor signed a bill repealing a controversial law known as the “Walking While Trans” ban, which has been widely criticised for disproportionately discriminating against transgender people of colour.

About:

- ‘Walking While Trans’ ban is the colloquial name for a law, which was originally passed in 1976 with the intention of prohibiting loitering for the purpose of prostitution.
- The law is criticised for how notoriously vague it is — it allows New York police to arrest or apprehend someone walking on the street if they suspect that they are sex workers.
- While the law is mostly used against women, several men, too, have been arrested or detained merely because police suspected that they were “loitering for the purpose of prostitution”.
- But the law is known for disproportionately impacting trans women, especially trans women of colour.

INDIA – SRI LANKA RELATIONS

After strong opposition from trade unions across the country, Sri Lanka has unilaterally pulled out of a 2019 agreement with India and Japan for developing the strategic East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port.

About:

- In 2019, India and Sri Lanka signed a memorandum of understanding for “co-operation on economic projects”.
- The MoU did not mention the Eastern Container Terminal, but India and Sri Lanka had already been in discussion for its development and operation.

Reason:

- Although India and Sri Lanka have seemingly friendly ties and much cultural affinity and people-to-people contact, the relationship is complex.
- The majority Sinhala-Buddhist public opinion is layered with the memory of Indian intervention in the ethnic conflict.
- Thus, unlike Chinese projects, big projects by India have always faced opposition in Sri Lanka.

BHAVYA LAL

NASA appointed Indian-American Bhavya Lal as its acting chief of staff.

**About:**

- As the acting chief of staff, Lal will be responsible for the day-to-day operations at NASA's headquarters and will work towards shaping the strategic direction of the space agency.
- Previously, as the senior White House appointee at NASA, Lal served as a member of the Biden Presidential Transition Agency Review Team for the agency and oversaw the agency's transition under the administration of President Joe Biden.
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is an independent agency of the U.S. federal government responsible for the civilian space program, as well as aeronautics and space research.