

1. Internet Shutdowns in India

Why in News?

- **India witnessed the highest number of Internet shutdowns in the world in 2023**, a record it has held for the sixth straight year, according to a report.

About

- India has collectively had **more than 500 instances** of Internet shutdowns.
- A total of **13 States and Union Territories** imposed shutdowns in 2023, where seven of them disrupted Internet services five or more times.



- Shutdowns spanning over five days or more shot up **from 15% of all shutdowns in 2022 to more than 41% in 2023**.
- With 37 orders, **Myanmar**, where the military seized power in a coup in 2021, recorded the second-highest number of Internet shutdowns, followed by **Iran (34)**, **Palestine (16)**, and **Ukraine (8)**.

Legal Provisions Relating to Internet Shutdown

- **Grounds:** Indian States and Union Territories can impose an internet shutdown only in case of a “**public emergency**” or in the interest of “**public safety**”, according to the Indian Telegraph Act.
 - However, the law **does not define what qualifies as an emergency or safety issue**.
- Till the year 2017, shutdowns were imposed largely **under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**.
 - Section 144 of CrPC gave the police and the District Magistrate the powers in order to prevent unlawful gathering of people and also to direct any person to abstain from a certain activity.

- However, in 2017 the law was amended and the Government promulgated the **Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rule 2017**.

Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India Case:

- In **2020** the Supreme Court by **ruling on Jammu and Kashmir Internet shutdown** held that **indefinite internet shutdowns** by the State is not permissible under Indian Constitution.
- The apex Court further stated that **imposition of Section 144** can not be used as a mechanism to avoid genuine protest which is permitted under the Constitution.
 - a. **Section 144** has very specific parameters, only if those parameters are satisfied then only a Magistrate can pass the orders.

Key Highlights of the orders:

- Usage of the Internet is the **Fundamental Right under Article 19** of the Indian Constitution.
- Internet shutdowns can be of **temporary period** but not for indefinite period.
- Government to publish all orders imposing restrictions under Section 144.
- The Court had also said that any order with regard to Internet Shutdowns will come under **Judicial Scrutiny**.

Implications

- **Impact on Freedom of Expression:** Internet shutdowns infringe upon the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.
- **Global Image and Investment:** Frequent internet shutdowns can impact India's global image, raising concerns among investors and international partners.
- **Human Rights Concerns:** Internet shutdowns raise human rights concerns, including the right to access information, freedom of speech, and the right to peaceful assembly.
- **Economic Disruptions:** India has a rapidly growing digital economy, and internet shutdowns lead to significant economic losses.
- **Educational Challenges:** With the increasing use of online platforms for education, internet shutdowns severely affect students' access to learning resources, online classes, and communication with teachers.
- **Lack of Transparency:** The government needs to provide clear justifications for such actions and communicate transparently about the duration and reasons for the shutdown.

Conclusion

- In a democracy Governments need to provide a rationale for disrupting the internet services in a periodic manner.
- Indiscriminate shutdowns have high social and economic costs and are often ineffective.

- For better internet governance the Indian civil society needs to push for a transparent and accountable system.

2. Who are Kadars?

Why in News?

The recent death of a Kadar tribesman in Tamil Nadu's Anamalai Tiger Reserve in an elephant attack has left the indigenous community and conservationists in shock as Kadars are known to co-exist with wild elephants for ages.

About Kadars:



- The Kadars are a small indigenous **tribal community** in **South India**.
- **They reside** along the hilly border between Cochin in **Kerala** and Coimbatore in **Tamil Nadu**.
- They are **traditional forest dwellers** who depend on forest produce for sustenance.
- They do **not practice agriculture**, building shelters thatched with leaves and shifting locations as their employment requires.
- They **prefer to eat rice obtained in trade or as wages** rather than to subsist on food of their own gathering.
- They have long served as **specialized collectors of honey, wax, sago**, cardamom, ginger, and **umbrella sticks** for trade with merchants from the plains.

- Kadar have a **symbiotic relationship with nature**, and they **believe in the coexistence of Kadar and Kaadu (forest)**.
 - The Kadar have **traditional protocols to ensure the sustainable use** of forest resources.
 - **Every practice of resource collection**—be it honey, firewood, resin, or herbs—is **designed to allow time for regeneration**.
- Their population was estimated at approximately 2,000 individuals in the early 21st century.
- They **speak** the Dravidian **languages of Tamil and Kannaḍa**.
- They **worship jungle spirits** and their own kindly creator couple, **as well as local forms of the Hindu deities**.

They are listed as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Kerala**, but not in Tamil Nadu

3. What is Igla-S?

Why in News?

The Army is all set to begin receiving another set of Russian Igla-S very short range air defence systems (VSHORAD) by the end of May or early next month.

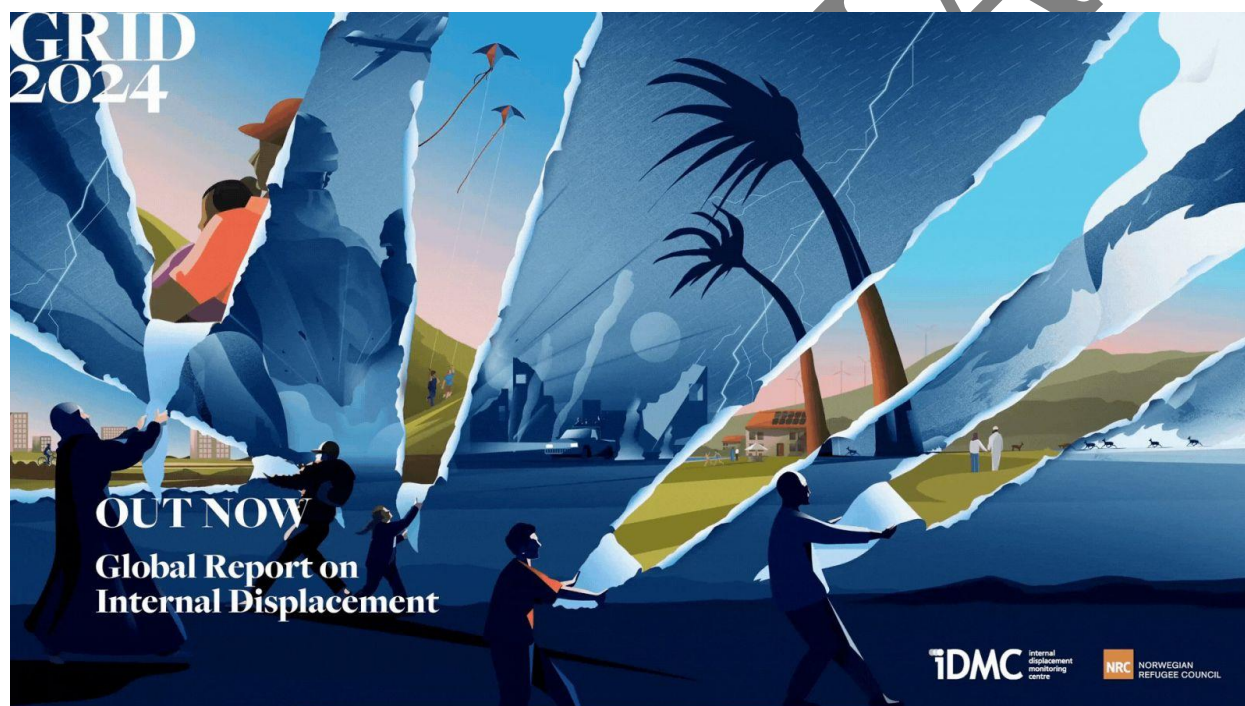
About Igla-S:



- It is a **man-portable air defence system (MANPADS)** developed by Russia.
- **Capabilities:**
 - It is a **hand-held defence system** that can be operated by an individual or crew.

- It is designed to **bring down low-flying aircraft** and can also identify and neutralise air targets such as cruise missiles and drones.
- It comprises the 9M342 missile, the 9P522 launching mechanism, the 9V866-2 mobile test station, and the 9F719-2 test set. These components work together to provide a comprehensive air defence solution.
- A VSHORAD is the soldier's **last line of defence against enemy** combat aircraft, helicopters and UAVs in the multilayered air defence network.
- **Range:** It has a **range of 500 metres to 6 kilometres** and attack targets up to an altitude of 3.5 kilometres. The speed of the missile is 400 metres per second and the deployment time is 13 seconds.
- **Significance:** The acquisition of the Iгла-S MANPADS marks a significant step in enhancing India's air defence capabilities, particularly in mountainous regions.

4. Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024



Why in News?

In 2023, the number of internally displaced people increased to 75.9 million, from 71.1 million in the preceding year, according to the Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024 (GRID-2024) released recently.

About Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024:

- It is an **annual report** published by the **Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)**.
- It records internal displacements **due to conflict and violence and disasters**.
- **Highlights of GRID-2024:**

- **In 2023**, the number of **internally displaced people (IDP) increased to 75.9 million**, from 71.1 million in the preceding year.
- Report says **7.7 million** displaced **by disasters** (one-fourth of it was caused by earthquakes) and **68.3 million by conflict and violence**.
- **Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Colombia, and Yemen** host nearly **half of the world's IDPs**.
- At **9.1 million**, **Sudan** has the **highest number** of IDPs recorded for a single country.
- **Most of the new displacement** this year happened in **Sudan, the Palestinian territories, and the Democratic Republic of Congo**, accounting for almost **two-thirds** of all **new displacement**.
- **South Asia:**
 - The IDMC said around **5.3 million** people were living **in internal displacement** as a **result of conflict and violence across South Asia** at the end of 2023, **80 percent** of whom were **in Afghanistan**.
 - **Conflict and violence triggered 69,000 displacements in South Asia in 2023**, with **Manipur violence alone** accounting for **67,000**.
 - It is the **highest number** of displacements **triggered by conflict and violence in India since 2018**.
 - There is a **sharp decline in IDP in 2023** from 2.5 million internal displacements **due to natural disasters in India** in 2022. Internal displacements by natural disasters **in 2023 was 528,000**.

Key Facts about Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC):

- It is the **leading source** of information and analysis **on internal displacement**.
- IDMC defines internal displacement as “the number of forced movements of people within the borders of their country, recorded during (a) year.
- IDMC was **set up in 1998** at the **request of the international community** to fill an important knowledge gap on the global scale and patterns of internal displacement.
- IDMC is **part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**, an **independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation**.
- IDMC plays a unique role as a global monitor and evidence-based **advocate to influence policy and action by governments, UN agencies**, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

IDMC's GRID is the **official repository of data and analysis on internal displacement**.



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5. Legal Position on live-in Relationships in India

Why in News?

- The Allahabad High Court stated that a **Muslim cannot claim rights in a live-in relationship when he or she has a living spouse.**

About



- The judgement called such a relationship **against the tenets of Islam while hearing a writ petition.**
- Live-in relationships with variables of marital status of the partners, their possibly different faiths, birth of children and even separation have occupied the attention of the judiciary at various levels in recent years.

Legal Status in India

- India does not have **any laws that directly address a live-in partnership.**
- As per the top Court, for a man and a woman to live together is part of **‘the right to life’**; therefore, a live-in relationship is no longer an offence.
- The concept of live-in relationships was **legally recognized for the first time in 2010** while discussing the safety of women and said that women who were in live-in relationships are **protected under the domestic violence law.**
- Twelve years later, the Supreme Court strengthened the legitimacy of live-in partnerships by **recognizing that children born out of such situations** are entitled to rights under a co-parenting agreement and have a **right to inherit property.**
- The Supreme Court in its various judgments has stated that a man and a woman living like a husband and a wife in a long-term relationship, and even have children, the judiciary will **presume that the two were married and that the same laws would be applicable to them and their relationship.**

Arguments in Favour of Live-In Relationships

- **Changing Social Norms:** Indian society is experiencing significant cultural shifts, Live-in relationships are seen as a reflection of this changing mindset, allowing individuals to explore alternative forms of partnership.

- **Compatibility Testing:** In a country where arranged marriages are still prevalent, live-in relationships offer a way for couples to get to know each other on a deeper level before making a lifelong commitment.
- **Financial Independence:** Living together provides financial independence and allows couples to share living expenses, which can be particularly advantageous in expensive cities.
- **Reduced Stigma:** While live-in relationships may still face stigma in certain conservative segments of Indian society, attitudes are gradually evolving, especially in urban areas.
- **Legal Recognition and Protection:** The Indian legal system has begun to acknowledge the rights of couples in live-in relationships through various judgments by the Supreme Court and High Courts.
- **Personal Freedom and Choice:** Ultimately, live-in relationships in India represent a broader movement towards individual freedom and choice in matters of love and relationships.

Arguments Against Live-In Relationships

- **Social Stigma:** Live-in relationships are often viewed negatively in Indian society, particularly in more conservative communities.
 - Couples face judgment, criticism, and ostracism from family members, friends, and the broader community.
- **Cultural and Religious Beliefs:** India is a country with diverse cultural and religious traditions, many of which emphasize the sanctity of marriage and family.
 - Live-in relationships are seen as contrary to these beliefs and perceived as morally and socially unacceptable.
- **Family Pressure:** Live-in relationships may strain familial relationships and lead to conflict with parents who may not approve of the arrangement.
- **Legal Ambiguity:** Despite some legal recognition of live-in relationships by the Indian judiciary, there is still ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the legal rights and protections of couples in such arrangements.
- **Lack of Financial Dependence:** Women may feel pressured to enter into marriage rather than pursue a live-in relationship as marriage is seen as providing more financial security and stability.
- **Impact on Children:** If children are involved in a live-in relationship, they may face social stigma and discrimination, particularly in more conservative communities.
- **Lack of Social Support:** Unlike marriage, which is socially sanctioned and supported, couples in live-in relationships lack the same level of social support and acceptance.
 - This lead to feelings of isolation and alienation, especially during times of crisis or need.
- **Influence of Media and Westernization:** While attitudes towards live-in relationships may be changing, particularly in urban areas, there is concern that the increasing influence of Western media and culture is eroding traditional values and norms regarding marriage and relationships.
- **Potential for Exploitation and Abuse:** In the absence of legal protections and societal recognition, individuals in live-in relationships may be vulnerable to

exploitation, abuse, and coercion, particularly if there is a significant power imbalance between partners.

Way Ahead

- Positive and realistic portrayal of live-in relationships in media and popular culture can help normalize these relationships and reduce stigma.
- Family acceptance plays a crucial role in the success of live-in relationships, particularly in the Indian Why in News? where familial ties hold significant importance.
- Encouraging open dialogue and understanding within families can facilitate acceptance of diverse relationship choices.
- Ultimately, the way forward for live-in relationships in India lies in upholding the principles of personal choice and freedom.
- Individuals should have the right to choose their relationship dynamics without fear of societal judgment or legal repercussions.

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