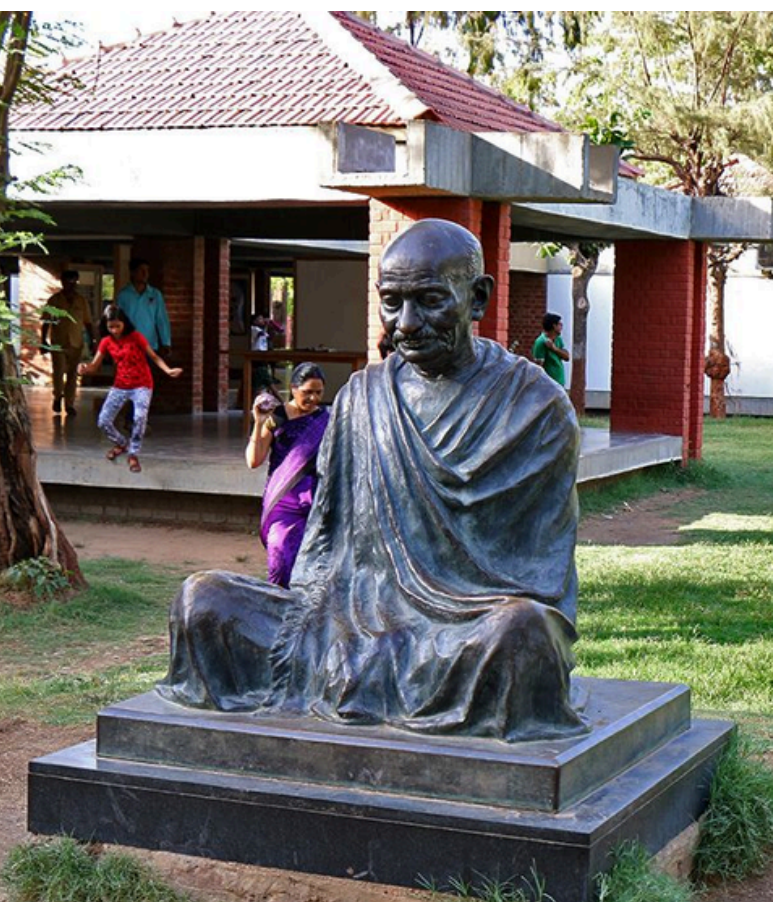


# MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

BOOST UP YOUR PRE PLUSE MAINS PREPARATION  
DETAILED EXPLANATION OF CURRENT AFFAIRS.

APRIL 20  
24



|   |    |
|---|----|
| ■ Katchatheevu Island Issue.....  | 1  |
| ■ Defence exports.....  | 2  |
| ■ Kallakkadal.....  | 3  |
| ■ Glacial Lake Outburst Floods.....                                       | 4  |
| ■ India new geopolitics.....  | 5  |
| ■ Antimicrobial resistance.....   | 6  |
| ■ Youth suicide in India.....   | 7  |
| ■ Solution .....  | 8  |
| ■ India's solar potential.....  | 9  |
| ■ The climate crisis is not gender neutral.....                           | 9  |
| ■ DMRC not required to pay Rs 8,000 crore to Reliance Infra arm – SC..... | 11 |
| ■ Malnutrition remains sluggish.....                                      | 13 |
| ■ The blurry lines between wildlife 'capture' and 'rescue'.....           | 14 |
| ■ Constitution and the Redistribution of Wealth.....                      | 15 |
| ■ Plastic Treaty: INC 4 Meeting, in Ottawa.....                           | 16 |
| ■ Fixing India's VVPAT-based audit of EVMs.....                           | 17 |
| ■ What is Doxxing and what can you do if it happens to you? .....         | 18 |
| ■ Siachen: 40 years of Op Meghdoot.....                                   | 19 |
| ■ Imported Inflation .....  | 20 |
| ■ Indian economy projected to grow 6.5% in 2024: UNCTAD.....              | 21 |
| ■ Tackling Tuberculosis (TB): Strategies and Progress.....                | 22 |
| ■ {GS2 – Policies – Data} Non-Personal Data (NPD).....                    | 23 |
| ■ {GS1 – Issues – Famine} Gaza and Haiti on the brink of famine.....      | 25 |
| ■ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) scheme.....                 | 26 |
| ■ Supreme Court Allows Abortion for 14-Year-Old Rape Survivor.....        | 27 |
| ■ Inheritance Tax.....  | 28 |
| ■ RBI Proposes Enhanced Regulation for Offline Payment Aggregators.....   | 29 |
| ■ Glacial Lakes in the Himalayas Using Satellite Remote Sensing.....      | 30 |
| ■ Anticyclones and Heat Waves.....  | 31 |
| ■ Urgent Reforms Needed for India's Poultry Industry.....                 | 32 |
| ■ Ram Navami .....  | 33 |
| ■ International Relations.....  | 34 |
| ■ Sweden Became Member of Nato.....                                       | 35 |
| ■ Supreme Court forms panel for Great Indian Bustard Conservation .....   | 36 |
| ■ MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN.....                                       | 36 |
| ■ INDIA AND BRAZIL 2+2 DIALOGUE.....                                      | 36 |



|   |    |
|---|----|
| ■ Brief on India-Brazil Relations:.....                             | 37 |
| ■ NORWAY TO INVEST ALMOST HALF OF \$100 BILLION UNDER EFTA.....     | 38 |
| ■ OPERATION INDRAVATI.....  | 39 |
| ■ UNREST IN BALOCHISTAN.....  | 39 |
| ■ India's Stand on Balochistan:.....                                | 40 |
| ■ UNITING FOR CONSENSUS.....  | 41 |
| ■ UNITING FOR CONSENSUS.....  | 42 |
| ■ Role in Global Development.....                                   | 43 |
| ■ UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA (UNCLOS).....     | 44 |
| ■ EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER'S VISIT TO MALAYSIA.....                | 45 |
| ■ INDIA-LED GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF).....                             | 46 |
| ■ ENVIRONMENT.....  | 47 |
| ■ EARLY JACARANDA BLOOM.....  | 48 |
| ■ DISCLOSURE FRAMEWORK ON CLIMATERELATED FINANCIAL RISKS, 2024..... | 49 |
| ■ GREEN TUG TRANSITION PROGRAMME (GTTP).....                        | 50 |
| ■ WORLD WILDLIFE DAY.....   | 51 |
| ■ HANGULS.....  | 52 |
| ■ METHANESAT.....   | 53 |
| ■ INDIA'S FIRST NATIONAL DOLPHIN RESEARCH CENTRE.....               | 54 |
| ■ KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK.....                                      | 55 |
| ■ Ratan Tata Awarded PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award.....           | 54 |
| ■ GOLDEN LANGURS.....   | 56 |
| ■ RISING GLOBAL SEA SURFACE TEMPERATURE.....                        | 57 |
| ■ POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY.....                                  | 58 |
| ■ ETHANOL 100.....  | 59 |
| ■ CAPTIVE ELEPHANT (TRANSFER OR TRANSPORT) RULES, 2024.....         | 60 |
| ■ STATE OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE 2023.....                             | 61 |
| ■ SOLAR WASTE.....  | 62 |
| ■ ASBESTOS.....   | 64 |
| ■ GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD.....   | 65 |
| ■ ARSENIC CONTAMINATION.....  | 65 |
| ■ CURBING BLACK CARBON EMISSIONS.....                               | 66 |
| ■ CARBON CREDIT SCHEME OF AUSTRALIA.....                            | 68 |
| ■ NUCLEAR ENERGY AS CLIMATE SOLUTION.....                           | 69 |
| ■ GRAY WHALE.....   | 71 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| ■ PEBANISTA YACURUNA.....   | 72 |
| ■ SOCIETY.....  | 72 |
| ■ LISUS AND SINGPHOS COMMUNITIES.....   | 74 |
| ■ YAOUNDE DECLARATION.....  | 74 |
| ■ NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF SNAKEBITE ENVENOMING (NAP-SE)..... | 75 |
| ■ HBA1C TEST.....   | 76 |
| ■ LACK OF REGULATIONS & SECURITY BENEFITS FOR GIGS: STUDY.....                          | 77 |
| ■ INDIA'S DISABILITY LAW.....   | 80 |
| ■ DROP IN FERTILITY RATE IN INDIA.....  | 84 |
| ■ CULTURE & HISTORY.....  | 85 |
| ■ AYYAVAIKUNDAR.....  | 87 |
| ■ SABARMATI GANDHI ASHRAM REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT.....                                    | 88 |
| ■ SAVITRIBAI PHULE.....   | 89 |
| ■ HYDERABAD LIBERATION DAY.....   | 90 |
| ■ CHAUSATH KHAMBA.....  | 91 |
| ■ MISCELLANEOUS.....  | 92 |
| ■ ORDER OF THE DRUK GYALPO.....   | 93 |
| ■ UNITED NATIONS ON GLOBAL FOOD WASTE.....  | 93 |



## KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND ISSUE



The map shows the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka. Katchatheevu Island is marked with a red pin in the strait. Rameswaram is marked with a black dot on the Indian coast, and Jaffna is marked with a black dot on the Sri Lankan coast. The text 'Kachchatheevu Island' is written in large, bold letters above the island, and 'Rameswaram' and 'Jaffna' are written below their respective locations.

- Katchatheevu is an uninhabited island of Sri Lanka in the Palk strait, formed from a 14th century volcanic eruption.
- It is located 33 kilometres from Rameswaram, India.
- Initially a disputed territory between India and Sri Lanka over fishing, the dispute was resolved in 1974 when India renounced its claim to the island in exchange for fishing rights for Indian fisherman.
- Tamil Nadu cited the historical control of the city Ramnad Zamindar over the island and traditional fishing rights of Indian Tamil fishermen.
- The island was given away to Sri Lanka without consulting the state legislative assembly.
- In 1991, the Tamil Nadu assembly adopted a resolution demanding the retrieval of Katchatheevu.

### ABOUT MARITIME BOUNDARY AGREEMENT

- The issue emerged when both the countries signed these Agreements in 1974-76.
- The 1974 agreement was to fix the maritime boundary in the Palk Strait.

#### 1974 Agreement :-

- Each country shall have sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction and control over the waters, the islands, the continental shelf and the subsoil, falling on its own side of the aforesaid boundary.
- Only navigational rights of the vessels of both Sri Lanka and India over each other's waters have been preserved.

#### 1976 Agreement:-

- Each Party shall respect rights of navigation through its territorial sea and exclusive economic zone in accordance with its laws and regulations and the rules of international law.
- It marked the international maritime boundary of India and Sri Lanka without consulting the Tamil Nadu State Assembly.

## INDIA'S STAND

- The Union government argued that since the island had always been under dispute, “no territory belonging to India was ceded nor sovereignty relinquished.
- According to the agreement, the Island lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line.
- The matter is still sub-judice in the Supreme Court of India.
- The government has raised the issue at the highest political level with Sri Lanka. According to agreements, the issue was bilaterally resolved and allowed Indians to visit the island for the pilgrimage without any requirement of a visa.

## DEFENCE EXPORTS



- India's defence exports reached an all time high level of ₹21,083 crore in financial year 2023-24 with a 32.5% growth in FY24.
- The rise in exports was led by an increase in Global interest in Indian defence products like LCA-Tejas, light combat helicopter and aircraft carriers.
- According to a mini report, India is exporting its locally manufactured defence product to over 85 countries, showcasing the prowess of its defence industry.
- Over 100 firms are actively exporting defence products, sophisticated defence systems including 155 mm Advanced Towed Artillery Guns, Brahmos Missile have been exported to other countries.
- Defence manufacturing has become the critical focus of the Make in India and Atma Nirbhar Bharat missions
- Several factors like rising demand, greater innovation, more conducive policies and a maturing ecosystem in defence and aerospace manufacturing space are leading to the growth in the sector.
- Steps taken by the government to boost the Make in India initiative by promoting indigenous design development and manufacturing of defence equipment, platforms, systems and subsystems.
- India has imposed a phased import ban on 310 different weapons and systems during the last two years, which helped boost export.
- India has set aside ₹70,221 crore-63% of the military capital budget for 2021-2022 for buying locally produced weapons and systems to boost defence indigenisation.



## KALLAKKADAL



- Kallakkadal is essentially coastal flooding during the pre- monsoon season by swell waves on the southwest coast of india
- The term kallakkadal used by local fisherman, is a combination of two malayalam words, including kallan and kadal. Kallan means thief and kadal means sea.
- In 2012, the term was formally approved by the United Nations Educational,Scientific and Cultural organization(UNESCO).
- Kallakkadal is caused by waves that are formed by an ocean swell, hence the name swell surge.
- Ocean swells occur not due to the local winds,but rather due to distant storms like hurricanes,or even long periods of fierce gale winds.
- Swells are lower frequency waves that outrun the storm that creates them.
- During such storms, huge energy transfer takes place from the air into the water,leading to the formation of very high waves. Such waves can travel thousands of kilometres from the storm's centre until they strike shore.
- They lengthen and decrease in height as they travel away from the wind source. Swells organize into groups that appear smooth and regular.
- Usually kallakkadal is a consequence of the strong winds in the southern part of the Indian ocean,where an ocean swell is generated, and the waves then travel north to reach the coast in two or three days.
- Kallakkadal occurs without precursors or any kind of local wind activity and as a result, it has been very difficult for the coastal population to get advance warning.
- However early warning systems like the swell surge forecast system -Launched by the indian national centre for ocean information service in 2020 - gives forewarning information seven days in advance.

# GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST FLOODS



- A GLOF refer to the flooding that occur when the water dammed by a glacier or a moraine is released suddenly.
- Unlike earthen dams, the weak structure of the moraine dam led to the abrupt failure of the dam on top of the glacial lake, which holds a large volume of water.
- The Uttarakhand government has constituted two teams of experts to evaluate the risk posed by five potentially hazardous glacial lakes in the region.
- The goal of the risk assessment exercise is to minimise the possibility of a GLOF incident and provide more time for relief and evacuation in case of a breach.
- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), which operates under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, has identified 188 glacial lakes in the Himalayan states that can potentially be breached because of heavy rainfall. Thirteen of them are in Uttarakhand.
- Rising surface temperature across the globe, including India, have increased the risk of GLOFs.

## What are Glacial Lakes?

- Glacial lakes, like the South Lhonak Lake, are large bodies of water that sit in front of, on top of, or beneath a melting glacier.
- As they grow larger, they become more dangerous because glacial lakes are mostly dammed by unstable ice or sediment composed of loose rock and debris.
- In case the boundary around them breaks, huge amounts of water rush down the side of the mountains, which could cause flooding in the downstream areas. This is called glacial lake outburst floods .

## What are the Causes Behind GLOF?

- GLOF can be triggered by several reasons, including earthquakes, extremely heavy rains and ice avalanches.
- As these lakes are often found in steep, mountainous regions, landslides or ice avalanches can sometimes fall directly into the lakes and displace the water, causing it to over-top the natural dam and flood downstream.
- In 2013, one such event took place in Uttarakhand's Kedarnath when the region witnessed flash floods along with a GLOF caused by the Chorabari Tal glacial lake, killing thousands of people.



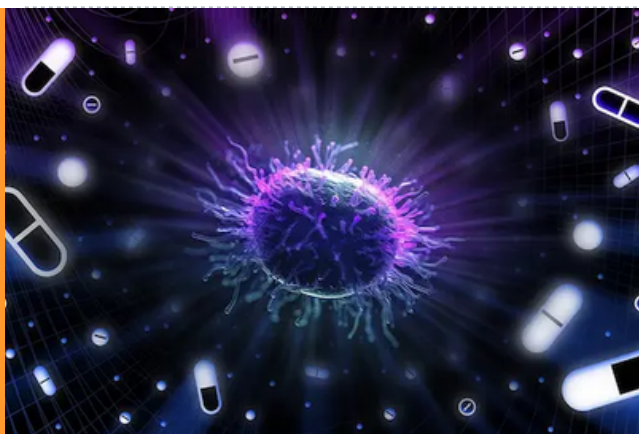
# INDIA NEW GEOPOLITICS

## Islands have emerged as an important part of India's new geopolitics.

- E.g.: Maldives growing maritime joust with China or Delhi's new engagement with the resource-rich Papua New Guinea in the Pacific Islands, the joint development of infrastructure on the Agalega island of Mauritius, the collaboration with Australia in the eastern Indian Ocean islands, or the government's focus on developing the Andamans to our east and the Lakshadweep in the west.
- India's strategic imagination of the world's regions and how we describe them has altered significantly over the last decade.
- India's deteriorating relations with China, marked by a series of military crises in 2013, 2014 and 2017, was an important factor in Delhi's rethink: so was the growing strategic partnership with the US.
- The idea of "Eurasia"- the continental cushion of the maritime Indo-Pacific- has not gained equal currency in the India strategic discourse but is now part of India's new diplomatic vocabulary.
- If Japan and the US popularised "Indo-Pacific", Russia has driven the Eurasian idea.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, built jointly by Russia and China, was the institutional expression of the Eurasian idea. Given India's stakes in the continental Asia, its long-standing ties to Russia, and its quest for a multipolar world, Delhi joined the SCO.
- India's interest is no longer limited to inner Asia but has expanded to include Europe in the far western corner of Eurasia.

## Embracing the Indo-Pacific Concept

- **Origin of the Concept:** The notion of the "Indo-Pacific" was first introduced by the late Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in 2007, during a speech to the Indian Parliament.
- **Initial Resistance:** Initially, there was opposition in India to the Indo-Pacific notion. Some sceptics saw it as an "American plot" to coerce India into limiting China.
- **Formal Adoption:** It took more than a decade for India to formally accept the Indo-Pacific concept. In 2018, Prime Minister announced India's support for the proposal during a speech at Singapore's annual Shangri La Dialogue.
- **Reasons to Join Indo-Pacific:** The deterioration of relations with China, as seen by multiple military crises, and the developing strategic cooperation with the United States were critical reasons in this choice.
- **Institutionalization:** The concept of the Indo-Pacific area is widely discussed in India. The Quad, its institutional anchor, which includes Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, is a powerful group that demonstrates how these countries collaborate and share common aims.



## ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

- **Resistance to antimicrobial (AMR)** - antibiotics, antifungals, and antiparasitics - is already weakening havoc, and is the result of the massive use of these products to treat humans, animals and food.
- AMR occurs naturally over time, usually through genetic changes. Antimicrobial resistant organisms are found in people, animals, food, plants and the environment (in water, soil and air).
- They can spread from person to person or between people and animals, including from food of animal origin.
- The main drivers of antimicrobial resistance include the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials; lack of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for both humans and animals; poor infection and disease prevention and control in health-care facilities and farms; poor access to quality, affordable medicines, vaccines and diagnostics; lack of awareness and knowledge; and lack of enforcement of legislation.
- AMR is already one of the world's leading causes of death, directly responsible for 1.27 million deaths a year.
- The world now has a limited and critical window of opportunity to respond at scale and with urgency proportionate to the rapidly increasing threats posed by AMR..
- If unchecked, AMR is expected to reduce life expectancy by an average of 1.8 years by 2035, leading to unprecedented healthcare costs and economic losses.
- Within a decade, AMR is estimated to cost the world \$412 billion a year in additional health costs and \$443 billion a year in lost labour productivity, according to an economic impact study commissioned by the Global Steering Group.

### ABOUT GLOBAL ACTION PLAN ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

- Globally, countries committed to the framework set out in the Global Action Plan<sup>1</sup> (GAP) 2015 on AMR during the 2015 World Health Assembly and committed to the development and implementation of multisectoral national action plans.
- It was subsequently endorsed by the Governing Bodies of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).
- Prior to the endorsement of the GAP in 2015, global efforts to contain AMR included the WHO global strategy for containment of Antimicrobial Resistance developed in 2001 which provides a framework of interventions to slow the emergence and reduce the spread of AMR.



## YOUTH SUICIDE IN INDIA

- **India** has the dubious distinction of having the **highest number of suicides** in the world. The **National Crime Records Bureau** reports that **1.71 lakh** people died by **suicide in 2022**.
- The **suicide rate has increased to 12.4 per 1,00,000** — the highest rate ever recorded in India.
- Unfortunately, **41% of all suicides are by young people below the age of 30**. Suicide in young people is best understood as multi determined and the result of interaction between **biological, psychological, familial, and social cultural factors**.
- A current review of **adolescent suicides** in India shows that the most commonly reported risk factors were **mental health problems (54%), negative or traumatic family issues (36%), academic stress (23%), social and lifestyle factors (20%), violence (22%), economic distress (9.1%) and relationship factors (9%)**.
- Physical and **sexual abuse, examination failure, inter generational conflicts**, parental pressures and caste discrimination are associated with youth suicide.
- There are specific sociocultural factors for suicide among young girls and women.
- Arranged and early **marriages, young motherhood, low social status**, domestic violence and economic dependence are well documented.
- Rigid gender roles and **discrimination** have also been implicated.
- Enormous competition to get into colleges, media hype around results, the shame associated with failure, and **months of pent-up pressures and emotions** result in a highly emotionally wrought state.
- **Alcohol and substance** use are known risk factors in youth suicides.
- Sensational reporting of **suicide, particularly by a celebrity**, is followed by increased suicidal behaviour.



## SOLUTION

- Young people can be **taught problem solving, impulse control and emotional** regulation skills along with improving help-seeking behaviour.
- Early identification of **mental distress and provision of care in a youth-friendly environment** are essential.
- Adopting a healthy lifestyle improves **mental health and reduces suicide in the young**.
- Educational reforms such as alternative **assessment methods and provisions** to explore the **potential of a young person** are needed.

### A strategy that needs more visibility

- National Suicide Prevention Strategy for India. The final strategy was launched on **November 21, 2022** with the objective of **reducing suicide by 10% by 2030**.
- The strategy has recognised that collaboration between the **Ministries of Health, Education, Information and Broadcasting, and Social Welfare is essential**.
- The strategy focuses on the need to leverage educational institutions and youth organisations to promote mental health and **reduce substance and behavioural** addictions through school health ambassadors and youth clubs.
- **Budgetary allocations** are necessary and the strategies need to be implemented at the earliest at the **State, district and community levels**.

## RIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

01

It is yet to be articulated that the people have a right **against the adverse effects** of climate change. This is perhaps because this **right and the right to a clean environment** are two sides of the same coin.

02

As the **havoc caused by climate change** increases year-by-year, it becomes necessary to articulate this as a distinct right. It is recognised by **Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (right to life)**."

03

The judgement came in a case connected with the survival of the endangered Great Indian Bustard species.

04

Linking the right against climate change to **Articles 21 and 14**, Chief Justice Chandrachud said the rights to life and equality could not be fully realised without a clean, stable environment.

05

The right to health (**which is a part of the right to life under Article 21**) is impacted due to factors such as **air pollution, shifts in vector-borne diseases, rising temperatures, droughts, shortages in food supplies due to crop failure, storms, and flooding**.

06

The court also highlighted the interconnection between climate change and various human rights, including the right to health, indigenous rights, gender equality, and the right to development.

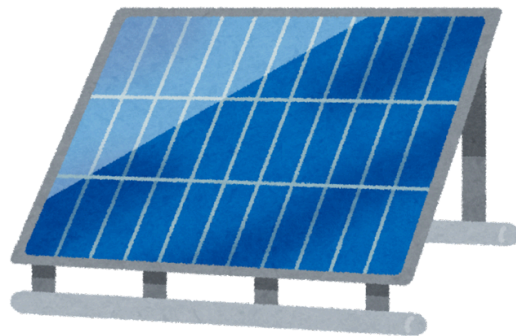




## INDIA'S SOLAR POTENTIAL

India needed to shift to solar power due to three issues

- ➔ The country is likely to account for 25% of global energy demand growth over the next two decades;
- ➔ Rampant air pollution emphasises the need for cleaner energy sources;
- ➔ Declining groundwater levels and decreasing annual rainfall.



By shifting towards **renewable energy sources**, India enhances its energy security, reducing reliance on volatile fossil fuel markets and mitigating the risks associated with **energy scarcity**.

Expanded the scope of fundamental rights to include rights against adverse effects of climate change.

- ➔ Article 21 recognises the right to life and personal liberty while Article 14 indicates that all persons shall have equality before law and the equal protection of laws.
- ➔ These Articles are important sources of the right to a clean environment and the right against the adverse effects of climate change..
- ➔ The right to health (which is a part of the right to life under Article 21) is impacted due to factors such as air pollution, shifts in vector-borne diseases, rising temperatures, droughts, etc.
- ➔ The inability of underserved communities to adapt to climate change or cope with its effects violates the right to life.

### Conclusion

- ➔ The Supreme Court has, from time to time, expanded the fundamental rights chapter to include various facets of a dignified existence.
- ➔ However, this is the first time that it has included the "right against the adverse effects of climate change.

## THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS NOT GENDER NEUTRAL

- ➔ According to the **United Nations Development Programme** , women and children are 14 times more likely than **men to die in a disaster**.
- ➔ Agriculture is the most important livelihood source for **women in India**, particularly in rural India.
- ➔ The Supreme Court of India has just ruled that people have a **right to be free** from the **adverse effects of climate change**, and the **right to a clean environment** is already recognized as a fundamental right within the ambit of the right to life.



- ➔ Climate-driven crop yield reductions **increase food insecurity, adversely impacting poor** households that already suffer higher **nutritional deficiencies**.
- ➔ **National Family Health Survey 4 and 5** data showed that **women living in drought-prone** districts were more underweight,
- ➔ experienced more intimate partner violence and had a **higher prevalence of girl marriages**.

## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

- ➔ Studies are increasingly showing a direct correlation between these **natural disasters and gender-based** violence against women.
- ➔ Of course, not all women are equally at risk, even within the same geographic or agro-ecological zone.

## **WHY DOES CLIMATE ACTION NEED WOMEN?**

- ➔ Climate action **requires 100%** of the population if we want to achieve the Paris Agreement goal of limiting **global temperature** rise to 1.5° C.
- ➔ Women **mean better climate solutions** when provided with the same access to resources as men, women increased their agricultural yields by **20% to 30%**.

## **ON HEAT WAVES AND WATER SHORTAGE**

- ➔ Water shortage is probably the biggest threat to our very existence and needs concerted societal action.
- ➔ Work done by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in a few districts of Tamil Nadu showed that using geographic information systems, the panchayat could map key water sources, identify vulnerabilities and climate hazards and develop a local plan to improve water access by directing government schemes and resources

## **WORKING AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL**

- ➔ A gender lens needs to be applied to all State-action plans on climate change.
- ➔ The National Action Plan on Climate Change and State Action Plan on Climate Change highlight the impacts on women, yet often default to portraying them as victims, missing deeper gender dynamics.
- ➔ A review of 28 SAPCCs showed a lack of transformative approaches, with only a few recognising women as agents of change.
- ➔ Recommendations for the ongoing revision of SAPCCs lay stress on the need to move beyond stereotypes, recognise the vulnerabilities of all genders, and implement gender-transformative strategies, ensuring a comprehensive and equitable approach to climate adaptation.



## DMRC NOT REQUIRED TO PAY RS 8,000 CRORE TO RELIANCE INFRA ARM – SC



- While hearing a **curative petition**, the Supreme Court has overturned its own decision from 2021 about a case involving the **Delhi Metro Rail Corporation** and **Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited** .
- Originally, **DMRC** was told to pay Rs 2,782.33 crore plus interest to **DAMEPL**, which is owned by **Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure**. This was regarding their work on the **Airport Metro Express Line project in Delhi**. This has been set aside by the **SC** in its latest judgement.

### CURATIVE PETITION

- A Curative writ petition as a lawyer of appeal against a **supreme Court** is **not prescribed in the constitution**.
- It is a judicial innovation, designed for correcting “grave injustice” in a ruling of the country’s top court.
- The SC first articulated the concept of a curative writ in **Ripa Ashok Hurra vs Ashok Hurra(2002)**.
- Sc said that its “**concern for rendering justice** in a cause is not less important than the principle of **finality of its judgement**.”
- However, curative wrists are sparingly used. There are narrow, mostly procedural grounds that permit the filling of a **curative writ**.
- Claim Must be made that principles of natural justice were not allowed - for example , that a party was not heard, or that a **judge was biased , had a conflict of interest** .

### BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

- **DMRC entered into a public-private partnership with DAMEPL**
- In 2008, the DMRC entered into a public-private partnership with DAMEPL, a consortium led by Reliance Infrastructure Ltd.
- This partnership was for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Delhi Airport Metro Express.
- While DMRC acquired the land and bore the cost of construction, the consortium was to design, install, and commission the railway systems in two years.
- Thereafter, **until 2038, DAMEPL** was to maintain the line and manage its operations, while paying a concession fee to DMRC.



## **RISE OF DISPUTE**

- A year after the line became operational, the consortium asked DMRC if it could defer payment of the concession fee.
- Among the reasons cited were delays in providing access to the stations by DMRC, and that retail activity had not picked up on the line.
- This triggered a dispute between the consortium and the Union Ministry of Urban Development.
- Later, the line was shut following a complaint from DAMEPL that it was unsafe to operate.
- The consortium triggered a termination of its agreement alleging there were technical problems in the civil structure of the Metro corridor, for which DMRC was responsible as per the agreement.
- As a result, a battle was started between DMRC and Reliance before an arbitration tribunal for losses due to cancellation of the agreement.

## **RULINGS OF COURTS**

### **Ruling by arbitration panel**

- In 2017, the panel of three arbitrators decided in favour of Reliance and ordered DMRC to pay nearly Rs 8,000 crore.

### **Ruling by single judge Bench of the HC**

- Against the orders of the panel of arbitrators, DMRC moved the Delhi High Court. A single judge Bench of the HC refused to interfere with the award.

### **Ruling by two-judge (division) Bench of the High Court**

- In 2019, the division Bench overturned the arbitral award, ruling in favour of DMRC.
- The Bench held that the tribunal had not considered some key facts, and had left some ambiguity in interpreting when the termination of the agreement took place.

### **Ruling by the Supreme Court**

- The SC heard the case, and in September 2021 reversed the HC verdict.
- The SC bench underlined that courts must exercise restraint when interfering with arbitral awards. This is crucial, since arbitration is an institutionalised alternative form of dispute resolution.
- It is devised and regulated by a 1996 statute to ensure speedy disposal of cases, especially commercial matters which suffer due to delays in the judicial system.

### **Subsequent review petition and curative petition**

- In November 2021, the SC dismissed a review petition against its judgment.
- Later, DMRC filed a curative writ petition.

## MALNUTRITION REMAINS SLUGGISH



- Malnutrition is a significant contributor to the **disease burden** in India.
- A study by the **Indian Institute of Public Health Hyderabad** Comparing data from **NFHS-1 (1992–93) to NFHS-5 (2019–20)**, the study found that while the prevalence of wasting (low weight for height) increased marginally from **19.9% to 20.5%**, **stunting (impaired growth)** and the **incidence of underweight decreased from 51.9% and 34.1% to 45.8% and 29.4%, respectively.**
- The study identified significant factors affecting children's nutritional status, **including maternal education and the child's gender.**
- According to the study, **all States and Union territories** mirrored the national trend of decreasing rates of stunting and underweight among children, though no consistent trend was **observed for wasting prevalence.**
- **In the NFHS-1 survey**, stunting prevalence ranged from **33.2% (lowest) in Nagaland to 63.8% (highest) in Bihar.**
- The **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** have an ambitious target of eradicating malnutrition by 2030, prompting the World Health Organisation.

### What is malnutrition?

- Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of **energy and/or nutrients.**
- The term malnutrition **covers 2 broad groups of conditions.**
- One is '**undernutrition**'—which includes **stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies** (a lack of important vitamins and minerals).
- The other is overweight, obesity and **diet-related non-communicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer).**

### National Nutrition Mission (NNM): Focus on essential nutrition interventions

- Government appears determined to set it right — with an aggressive push to the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), rebranding it the Prime Minister's Overarching **Scheme for Holistic Nutrition, or POSHAN.**
- **Window of opportunity: The Ministry of Women and Child (MWCD)** continues to be the **nodal Ministry implementing** the NNM with a vision to align different ministries to work in tandem on the "window of opportunity" of the first 1,000 days in life (**270 days of pregnancy and 730 days; 0-24 months).**



## THE BLURRY LINES BETWEEN WILDLIFE 'CAPTURE' AND 'RESCUE'

- The **escalating** frequency of **human-wildlife interactions**.
- Given the **inevitability of conflict** with wildlife, we should look for better solutions than those which focus solely on reactive capture and relocation, which have **frequently proven unsustainable**, or, worse, **fatal to the animals involved**.
- **Leopards killing livestock** or **elephants** damaging crops do impact communities but may not always warrant a capture in the **guise of rescue**.
- The **litmus test** of an effective response and proactive conflict management systems is when a tense situation is mitigated without the need to capture or **relocate an animal**.
- Guidelines issued by the **central government** for management of **human-leopard** conflict, based on advice from experts, specifically discourage the capture of **leopards** on mere sight.
- The **failure to distinguish between capture**, removal, and rescue becomes all the more apparent when we look further into how conflict with **snakes** is managed.
- **'Rescue' as a solution to conflict draws a line in the sand**, and pits animals against people. This does not help long-term conservation goals.
- **Relocation of a wild animal disrupts two ecosystems** — the one that the animal is taken from, and the one to which that animal is introduced.
- We need to see the community more holistically, as comprising and integrating both human beings and non-human animals, instead of driving divisiveness through our wildlife management practices.
- **Proactive mitigation** strategies to avoid conflicts before they occur should always be our first **instinct**.
- Some promising approaches being tested across India, especially by the **Karnataka Forest Department**, include early warning systems, regular **monitoring**, fencing, better lighting, public education, and improved waste management to reduce, or better prepare communities for **potential interactions with wildlife**.





## CONSTITUTION AND THE REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

The ongoing political campaigns have sparked a discussion, about wealth distribution in India. This controversial topic focuses on how material resources are allocated and controlled, impacting economic fairness and social equality.

### Constitutional Perspective:

The **preamble** of the **Indian Constitution** aims to ensure **economic justice, liberty** and **equality** for all citizens. **Fundamental rights** outlined in **Part III** guarantee freedoms and equality. **Part IV** includes **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** which while not binding guide governance with a focus on justice. These DPSP provisions address justice; Article 39 (b); Promotes the distribution of ownership and control of resources for the good. Article 39 (c); Seeks to prevent wealth concentration that may harm welfare.

### Historical Background:

Initially the Constitution recognized property rights as fundamental under Article 19 (1) (f). Article 31 mandated state compensation for property acquisition. However changes were necessary due, to land reforms and public infrastructure projects requiring flexible land procurement methods. Amendments, like Articles 31A, 31B and 31C have restricted the right to property giving the government the authority to acquire land for benefit.

### Regarding Judicial Interpretations:

Courts have struggled with how fundamental rights interact with DPSP. In the **Golak Nath case, 1967** the Supreme Court ruled that **fundamental rights should not be weakened to enforce DPSP**. The current debate revolves around whether private properties considered "**material resources of the community**" fall under **Article 39(b)**. Recently the Supreme Court established a nine judge Bench to interpret DPSP concerning ownership and management of material resources.

To sum up wealth redistribution remains an issue as we balance rights, with collective well-being. The judiciary's interpretation of these provisions will influence India's landscape and societal structure.



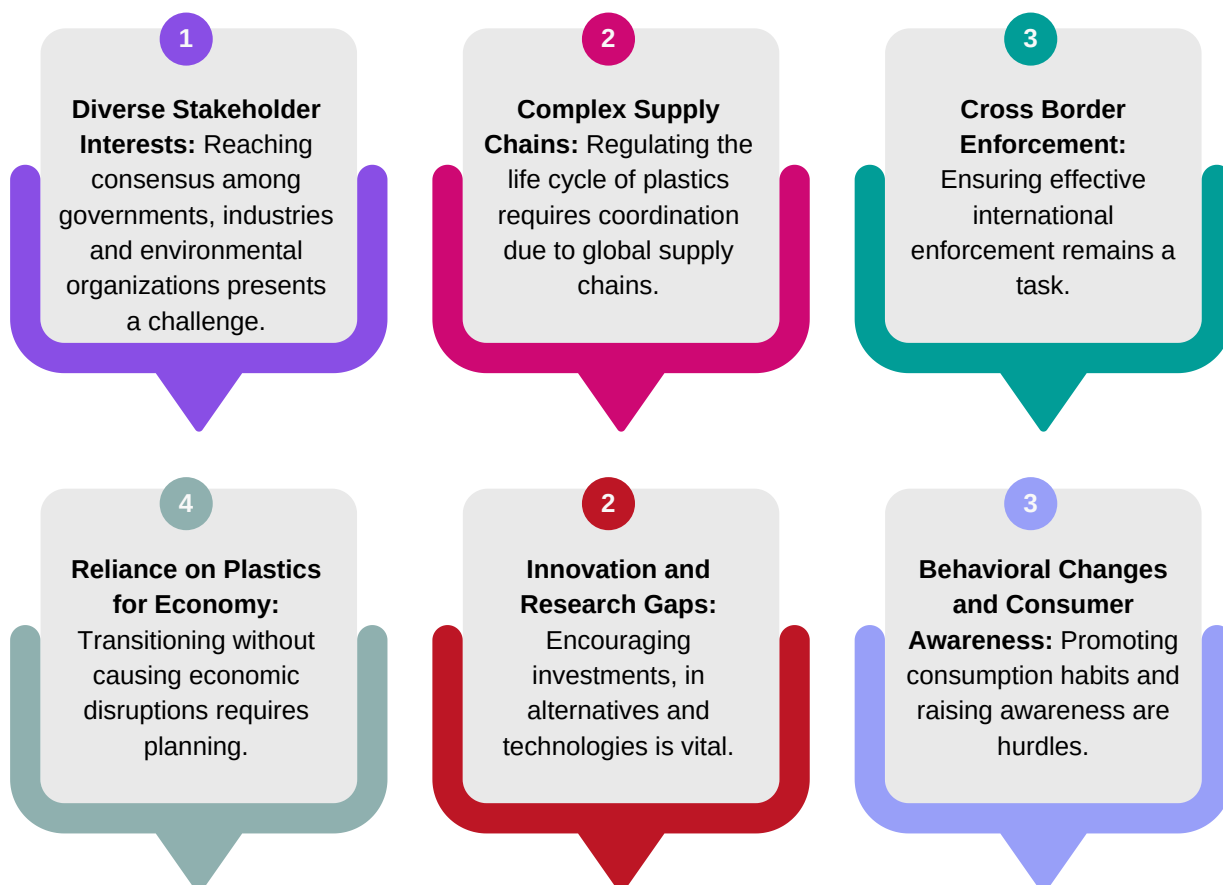
## PLASTIC TREATY: INC 4 MEETING, IN OTTAWA

The INC 4 gathering took place in Ottawa, Canada from April 23 to 29, 2024 with the aim of creating a binding agreement to tackle pollution in marine settings. Following the commitment of 175 nations in March 2022 to finalize the treaty by 2024 there is a sense of urgency matching the seriousness of the issue.

### GOALS:

The treaty seeks to prevent and decrease pollution at its origin safeguard marine ecosystems, adopt a life cycle approach promote global collaboration and establish concrete legal obligations. These actions involve setting targets for reduction advocating for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), limiting single use plastics, focusing on waste management practices, supporting research and innovation efforts and implementing worldwide monitoring and reporting systems.

### CHALLENGES:



In order to ensure that environmental objectives take precedence over benefits it is crucial to persuade decision makers of the importance of political determination and priorities. To effectively implement a treaty, on plastic usage it is essential to work educate and maintain long term dedication, from nations worldwide.

## FIXING INDIA'S VVPAT-BASED AUDIT OF EVMS



### Background

The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has been criticized for **reducing the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** based audit of **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)** to a token exercise and lacking transparency.

The ECI has set a uniform sample size of **"five EVMs per Assembly constituency"** for audits, which does not adhere to statistical sampling principles and results in **high error margins**.

The ECI has not clearly defined what constitutes the **'population' of EVMs**, how it determined its sample size, or the **steps to be taken in case of a mismatch**. There are also unaddressed cases of mismatches reported.

### What is Statistical Sampling?

Randomly checking a few voting machines. If any machine shows a discrepancy with its paper records (VVPAT), manual count of all VVPATs from all machines (population) will be done to ensure accuracy.

### Misguided Demands

Critics of the ECI have demanded non-statistical sample sizes like "25%" or "50%", and some have even called for a 100% manual count of VVPAT slips, under the false impression that higher percentages ensure more accurate results.

### Voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT)

Also known as **verified paper record (VPR)**, is a method used in elections to provide feedback to voters using a ballotless voting system.

### How It Works:

- After casting their vote on an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), voters receive a printed slip.
- This slip, the VVPAT, contains the name of the candidate for whom the vote was cast and the symbol of the party/individual candidate.
- Voters can directly interpret their vote from the readable paper VVPAT.

## Way Forward:

- Proposal to use the **"plateau effect"** of sample sizes to divide larger states into regions with approximately 5,000 EVMs each.
- Each region's EVMs are treated as the population, with an **average of about 20** Assembly constituencies per region.
- Sample size required for each region is 438, with an **average of 22** EVMs per Assembly constituency whose VVPAT slips are hand counted.
- Example: Uttar Pradesh (UP) with 150,000 EVMs can be divided into 30 regions, each with roughly 5,000 EVMs.
- If a defective EVM is found, manual counting of VVPAT slips is confined to the affected region, ensuring both statistical robustness and administrative feasibility.
- Call for the Supreme Court to intervene and compel the Election Commission of India (ECI) to disclose its methodology for defining population, determining sample size, and decision rules in case of mismatches.
- Emphasize the importance of upholding the 2013 Supreme Court order on VVPAT implementation to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

Source: TH

## WHAT IS DOXXING AND WHAT CAN YOU DO IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU?



- Doxxing, also known as doxing, involves publicly revealing an individual's private information online without their consent.
- This information can include home addresses, phone numbers, email IDs, medical conditions, government documents, social security numbers, live locations, insurance details, and more.
- Doxxing is often carried out with malicious intent and can lead to serious consequences for the victim.

### Methods of Obtaining Information

- Doxxers acquire personal data through illegal means such as hacking or theft.
- Even sharing semi-public content (like a video intended for friends) without consent can lead to doxxing and harassment.

### Impact and Dangers

- Doxxing is a direct attack on a person's physical, digital, and emotional security.
- Victims may face threats, stalking, and harm to their reputation.
- It can force individuals to flee their physical location or deal with emotional distress.

## What to Do If You're Doxxed

- **Report to Law Enforcement:** Treat doxxing seriously and report it to the police. It may be considered a cybercrime in your area.
- **Report on Social Media Platforms:** Use reporting features on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or others where the doxxing occurred and request removal of the information.
- **Change Usernames and Passwords:** Secure your accounts by changing usernames and passwords.
- **Document Everything:** Take screenshots and write down details related to the doxxing.
- **Inform Your Bank and Other Relevant Parties:** Notify your bank and other relevant institutions to prevent financial harm.

Source: TH

## SIACHEN: 40 YEARS OF OP MEGHDOOT



- On **April 13, 1984**, the Indian Army executed **Operation Meghdoot**, a strategic move that **pre-empted Pakistan** and secured control over the **Siachen glacier** in the **Karakoram** ranges.
- **Siachen Glacier:** Known as the “land of roses” in the Balti language, Siachen is the **world’s highest and coldest battlefield**. It sits at a strategic location, with Pakistan to the left and China to the right. The glacier remained unmarked after the **1972 Simla Agreement**, leading to conflicting claims between India and Pakistan.
- **Operation Meghdoot:** In response to Pakistan’s cartographic aggression and foreign mountaineering expeditions, India launched Operation Meghdoot. On April 13, 1984, a platoon of 4 Kumaon, led by then **Captain Sanjay Kulkarni** (who later retired as Lieutenant General), planted the Indian flag at Bilafond La (altitude: 18,000 feet), capturing the **76.4 km-long** glacier.
- **Extreme Conditions:** The Siachen glacier poses immense challenges due to extreme weather conditions. Around 1,150 soldiers have lost their lives, primarily due to the vagaries of extreme weather.
- **Strategic Significance:** Siachen’s control is crucial for India’s security. While India claims the area based on the **Jammu and Kashmir Accession Agreement of 1947** and the **Karachi Agreement of 1949**, Pakistan interprets it differently. The glacier’s location provides Pakistan **direct connectivity** to China and strategic oversight over the Ladakh region and the Leh-Srinagar highway, posing a serious threat to India.
- **Unsung Heroes:** Lieutenant Colonel NS Salaria led soldiers from the snout of the Siachen Glacier at 12,000 feet to Sia La Pass at 22,000 feet, linking up with troops dropped by helicopters.
- Despite the ceasefire, the legacy of Operation Meghdoot endures, reminding us of the sacrifices made by our brave soldiers in this inhospitable terrain.



## IMPORTED INFLATION

Imported inflation refers to the rise in the prices of goods and services within a country due to an increase in the price or cost of imports.



### CAUSES FOR IMPORTED INFLATION

**Currency Depreciation:** When a country's currency **loses** value relative to other currencies, it becomes more **expensive** for residents to purchase foreign goods and services. As the local currency weakens, people need to exchange more of it to acquire the necessary foreign currency for imports. Consequently, the effective cost of imported items rises.

**Interest Rates and Currency Depreciation:** When interest rates rise in the West, it often leads to currency depreciation in developing economies. A weaker local currency means higher import costs, affecting the prices of goods and services produced domestically.

**Import Costs beyond Currency Depreciation:** Import inflation can occur even without currency depreciation. For instance: If international oil prices increase due to supply shortages, countries reliant on oil imports face higher production costs. These costs are then passed on to consumers.

**Cost-Push Inflation Variant:** Imported inflation is a variant of cost-push inflation. It posits that rising input costs lead to inflation in final goods and services. However, prices are influenced by what consumers are willing to pay. Producers base input costs on expected selling prices.

**Consumer Demand and Pricing:** Producers assess input costs based on the price they believe they can charge consumers for the final output. If input costs exceed what consumers are willing to pay, unsold inputs result. Thus, consumer demand ultimately shapes the cost of production. Therefore, imported inflation arises from currency fluctuations, input cost changes, and the delicate balance between producer costs and consumer willingness to pay. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for managing inflationary pressures in an interconnected global economy.

## INDIAN ECONOMY PROJECTED TO GROW 6.5% IN 2024: UNCTAD



India's economy is projected to grow by **6.5% in 2024**, according to a report by the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**. This growth is driven by strong **public investment** and the increasing focus of multinationals on India as a **manufacturing base**, as they diversify their supply chains.

In 2023, India's economy expanded by **6.7%**, and it is expected to continue as the **fastest-growing major economy** in the world in 2024. The growth in 2023 was fuelled by robust **local demand** for consumer services and firm external demand for the country's **business services exports**. These factors are anticipated to support India's growth in 2024 as well.

The report highlights that multinationals extending their manufacturing processes into India will positively impact Indian exports. Additionally, moderating commodity prices will benefit the country's import bill. India's attractiveness as an alternative manufacturing base, especially in the context of developed economies' supply chain diversification strategies, is becoming increasingly evident.

While India's growth remains strong, other **Southern Asian countries** face more **subdued economic growth**. For **instance, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka** are currently under **IMF programs**, which necessitate tight monetary policies and fiscal austerity measures. These measures disproportionately affect low-income households in these countries.

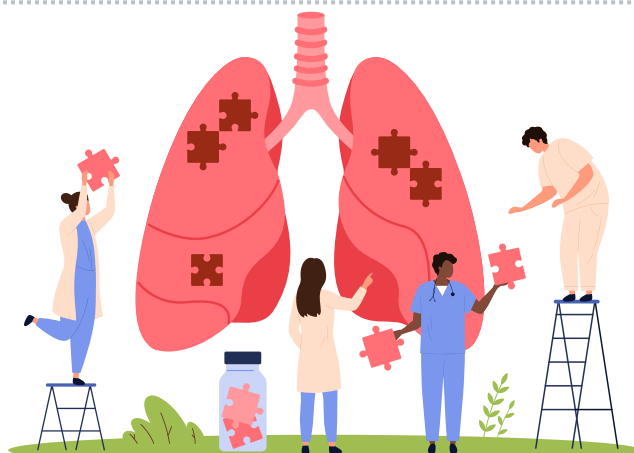
Globally, economic growth is projected to be **2.6% in 2024**, slightly slower than the **2.7%** in **2023**. The report mentions that despite challenges such as trade disruptions and climate change, policy discussions primarily focus on inflation and anticipated monetary easing.

In contrast, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects India's growth to remain strong at **6.8% in 2024 and 6.5% in 2025**, reflecting continued domestic demand strength and a **rising working-age population**.

Overall, while India's economic outlook appears positive, global economic growth faces challenges that warrant attention beyond inflation and monetary policy, including trade disruptions, climate change, underinvestment, and inequalities.

Source: **TH**

# TACKLING TUBERCULOSIS (TB): STRATEGIES AND PROGRESS



Sir Alexander Fleming's discovery of antibiotics provided a new weapon against the TB. **Randomised Control Trials (RCTs)** offered a robust and unbiased method to evaluate the effectiveness of various treatments and interventions. Sir Austin Bradford Hill, a pioneer in medical research and modern epidemiology, significantly influenced the adoption of RCTs. Tuberculosis, caused by **Mycobacterium tuberculosis**, is an infectious disease. It primarily affects the **lungs (pulmonary TB)** but can also involve other organs (extrapulmonary TB). Pulmonary TB presents as a **long-term debilitating** illness, sometimes resembling acute **pneumonia** (inflammation of the lung's small air sacs, known as alveoli).

**Transmission:** TB spreads through **airborne respiratory fluids** expelled by infected individuals, such as coughing or sneezing. However, those with latent TB, where symptoms are absent, do not transmit the disease.

**Symptoms:** Many TB infections remain asymptomatic, termed latent TB. Common symptoms include a **persistent cough** with **blood-tinged mucus**, weight loss, loss of appetite, and fever accompanied by night sweats and fatigue.

**Current Landscape:** Today, we aspire to eliminate TB globally by the end of this decade. World TB Day's theme in 2024 was "**Yes, we can end TB.**"

Overall, RCTs have been instrumental in shaping modern medicine, providing a pathway to combat TB effectively. The fight against this ancient foe continues, but with evidence-based strategies, we move closer to a TB-free world.

## Additional Information:

### Initiatives against Tuberculosis in India

**1. National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP):** Established in **2020**, formerly known as the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP). Focuses on eliminating TB in India by **2025** through strategic planning and collaboration.

**2. National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Elimination (NSP) 2017-2025:** Integrated into four pillars: Detect, Treat, Prevent, and Build. Emphasizes early diagnosis, comprehensive treatment, and prevention strategies.



- a. **Detect:** - Utilizes the NIKSHAY TB surveillance system for notification and tracking.
  - b. **Treat:** - Administers fixed-dose combinations of anti-TB drugs for effective treatment. Screens patients for drug resistance and provides appropriate therapy.
  - c. **Prevent:** Implements Isoniazid Preventive Therapy (IPT) for high-risk individuals. Advocates BCG vaccination for infants to prevent severe forms of TB.
  - d. **Build:** Strengthens health systems and policies to support TB control efforts.
- 3. Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan:** Aims to eliminate TB from India by 2025, five years ahead of the global target. Provides additional support to TB patients through Ni-kshay Mitra and Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana.
- 4. Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana:** Provides financial incentives to notified TB patients to support their treatment through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- 5. Ni-kshay Portal:** Web-enabled patient management system under NTEP for streamlined TB control. Facilitates data management and reporting for effective monitoring.
- 6. Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) Revaccination:** Proposed revaccination strategy to enhance TB protection, particularly in states where BCG effectiveness may diminish.

## {GS2 — POLICIES — DATA}

### NON-PERSONAL DATA (NPD)



**v Context (TH):** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeiTY**) released the **National Data Governance Framework Policy (NPD Framework)**.

As per a **NASSCOM report**, data and artificial intelligence (AI) can add approximately \$450-500 billion to India's GDP by 2025.

#### Types of data

- **Personal Data:** Contains identifiers through which an individual can be mapped.
- **Non-Personal Data (NPD):** Data which excludes personal data.
- NPD constitutes the primary kind of citizen data obtained by the government, which has the potential to serve as a '**public good**'.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF NON-PERSONAL DATA (NPD)

**1. Public NPD:** Data collected or generated by the government in the course of publicly funded works. For example, anonymised data from land records or vehicle registration can be considered public non-personal data.

.....

**Community NPD:** Raw or factual data (without any processing) sourced from a community of natural persons (ex., municipal corporations or public electric utilities).

**Private NPD:** Data collected or generated by private entities through privately owned processes (derived insights, algorithms, or proprietary knowledge).

### RELATED TERMINOLOGIES

**Data principal:** The entity to whom the non-personal data relates. This entity can be an individual, a community, or a company.

**Data custodian:** Collects, stores, and processes data in the best interest of the data principal.

**Data trustee:** Representative entity through which Data principals may exercise their rights.

### NPD FRAMEWORK

**Kris Gopalakrishnan committee:** The committee discussed the risks of de-anonymising NPD, the institutionalisation of a central authority for NPD, and ownership and **data sharing mechanisms**.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) released the National Data Governance Framework Policy (NPD Framework) based on this.

**Data businesses:** This is a new category of business in the country. Entities (including government agencies) that collect, process, or store data beyond a threshold will be classified as data businesses.

**Sharing of non-personal data:** Data-sharing requests for sovereign, public interest, or economic purposes may be made with or without remuneration, depending on processing cost.

**Open metadata:** Sharing metadata, including government metadata, to encourage innovation.

### ANALYSIS OF THE NPD FRAMEWORK

**Abstract high-level principles and objectives:** Lacks tangible, actionable guidance to achieve.

**Rights and obligations:** Silent on stakeholder rights and obligations across sectors.

**Pricing and legal mechanisms:** Such structures and solutions for data exchange are not addressed.

**Absence of standardised governance tools** aggravates challenges.

### NEED FOR NPD REGULATION REVAMP

- **Unprotected inter-flow** of NPD across various stakeholders makes it vulnerable to privacy breaches.
- The imperfect analysis of crucial public trends can result in **faulty decision-making**.
- Inefficient data fails to unlock the power of interdisciplinary **legislative and policy-making**.
- By creating a regulatory design for data exchanges in India, public welfare functions can be digitised and automated to a large extent.
- This will **reduce administrative burden** and facilitate inter-sectoral integration, making the digitisation of civic functions more participatory.
- Still, **no policy provides for an enforceable** regime for NPD in India.

# {GS1 – ISSUES – FAMINE} GAZA AND HAITI ON THE BRINK OF FAMINE



## v Context (IE): Famine is imminent in northern Gaza and Haiti.

- **Israel and Hamas war** in Gaza and the **crisis in Haiti** caused by **criminal gangs** attacking the country's key government institutions are posing the challenge of famine.
- Even before the war, 80% of Gazans relied on humanitarian aid, and nearly half of all households didn't have enough food.
- In Haiti, millions were already coping with emergency levels of hunger and crisis levels of food need.

## IPC Classification of Famine

- The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), developed in 2004 during the famine in Somalia, is a collaboration of 15 global organisations and charities.
- The group uses a five-tier scale to monitor access to food and levels of hunger.
- Famine is the top tier, Phase 5, "the absolute inaccessibility of food to an entire population or sub-group of a population, potentially causing death in the short term."
- It occurs when 20% of households have an extreme lack of food, 30% of children suffer from acute malnutrition, and at least two adults or four children per every 10,000 people die daily because of outright starvation or the interaction of malnutrition and disease.
- That top level follows the Phase 3 "crisis" and Phase 4 "emergency" levels of food need.

## Declaration of famine

- It would be made by top United officials based on the IPC criteria. Such a declaration would not bind UN members or states but serve to focus global attention on the problem.

## Hunger, Malnutrition, and Starvation

- **Hunger:** People can't afford or physically obtain sufficient nutrition for an **extended period**.
- **Malnutrition:** A medical condition that occurs when people **don't get the right calories** to grow and function properly, leading to health problems.
- **Starvation:** Not a technical term, but it describes extreme suffering or death caused by lack of food.
- Without food, the body uses **carbohydrates and fats** first, then turns to **breaking down protein**, including muscle and vital organs.
- Without treatment, **organs stop functioning**, and the body's defences can't fight infection.



## PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA - URBAN (PMAY-U) SCHEME

### What PMAY-U is?

PMAY-U is a **centrally sponsored scheme**. It targets providing **affordable housing** for **urban** and **rural populations**. This scheme was launched in **2015** through the flagship program. It was titled **"Housing For All"** and set sights on 2022.

### Objectives:

The program partners with **private developers** to rehabilitate slum dwellers. It seeks to promote affordable housing. This is done through **Credit Linked Subsidy Schemes (CLSS)**. This is for self-construction projects undertaken by eligible beneficiaries.

### Eligibility Criteria:

To meet the requirements for Economically Weaker Section (EWS), households having an annual income of up to ₹3 lakh and the area of dwelling is 30 square meters. Low Income Group (LIG) households earning between ₹3 lakh and ₹6 lakh annually and having a maximum carpet space of 60 square meters. Middle-Income Group (MIG): MIG-I category includes households with a range of incomes between ₹6 lakh and ₹12 lakh per annum and dwelling area is up to 120 square meters. MIG-II households earning ₹12 lakh to ₹18 lakh annually are approved for a house having maximum carpet area of 150 square meters.

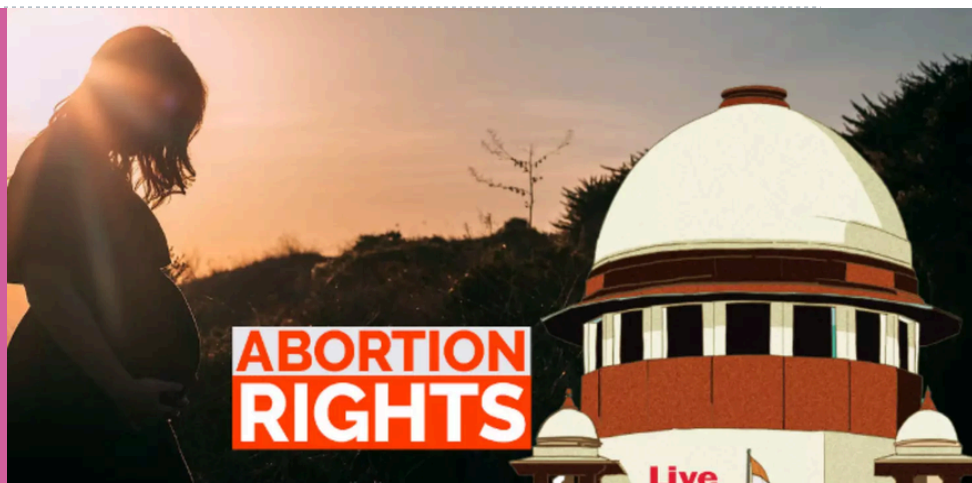
They or family members **cannot own a pucca house** anywhere in India. The urban areas are the only applicable locations. If the beneficiary is a **woman** or she shares ownership with another female, priority is given. **Age does not restrict eligibility**.

### Challenges and Shortcomings

While in operation for several years, the aim of "Housing For All" remains elusive. Presently, there's a **shortage** of nearly 20 million houses in rural regions. There's also a 3 million house shortage in urban areas. In-situ slum redevelopment, ISSR, is crucial for urban housing needs. Yet, it has not performed as planned. It shows a shortfall of nearly 40 lakh houses. If the remaining approved houses are constructed by 2024's end, it will address only **37% of actual needs**. This leaves an estimated 2.4 crore households without adequate housing. In a nutshell, the PMAY-U program has shown some advancement. There are immense hurdles remaining. These hinder any realization of the lofty goal.



## SUPREME COURT ALLOWS ABORTION FOR 14-YEAR-OLD RAPE SURVIVOR



A 14-year-old girl who was raped in Maharashtra has been given the permission by the **Supreme Court of India** to terminate her pregnancy in her **30th** week of pregnancy, in accordance with **Article 142** (which gives it the power to pass any decree or order that will ensure complete justice).

### Indian Abortion Legislation

A woman can only have an abortion if her life is under threat with the unborn baby inside her as per **Section 312** of **Indian Penal Code**. There is also **IPC 313** which deals with causing miscarriage **without a woman's consent**, **IPC 314** on causing miscarriage resulting in death of woman, and **IPC 315** for **child murder or infanticide** while section **IPC 316** applies to acts **resulting into culpable homicide**.

The **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971** made abortion legal under certain circumstances. The **Shantilal Shah Committee** was formed in **1964** due to **high maternal mortality and morbidity** associated with unsafe abortion and advocated for its legalization. Legal abortion cases include **risks to life or physical health**, extensive risk of terrible handicaps on babies, pregnancies resulted from **contraception failure** or **rape**.

### Key Features of the MTP Amendment Act, 2021:

- 1. Increased Upper Gestation Limit:** The upper gestation limit has been raised from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women.
- 2. No Upper Gestation Limit for Foetal Abnormalities** diagnosed by a Medical Board.
- 3. Opinion Requirements:** In case of termination between 20-24 weeks, one medical practitioner's opinion is required prior to that, while two are needed after that.
- 4. Confidentiality:** The identity of any woman who undergoes an abortion must be kept confidential and only revealed to those who may lawfully receive such information.
- 5. Inclusion Of Marital Status And Age:** Unmarried females can avail themselves of the MTP Act 2021. However, a guardian has to give consent if it concerns minors.

Women Who Can Terminate 20 to 24 Weeks of Pregnancy include sexual assault survivors, minors, physically disabled persons, foetal risk cases, mentally challenged individuals, at-risk children, as well as emergency cases.

## INHERITANCE TAX

Inheritance tax, also known as estate tax or death duty, is a tax levied on the transfer of assets from a deceased person to their heirs. The primary objective of inheritance tax is to address income inequality by redistributing wealth.



### Historical Context in India:

India did have an inheritance tax, which was known as estate duty. **Estate duty** was introduced in **1953** during the tenure of **PM Jawaharlal Nehru**. It applied to the estates of individuals who passed away, with rates varying based on the value of the estate. However, in **1985**, the government of **PM Rajiv Gandhi** abolished estate duty.

### Wealth Tax:

Wealth tax was levied on the net wealth of individuals, including assets such as **real estate**, **jewelry**, and **financial investments**. In **2015**, the Indian government decided to **abolish** **wealth** tax due to administrative challenges and low revenue collection.

### Gift Tax:

Gift tax applied to the **transfer of assets** during an individual's lifetime. However, in **1998**, the government **abolished** **gift tax**, citing similar reasons as for wealth tax.

### Current Scenario:

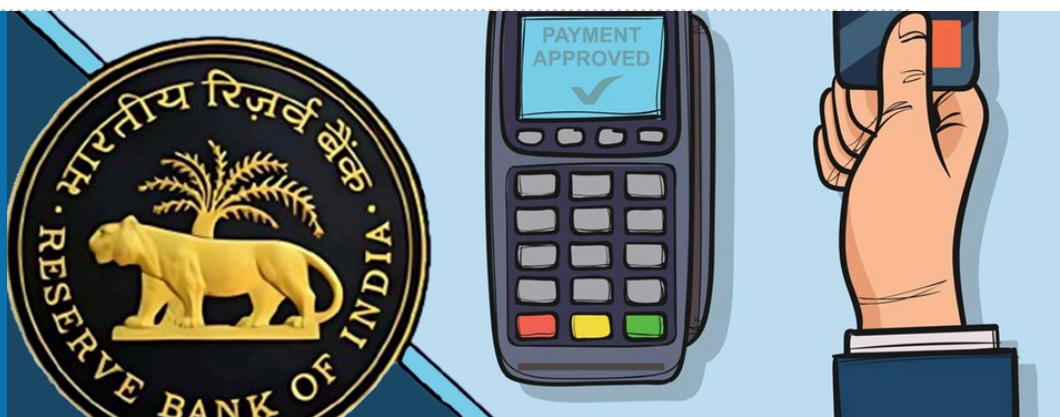
As of now, there is no specific inheritance tax in India. Calls for reintroducing inheritance tax have surfaced periodically, especially during election cycles. However, no concrete steps have been taken to reintroduce it.

### Global Trends:

Some countries have proposed measures such as a **global minimum corporate tax rate** and **higher taxes on the super-rich**. For instance, the Biden Administration in the United States has proposed a **Billionaire Minimum Income Tax** of at least 25% on their full income, including unrealized gains.



## **RBI PROPOSES ENHANCED REGULATION FOR OFFLINE PAYMENT AGGREGATORS**



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently proposed comprehensive guidelines to **regulate payment aggregators (PAs)** operating in offline spaces. These recommendations aim to **enhance safety, compliance, and transparency in proximity or face-to-face transactions.**

### **Background**

In June 2022, the RBI announced its intention to improve the regulation of offline PAs. The RBI has now released two consultation papers: The first paper focuses on the activities of offline PAs. The second paper aims to strengthen safety measures by expanding instructions related to Know Your Customer (KYC), due diligence for onboarded merchants, and operations in Escrow accounts. Stakeholders are invited to provide feedback by May 31.

### **Scope of Regulations**

Payment aggregators facilitate **transactions between customers and merchants, relieving merchants from creating their own payment integration systems.** Existing guidelines cover PAs operating in **e-commerce and online platforms.** The proposed draft guidelines **extend these regulations to offline spaces**, including proximity or face-to-face transactions. The RBI emphasizes the need for synergy in regulation across both online and offline PAs, ensuring consistent standards for data collection and storage

### **Lessons from Past Incidents**

The RBI's move comes after the Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL) crisis, which highlighted irregularities in KYC adherence. PPBL faced penalties for engaging in illegal activities, including facilitating online gambling. The proposed norms aim to prevent opacity and strengthen the ecosystem against such risks.

### **Compulsory Registration**

Non-bank PAs, especially those operating offline, will be subject to the new regulations. Banks providing physical PA services within their normal banking relationships won't need separate authorization. However, they must comply with revised instructions within three months of issuance.

Overall, the RBI's recommendations seek to create a robust regulatory framework for offline payment aggregators, ensuring transparency, security, and adherence to best practices.

## GLACIAL LAKES IN THE HIMALAYAS USING SATELLITE REMOTE SENSING



The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** recently conducted an extensive analysis of glacial lakes in the catchments of Indian Himalayan river basins. Leveraging satellite remote sensing technology, ISRO's study sheds light on the expansion of these lakes and the associated risks.

### Key Findings

**Expansion of Glacial Lakes:** ISRO examined satellite data archives spanning four decades (1984 to 2023) to assess changes in the glaciated environment. Among the 2,431 lakes larger than 10 hectares identified during 2016-17, **676 glacial lakes** had significantly expanded since 1984. Glacial lakes are expanding due to the **retreat of glaciers**, which is accelerating due to global warming.

**Geographical Distribution:** **130 of the 676 lakes** are situated in India, specifically in the: **Indus basin** (65 lakes), **Ganga basin** (7 lakes), **Brahmaputra basin** (58 lakes).

**Formation of Glacial Lakes:** The movement of glaciers causes erosion, creating depressions in the surrounding topography. As glaciers retreat, **meltwater accumulates** in these depressions, giving rise to glacial lakes.

### ISRO categorized glacial lakes into four types

- ➡ **Moraine-dammed:** Formed when water is dammed by moraine (debris left during glacier movement).
- ➡ **Ice-dammed:** Formed when water is dammed by ice.
- ➡ **Erosion-based:** Formed when water is dammed by erosion-created depressions.
- ➡ **Others:** Additional categories based on formation mechanisms.

**Risks and Impacts:** While glacial lakes serve as crucial freshwater sources for rivers, they also pose significant risks. **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)** occur when these lakes release large volumes of meltwater due to natural dam failure. **GLOFs** can lead to sudden and severe flooding downstream, impacting infrastructure and settlements.

ISRO's satellite-based analysis provides valuable insights into glacial lake dynamics, glacier retreat rates, and the risks associated with GLOFs.

## ANTICYCLONES AND HEAT WAVES



The **record-breaking warmth** experienced in 2023 remains an intriguing puzzle. While the superposition of **El Niño** on global warming partially explains the elevated temperatures, there's more to the story.

### Anticyclones:

The interplay between global warming and local weather patterns is multifaceted. These high-pressure systems, currently lingering over India, play a pivotal role in modulating heat waves.

- ➡ **Anticyclonic Circulations:** In March, the North Indian Ocean witnessed anticyclonic circulations. Picture these as clockwise-moving winds with descending air at their core. As this air descends and compresses, it forms a **heat dome**—a region of intense warmth. These anticyclones were instrumental in shaping unusual rainfall patterns over Odisha.
- ➡ **Dubai Floods and Anticyclones:** Notably, the historic floods in Dubai on April 17 can also be attributed to anticyclones. These weather systems persistently exist over the North Indian Ocean and the Indian subcontinent.

### Linking Anticyclones to Global Warming

During the pre-monsoon season, the **Indian Easterly Jet (IEJ)** takes shape in the upper atmosphere. Around 10 degrees N latitude, spanning the Arabian Sea, peninsular India, and the Bay of Bengal, the IEJ interacts with a strong westerly jet at 30 degrees N. Together, they generate anticyclonic patterns.

- ➡ **Strong Anticyclones:** A robust anticyclone brings dry, scorching weather to many parts of India. Conversely, a weaker anticyclone results in milder conditions.

While the persistence of anticyclones isn't unusual, their impact warrants scrutiny. As we grapple with heat waves, understanding these atmospheric dynamics becomes paramount. The battle against rising temperatures demands both global awareness and local precision.



## URGENT REFORMS NEEDED FOR INDIA'S POULTRY INDUSTRY

The poultry sector, in India is currently facing a moment that calls for reforms. Here are some key aspects to take into consideration;



### One Health Principle

It is crucial for India's environmental regulations to align with the One Health principle, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of **animal welfare**, public health, ecosystem health and biodiversity conservation. The current public health crisis highlights the pressing need for this alignment.

### Biosecurity Concerns:

The recent outbreak of **H5N1 influenza** sheds light on the conditions prevalent in industrial livestock farming. Experts have long warned about practices. Now we are witnessing the repercussions as the **pathogen** crosses species boundaries **affecting various wildlife** including polar bears in the Arctic and seals and seagulls in Antarctica.

### Waste:

The intensive methods used in the poultry industry such as overcrowding chickens in 'battery cages' result in surroundings. Issues like air **quality deterioration, particulate matter pollution and greenhouse gas emissions present challenges**. The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** categorizes poultry facilities as polluting industries, necessitating adherence to regulations.

### Financial Market Instability:

Poultry farmers are grappling with market shifts and industry norms influenced by players. The use of **antibiotics** for both purposes and growth promotion boosts profits. Raises concerns, about antibiotic resistance.

It's tough to leave the industry because of debts and specialized skills. In short we really need some changes to protect animal welfare, public health and the environment. India's policies should show that these things are all connected and support a responsible poultry industry.

## RAM NAVAMI

Ram Navami, celebrated on the ninth day of the first fortnight of Chaitra, holds great significance in Hindu tradition.

**Birth of Lord Rama:** Ram Navami commemorates the **birth** of Lord Ram (also known as Ramachandra), who is considered an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. His story is beautifully narrated in the epic **Ramayana**, written by the **sage Valmiki**.

**Religious Significance:** On this auspicious day, devotees engage in worship, offering flowers, fruit, and Vedic mantras dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Many observe a **fast** throughout the day, breaking it only at midnight with fruit.

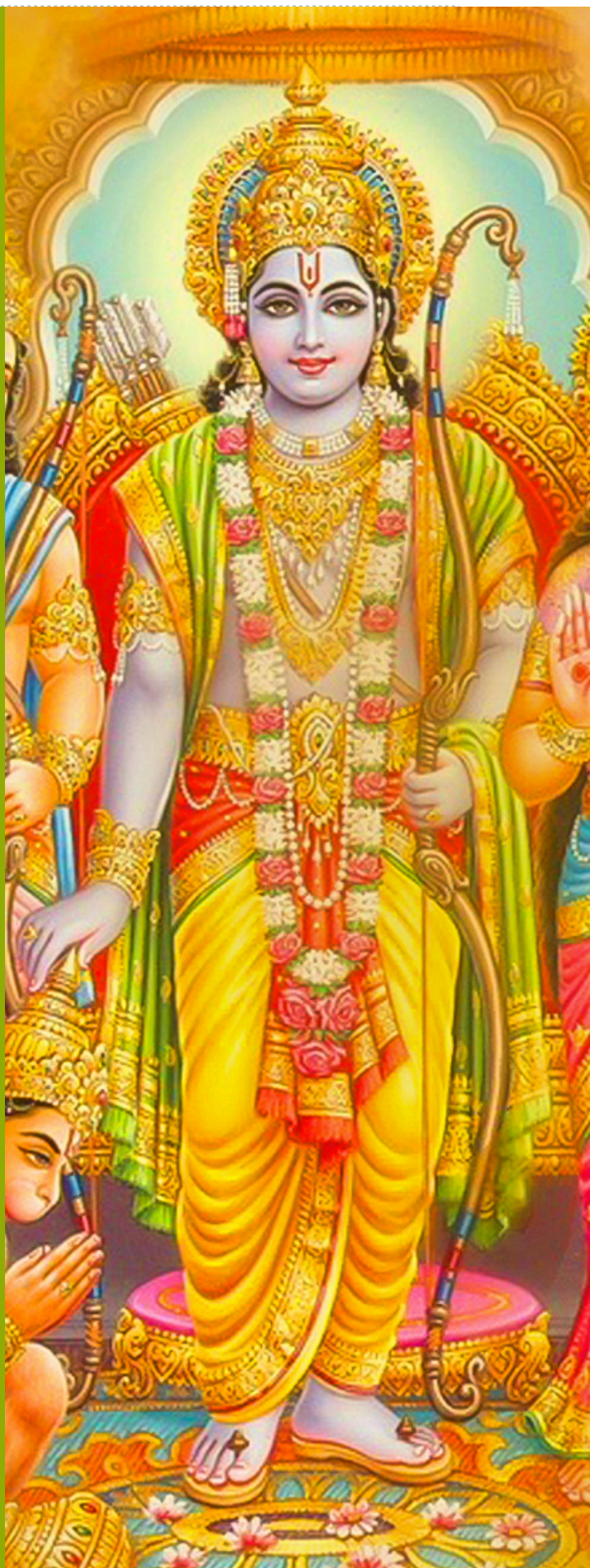
In some regions, especially Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, public gatherings called satsangs are organized to commemorate Ram's birth. People from all backgrounds participate to listen to stories and learn from the wise.

**Cultural and Social Significance:** Ram Navami is not just a religious event; it also has cultural and social dimensions. Families and friends come together to celebrate, sharing food and joy.

It provides an opportunity to reflect on the teachings and values of Lord Ram, including **righteousness, courage, and devotion**.

**Legend of Lord Rama:** Ram was born at noon on the bright ninth day of Chaitra. He is believed to be the embodiment of half a degree of **Vishnu's divinity (ardha ounsh)**. The epic tale of Ram's life, his exile, the rescue of his wife Sita, and the battle against the demon king Ravana continues to inspire generations.

Ram Navami serves as a reminder of dharma, victory of good over evil, and the timeless values upheld by Lord Ram.





# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INTERNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INDEX



**“Recently, the US Chamber of Commerce released its 12th edition of its International Intellectual Property Index.”**

### About

- It is a comprehensive assessment of the world's intellectual property frameworks, published annually by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Innovation Policy Center.
- It evaluates the IP framework of the world's top 55 economies using 50 unique criteria.

### Purpose

It serves as a roadmap for economies seeking to strengthen their **innovation and creativity ecosystems** through more effective IP standards.

It reveals **trends in global IP protection** and shows economies how to improve **IP-driven innovation and creativity**.

### Key Findings

- **The IP Index found that 20 economies significantly improved their IP frameworks.**
- **The United States emerged at the top of the list, followed by the United Kingdom and France.**
- However, eight economies, including Ecuador, declined in rankings due to weak IP enforcement.
- India ranked 42 out of the 55 countries, with an overall score of 38.64%
- ➡ It represents a **significant improvement** from previous years, demonstrating India's efforts to strengthen its IP framework.

### Purpose

- It serves as a roadmap for economies seeking to strengthen their **innovation and creativity ecosystems** through more effective IP standards.
- It reveals **trends in global IP protection** and shows economies how to improve **IP-driven innovation and creativity**.



## SWEDEN BECOMES MEMBER OF NATO

SWEDEN HAS OFFICIALLY BECOME THE 32ND MEMBER OF NATO AFTER COMPLETING THE ACCESSION PROCESS IN WASHINGTON



### North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

- **NATO**, also called the North Atlantic Alliance, is an intergovernmental military alliance.
- Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium
- **Background:** It was established by 12 countries from Europe and North America with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (also known as Washington Treaty) in 1949 in Washington, D.C.
- The objective was to provide collective security against the Soviet Union attack in the aftermath of World War II.

**Collective Defense:** According to Article 5, NATO works on the principle of collective defense, where an attack on any NATO member is considered an attack on all NATO members.

- ➡ So far, Article 5 has been invoked once – in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001.

**Members:** It comprises 32 member states – two North American countries (USA and Canada) and 29 European countries and one eurasian country (Turkey).

- ➡ Finland became the 31st member in 2023.

### Criteria for Membership of NATO:

- Under NATO's "open door policy" based on **Article 10**, membership at present is open to only European nations.
- These countries must fulfill certain criterias such as "a functioning democracy based on a market economy; fair treatment of minorities; a commitment to resolve conflicts peacefully; and making military contribution to NATO operations.
- New members are admitted with the unanimous **consent of all members**.

### Significance of NATO'S Expansion:

- **Benefits for Eastern Europe:** The enlargement of NATO will help to promote democratic reform and peaceful coexistence between the nations of Europe.
- **Enhanced Collective Defense:** The enlargement of NATO strengthens the collective defense capabilities of member states.
- **Addressing New Security Concerns:** The expansion of NATO allows it to adapt to new security threats such as terrorism, cyber attacks, and hybrid warfare, which require a coordinated and collective response from member states.
- **Counterbalancing Russian Influence:** NATO expansion serves as a counterbalance to Russian influence in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet space.

## MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN

THE UNION CABINET RECENTLY GAVE ITS APPROVAL FOR THE SIGNING OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN.



### About

- The MoU signed between the two countries is on General Supply of Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants (POL) and related products from India to Bhutan.
- It aims to benefit India and its citizens with improved economic and commercial linkages with Bhutan irrespective of any gender, class or income bias, particularly in the area of hydrocarbon sector.

### Expected Benefits of MoU

- The Memorandum of Understanding will promote bilateral trade in the hydrocarbon sector and will ensure secured and long term supply of petroleum products to Bhutan.
- Since, exports play a crucial role in realizing Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The MoU will give thrust towards self-reliant India.
- The MoU will be a strategic fit as Energy Bridge in India's Neighborhood First Policy

## INDIA AND BRAZIL 2+2 DIALOGUE

INDIA AND BRAZIL CONCLUDED THE FIRST '2+2' DEFENCE AND FOREIGN MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE.



### About:

- Discussions spanned defence, space, energy, critical minerals, tech, counter-terrorism and regional, multilateral & other issues of mutual interest.
- It was co-chaired by an additional secretary in the external affairs ministry and joint secretary in the defence ministry
- The 2+2 meetings signify the participation of two high-level representatives, Ministers holding Foreign and Defence portfolios, from each of the two countries who aim to enhance the scope of dialogue between them.
- Having such a mechanism enables the partners to better understand and appreciate each other's strategic concerns and sensitivities taking into account political factors on both sides, in order to build a stronger, more integrated strategic relationship.
- India has held 2+2 meetings with ministers from the USA, Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and Russia.

## BRIEF ON INDIA- BRAZIL RELATIONS:



**Diplomatic Relations:** Relations were established in 1948, and the two countries have been Strategic Partners since 2006.

- ➡ Both sides also have several Joint Working Groups to take forward sectoral cooperation.

**Trade Relations:** In 2022, the bilateral trade expanded by 32% to US\$15.2 billion (India's exports US\$8.8 billion & Imports – US\$6.4 billion).

- ➡ India and Brazil have established Trade Monitoring Mechanism as an institutional mechanism to monitor and identify bottlenecks in bilateral trade and take appropriate measures to address them

**Defence & Security Cooperation:** India and Brazil signed an agreement in 2003 for cooperation in defence. Meetings of Joint Defence Committee (JDC) are held as an institutionalized mechanism for defence cooperation.

**Security Cooperation:** India and Brazil established a Strategic Dialogue mechanism in 2006 to cover regional and global issues of mutual concern.

- ➡ The two countries have an Extradition Treaty, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters and an Agreement of Transfer of Sentenced Persons in place.

**Space Cooperation:** India and Brazil signed a framework agreement for peaceful use of outer space in 2004 as well an Agreement for inter-institutional cooperation between the space agencies

- ➡ Both countries have been collaborating in Data sharing and satellite tracking of Indian satellites.

## NORWAY TO INVEST ALMOST HALF OF \$100 BILLION UNDER EFTA

Switzerland and Norway are likely to contribute most of the \$100 billion free trade pact India recently signed with EFTA.



### About:

India signed a four-nation trade pact with EFTA countries, on March 10, 2024, which aims to attract \$100 billion and to create one million jobs in 15 years in exchange for tariff concessions for their pharma, chemical and minerals

### India: EFTA pact: Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)

**Signed on:** March 10, 2024

**Involves:** India and EFTA member states: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

**Goal:** Promote investments and exports, particularly in India's IT, audio:visual sectors, and skilled professional movement.

**Investment target:** The EFTA states shall aim to increase FDI into India by \$50 billion within 10 years, and another \$50 billion in the five years thereafter.

**Additional provisions:** For the first time, the FTA also included a chapter on commitments to human rights and sustainable development.

### Potential benefits for India:

**Tariff reduction:** After the treaty comes into effect, the EFTA nations will see a reduction in tariffs on most industrial goods exported to India, such as pharmaceutical products, machinery, watches, fertilisers, medicine, chemical products and others.

**Increased trade and investment:** EFTA investment already stood at \$10.7 billion in 2022 and Switzerland is India's largest trading partner in this bloc of nations, followed by Norway.

**Job creation:** As per the newly signed agreement, the EFTA states shall aim to increase FDI into India by \$100 billion within 15 years. This could facilitate the generation of one million direct jobs in the country.

**Access to the EFTA markets:** Markets of these four countries will be opened for Indian products, thereby enhancing the export avenues for Indian products.

**Services sector:** The services sector also forms a vital part of this trade agreement. The agreement would help stimulate services exports in areas such as information technology and facilitate the movement of key skilled personnel.



## OPERATION INDRAVATI

India launched 'Operation Indravati' to evacuate its nationals from Haiti.



### Background:

- Haiti has been witnessing violence for over two years since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise.
- Recently, various armed groups launched coordinated attacks on key installations in Haiti in an attempt to force the resignation of the country's de facto leader Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

### About Haiti

**Capital:** Port-au-Prince

- Haiti, is a country on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea, east of Cuba and Jamaica, and south of The Bahamas.

## UNREST IN BALOCHISTAN

Pakistani security forces repulsed a militant attack on a complex outside its strategic port of Gwadar in Balochistan province.



### About:

- Balochistan is the largest Pakistani province and is sparsely populated and impoverished when compared to the rest of the country.
- Its location as well as abundance of natural resources, especially oil, make it strategically vital for Pakistan.
- The province has been the site of a series of bloody insurgencies, brutal state repression, and an enduring Baloch nationalist movement since 1948.

### Background of the Insurgency

- At the dawn of **India's Independence in 1947**, the region now known as Balochistan was partitioned into four princely states: Kalat, Kharan, Las Bela, and Makaran.
- These states were presented with **three options: merge with India, join Pakistan, or maintain their independence.**
- Under the influence of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Kharan, Las Bela, and Makaran chose to become part of Pakistan but **Kalat decided to remain Independent.**
- On August 4, 1947, a meeting was convened in Delhi, and Jinnah supported Khan of Kalat's decision for independence.

➡ On August 11, 1947, a treaty was signed between Kalat and the Muslim League, recognising Kalat as an independent state, and promising that the Muslim League would respect Balochistan's independence

- Despite meetings with Mountbatten and recognition of Kalat's status as an independent sovereign state, the British issued a memorandum stating that the **Kalat was not in a position to undertake the international responsibilities of an independent state.**
- On March 26, the Pakistan Army moved into the Baloch coastal region of Pasni, Jiwani and Turbat.

### Discontent:

- The forceful integration of Kalat into Pakistan sowed the seeds of discontent and resistance among the Baloch people.
  - ➡ Many Baloch nationalists viewed the annexation as a betrayal of their autonomy and an infringement upon their cultural identity.
- The region saw many insurgencies for the Independence from Pakistan but Pakistan state managed to suppress the resistance.
- Once a proud sovereign state, Balochistan is now the most neglected and poverty-ridden province of Pakistan.
- Despite being the largest province and rich in minerals, Balochistan accounts for nearly 4 percent of Pakistan's economy.

## INDIA'S STAND ON BALOCHISTAN:



- India's position on Balochistan is complex and influenced by various factors including geopolitics, regional stability, and its relationship with Pakistan.
- India and Pakistan have a long-standing conflict over the region of Kashmir, and any overt involvement by India in Balochistan could escalate tensions further.
- India has been accused by Pakistan of supporting Baloch separatist movements, allegations that India has consistently denied.
- India maintains that it supports the right to self-determination for the people of Balochistan but does not interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs.
- Overall, India's stance on Balochistan involves a delicate balance between expressing concerns about human rights violations and maintaining diplomatic relations with Pakistan.
- Any significant shifts in this stance would likely depend on changes in the geopolitical landscape of the region.

## UNITING FOR CONSENSUS



**Recently, India criticised the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) Model at the United Nations for opposing reforms to the Security Council.**

### About

- It is a significant initiative at the United Nations (UN) which was initiated by Italy in the 1990s.
- It is also known as the 'Coffee Club' that comprises 12 member countries (Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain, and Türkiye) and 2 observers (China and Indonesia).
- It primarily aims to counter bids for permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council by G4 nations – India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan.

### The UfC Model and Its Criticism:

- UfC proposes a Security Council with 26 seats, with an increase only in the non-permanent, elected members
  - ➡ It does not support the representation of Africa and the Global South in the permanent category as a 'nonnegotiable' goal.
- It stands against the idea advocated by a majority of the UN member states, which is an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of an expanded security council.

### Reforms in United Nations:

- **Security Council Expansion:** India Calls for expanding the number of permanent and non-permanent seats in the Security Council to reflect contemporary global realities.
- **Equitable Representation:** Emphasis on ensuring equitable representation for underrepresented regions, particularly Africa, Latin America, and Asia.
- **Veto Power:** Proposals to reform or limit the veto power of permanent members to prevent its misuse or deadlock.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Advocacy for greater transparency and accountability within UN institutions to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

## India's Stand

- **Permanent Membership:** Continues to push for a permanent seat on the Security Council, citing its status as the world's largest democracy and its significant contributions to peacekeeping operations.
- **Reform Advocacy:** Actively participates in discussions and negotiations on UN reform, highlighting the need for equitable representation and inclusive decision-making.
- **Multilateralism:** Stresses the importance of multilateralism and the central role of the UN in addressing global challenges, including climate change, terrorism, and pandemics.
- **Peacekeeping Contributions:** Highlights India's extensive contributions to UN peacekeeping missions as evidence of its commitment to maintaining international peace and security.

## UNITING FOR CONSENSUS

Recently, India was elected as co-chair of Digital Innovation Board of International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

### About

- It is a part of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development, an initiative by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
- It comprises Minister of Telecom/ICT from 23 member countries of ITU spanning Asia, Europe, Africa, North and South America.
- It primarily focuses on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in digital development for a more inclusive digital future.
- It provides strategic guidance, expertise and advocacy regarding its mission of building critical local enablers and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in digital development, to create a more inclusive and equitable digital future for all.





## INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

- **Nature:** Specialized agency of the United Nations for information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- **Membership:** Includes 193 Member States and over 1000 companies, universities, and international/regional organizations.
- **Headquarters** in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Historical Significance:**
  - ➔ Oldest agency in the UN family, with roots tracing back to the telegraph era in 1865. □
  - Integral role in connecting the world through evolving telecommunications technologies.

### Functions and Responsibilities:

- ➔ Facilitates international cooperation in the development and use of ICTs.
- ➔ Sets global standards to ensure interoperability and compatibility of ICT systems.
- ➔ Allocates and manages radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbits to prevent interference and promote efficient use.
- ➔ Promotes access to ICTs, bridging the digital divide and fostering socio-economic development.

### Key Initiatives

- Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development: Driving efforts to make broadband internet accessible to all.
- Connect 2030 Agenda: Setting targets for expanding digital connectivity and leveraging ICTs for sustainable development.
- World Telecommunication and Information Society Day: Observance to raise awareness of the importance of ICTs in advancing societies.

### Role in Global Development

- Enabler of innovation, economic growth, and social progress.
- Catalyst for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by leveraging ICTs for education, healthcare, governance, and more.

## ROLE IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

- The South China Sea dispute is a long-standing territorial conflict involving several countries, including the Philippines and China
- China claims sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea, including the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, based on historical records dating back nearly 4,000 years.
  - ➔ However, the Philippines, along with other countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Brunei, disputed China's claims, and accused China of encroaching upon its territorial waters in the South China Sea.

# UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA (UNCLOS)

**Overview:** International treaty adopted in 1982, establishing a comprehensive legal framework governing all aspects of ocean affairs and marine resources.

## Key Provisions

- ➔ **Territorial Sea:** Defines the territorial sea as a belt of coastal waters extending up to 12 nautical miles from the baseline of a coastal state.
- ➔ **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** Grants coastal states sovereign rights over natural resources within a zone extending up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline, excluding activities such as military navigation.
- ➔ **Continental Shelf:** Coastal states have sovereign rights over the continental shelf, which extends beyond the EEZ for exploitation of natural resources.
- ➔ **High Seas:** Regulates activities on the high seas, ensuring freedom of navigation, overflight, and laying of submarine cables and pipelines.

## Marine Environment

- ➔ Obliges states to prevent, reduce, and control pollution of the marine environment and conserve marine biodiversity.

## International Seabed Authority (ISA)

- ➔ Establishes the ISA to regulate activities related to seabed mining in the Area beyond national jurisdiction

## Universal Acceptance

- ➔ Widely regarded as the "constitution for the oceans," with 168 parties, including the European Union.
- ➔ Serves as the primary legal framework for resolving disputes and promoting cooperation among states in maritime matters

## Dispute Settlement Mechanisms

- ➔ Provides mechanisms for resolving disputes, including the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).
- ➔ Encourages states to settle disputes through negotiation, mediation, or arbitration.

## Contributions to International Peace and Security

- ➔ Enhances stability and predictability in maritime relations by clarifying rights and responsibilities of states.
- ➔ Facilitates cooperation in combating piracy, illegal fishing, and other maritime crimes.

## India has been a signatory to the UNCLOS since 1982

### Institutions attached to UNCLOS:

- ➔ International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea;
- ➔ International Seabed Authority;
- ➔ Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER'S VISIT TO MALAYSIA

Recently, the External Affairs  
Minister of India visited  
Malaysia.



### About

- The minister held a bilateral meeting with his counterpart in Malaysia. Malaysia is a key partner for India in ASEAN and Act East Policy.
- The visit to Malaysia provided an opportunity to reiterate commitment to further develop the Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

### Overview of India and Malaysia Relations

**Diplomatic Relations:** India and Malaysia established diplomatic relations shortly after Malaysia gained independence from British rule in 1957.

- ➔ Both countries are members of various international organizations, such as the United Nations, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), and the NonAligned Movement.

**Trade and Economic Relations:** Malaysia is the 13th largest trading partner for India while India stands amongst the 10 largest trading partners globally.

- ➔ Furthermore, Malaysia has emerged as the third largest trading partner for India from the ASEAN region and India is the largest trading partner for Malaysia among the countries of the Southeast Asian region.
- ➔ Malaysia stands as Both countries have engaged in various economic agreements such as the India Malaysia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).
- ➔ Both countries have agreed to conduct trade settlements in Indian rupees, reflecting an intention to bolster trade relations.

**Defense and Security:** The defense ties have steadily expanded, marked by the signing of a **defense cooperation memorandum in 1993**, regular defense cooperation meetings, joint military exercises

**Strategic Partnership:** India and Malaysia have aimed to strengthen their strategic partnership through various initiatives, including high-level visits, joint commissions, and dialogues.

- ➔ Both countries have expressed interests in enhancing cooperation in areas such as defense, counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cultural exchanges.

**Tourism and diaspora:** Over the last two decades, tourism has been a cornerstone in fostering relations between India and Malaysia.

**Cultural Ties:** Indian influence in Malaysia can be seen in various aspects of Malaysian culture, including language, religion (Hinduism and Buddhism), architecture, cuisine, and festivals.

### Challenges

**Trade Disputes and Imbalances:** Trade disputes and imbalances have been a significant challenge in IndiaMalaysia relations.

- ➔ Issues related to tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and trade restrictions have occasionally strained economic ties between the two countries.

**Geopolitical Considerations:** Both countries have diverse foreign policy priorities and engagements with other nations, which can lead to differences in strategic perspectives.

### Conclusion

- India and Malaysia completed 65 years of modern diplomatic relations in 2022.
- The relations between India and Malaysia have grown from a Strategic Partnership to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership in the last 10 years, with new cooperation in cultural diplomacy, digital economy, and agricultural commodities forthcoming.

## INDIA-LED GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF)

Recently, the GOF deliberated on strategies to strengthen legal frameworks against perpetrators of malicious acts targeting Peacekeepers, focusing on supporting measures for ensuring accountability.



### About

- It is a significant initiative launched in 2022 by India during its presidency of the UN Security Council (UNSC).
- It represents the 'political will' of member states, particularly of the troop and police contributing countries, to champion the implementation of the provisions of UNSC Resolution 2589.
- It comprises 40 member states, and India, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Morocco, and Nepal serve as co-chairs of the GOF.

### Objectives and Functions

- It aims to promote accountability for all acts of violence against United Nations (UN) peacekeepers and provide capacity building and technical assistance to the host state authorities.



- ➡ It serves as an informal platform at the UN to exchange information, share best practices, and mobilise resources directed at facilitating accountability for crimes committed against peacekeepers.
- ➡ It monitors progress on bringing accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.
- ➡ It convenes two meetings of its members per year and organises one event per year involving Permanent Missions and other stakeholders to take the plan forward, thereby ensuring greater safety and security for peacekeepers.

#### INDIA'S ROLE IN UN PEACEKEEPING

- India has been one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.
- Since its first commitment in Korea in 1950, Indian troops have supervised complex, unmanageable peace operations, earning universal admiration for their professional excellence.

## ENVIRONMENT SEA SLUG



### Zoological Survey of India named a new marine species of head-shield sea slug after President of India Droupadi Murmu.

#### About

- The species belonging to **Melanochlamys** genus was discovered from **Digha of West Bengal coast and Udaipur of Odisha coast**.
- **Appearance:** It is a head-shield brownish-black sea slug with a ruby red spot and a maximum length of up to 7 mm named as *Melanochlamys droupadi*.
- **Distribution:** They can be found from the shallow intertidal to the deep sea and from the polar regions to the tropics.
- **Habitat:** Sea slugs are a group of molluscs that live primarily in marine habitats and are slug-like.
- Sea slugs are **hermaphroditic**, meaning they possess both male and female reproductive organs. They can reproduce through both sexual and asexual means.
- So far, **18 species** have been discovered across the globe, including one tropical species from the Gulf of Thailand.

## EARLY JACARANDA BLOOM



**Early blooming of the Jacaranda trees in Mexico has sparked the debate about climate change.**

### About

#### **Native Habitat and Global Distribution**

- Jacaranda trees, renowned for their exquisite purple flowers, originate from South America, particularly Argentina and Brazil.
- They have been introduced to various parts of the world, with Australia being a notable example where they are frequently cultivated as ornamental additions to landscapes.

#### **Aesthetic Appeal**

- Jacaranda trees are cherished for their striking floral displays, characterized by clusters of vibrant purple flowers.
- The flowering season typically occurs in spring or early summer, varying depending on the geographical location.

#### **Deciduous Nature**

- These trees are deciduous, meaning they shed their leaves annually, usually preceding the flowering phase.
- The shedding of leaves allows for a dramatic unveiling of the colorful blooms, enhancing the visual spectacle.

#### **Environmental Preferences**

- Jacarandas thrive in warm climates with well-drained soil, displaying resilience in regions with adequate sunlight.
- Once established, they exhibit a degree of drought tolerance, further contributing to their adaptability in various environmental conditions.

# DISCLOSURE FRAMEWORK ON CLIMATE-RELATED FINANCIAL RISKS, 2024



**The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released a draft Disclosure Framework on Climate-related Financial Risks, 2024 for banks to follow.**

## About

### Purpose and Scope:

- Regulated entities, particularly banks, are mandated to disclose information regarding their climate-related financial risks and opportunities to users of financial statements.
- This disclosure underscores the significance of the environment and its enduring influence on organizations and the broader economy.
- The RBI has outlined climate-related financial risks as potential risks stemming from climate change or efforts to mitigate it, encompassing their impacts and economic consequences.
- These risks manifest through two primary channels: physical risks and transition risks.

### Physical Risks

- Physical risks entail economic costs and financial losses resulting from the escalating frequency and severity of extreme climate-related weather events.
- **Impact on Regulated Entities (REs):** Such risks may strain expected cash flows due to localized or regional weather events, jeopardize collateral value against loans due to chronic flooding or landslides, and disrupt REs' physical infrastructure like data centers, hampering their service provision capabilities.

### Transition Risks

- Transition risks arise from the shift towards a low carbon economy, influenced by climate-related policies, technological advancements, evolving consumer sentiments, and behavioral changes.
- The transition process, aimed at reducing carbon emissions, carries significant implications for the economy as a whole.

### About the Framework

- All India financial institutions, and top and upper layer NBFCs will have to begin to provide information on **governance**, strategy, and risk management strategy from **2025-26 and begin disclosure metrics and targets from 2027-28.**



- Banks will be mandated to disclose those climate-related risks which have a bearing on their financial stability.
- The revelation will foster an early assessment of climate-related financial risks and opportunities and also facilitate market discipline.

#### **Organisations under the Purview**

- All scheduled commercial banks (excluding local area banks, payments banks and regional rural banks).
- All Tier -IV primary (urban) and cooperative banks (UCBs).
- All top and upper layer non-banking financial companies

#### **Disclosure by the REs**

- Identified climate-related risks and opportunities over short, medium and long term.
- The impact of climate-related risks and opportunities on their businesses, strategy and financial planning.
- The resilience of the RE's strategy taking into consideration the different climate scenarios.

## **GREEN TUG TRANSITION PROGRAMME (GTTP)**



**Union Minister of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways inaugurated the 60T bollard pull tug named 'Ocean Grace' and the Medical Mobile Unit (MMU).**

#### **About**

##### **Ocean Grace: India's First Make in India ASTDS Tug**

- ➡ Cochin Shipyard Limited, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW), has developed the Ocean Grace, the first Approved Standardised Tug Design and Specification (ASTDS) Tug in India.
- ➡ This initiative represents a significant milestone in India's maritime industry, showcasing indigenous capabilities in tugboat manufacturing.

### Medical Mobile Unit (MMU) for Corporate Social Responsibility

- ➡ The introduction of the Medical Mobile Unit (MMU) reflects the port's commitment to corporate social responsibility, aiming to provide essential medical services to local communities.
- ➡ The GTTP aims to transition at least 50% of all tugs into Green Tugs by 2030, with the ultimate goal of having Green Tugs operational across all major ports.
- ➡ This program emphasizes the conversion of tugboats into '**Green Hybrid Tugs**,' utilizing non-fossil fuels such as Methanol, Ammonia, and Hydrogen.

### Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Maritime Operations:

- ➡ India's ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction in maritime operations include a 50% reduction by 2030 and a substantial decrease of 70% by 2047.
- ➡ These targets encompass various vessels, including domestic/short sea shipping ferries, port vessels (tugs/ crafts/dredgers), reflecting India's commitment to environmental sustainability in maritime activities.

## WORLD WILDLIFE DAY



**Every year on 3rd of March, World Wildlife Day is celebrated to spread awareness regarding sustainable practices for conserving biodiversity.**

### About

#### Historical Significance

- ➡ In December 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution designating March 3 as World Wildlife Day, starting in 2014.
- ➡ Notably, March 3 marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973.

#### CITES Agreement

- ➡ CITES is a global agreement aimed at safeguarding wild animal and plant species by regulating international trade to prevent threats to their survival.
- ➡ It serves as a crucial framework for promoting sustainable trade practices and protecting biodiversity worldwide.

## World Wildlife Day 2024

- ➡ The WWF Environmental Information and Assessment Center Program, operating under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, observed World Wildlife Day at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary.
- ➡ The theme for World Wildlife Day 2024 is "Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation."
- ➡ The chosen theme underscores the importance of utilizing digital innovations to bridge the gap between humans and nature, fostering conservation efforts.
- ➡ It emphasizes the role of technology in enhancing awareness, engagement, and conservation practices to protect wildlife and their habitats.

# HANGULS



**Recently, the experts suggested that the number of Hanguls in Kashmir will cross 300 this spring, the first time in more than three decades.**

### About the Hangul (Kashmir Stag):

#### Unique Subspecies and State Animal Status:

- ➡ The Hangul is a distinctive subspecies of the Asian Red Deer and holds the prestigious title of being the State Animal of Jammu and Kashmir.
- ➡ Its habitat preference lies in high-altitude forests, characterizing it as a species adapted to mountainous terrain.

#### Habitat Distribution

- ➡ Hanguls predominantly inhabit areas such as Dachigam National Park and its vicinity, Rajparian Wildlife Sanctuary, Overa Aru, Sind Valley, as well as the forests of Kishtwar and Bhaderwah in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### Decline and Conservation Efforts

- ➡ The population of Hanguls has witnessed a significant decline over the years. In 1947, around 2000 individuals were estimated, which plummeted to 384 by 1968.
- ➡ Despite its status as the state animal, the population has further dwindled, with only 289 individuals remaining.

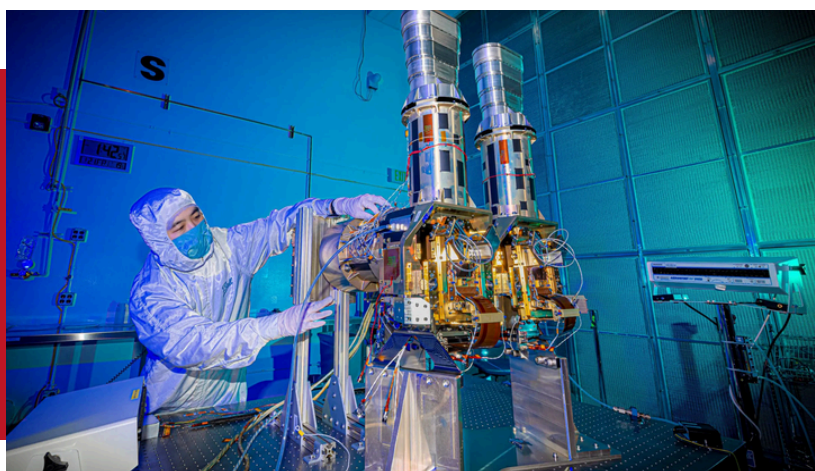


- ➡ Designated as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red Data Book, urgent conservation measures are imperative.

### **Project Hangul**

- ➡ To combat the alarming decline in Hangul population, the government of Jammu and Kashmir, in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), initiated Project Hangul.
- ➡ This project focuses on comprehensive conservation strategies aimed at reversing the declining trend and ensuring the long-term survival of the Hangul population.

## **METHANESAT**



**MethaneSAT, a new satellite backed by Alphabet Inc's Google and the Environmental Defense Fund group, was launched recently.**

### **About**

#### **Launch Details**

- ➡ MethaneSAT, a satellite designed to track and measure methane emissions globally, was launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon9 rocket from California.
- ➡ While not the first spacecraft dedicated to identifying and quantifying methane emissions, MethaneSAT offers enhanced capabilities and a broader observational scope compared to its predecessors.

#### **Collaborative Development**

- ➡ Developed by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), a US-based nonprofit environmental advocacy group, in partnership with Harvard University, the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, and the New Zealand Space Agency.
- ➡ MethaneSAT will orbit the Earth 15 times a day, focusing on monitoring methane emissions primarily from the oil and gas sector.

### Technical Specifications:

- ➡ Capable of detecting methane concentrations as small as three parts per billion in the atmosphere, enabling it to identify smaller emissions sources.
- ➡ Features a wide-camera view covering approximately 200 km by 200 km, facilitating the identification of larger emitters, often referred to as "super emitters."

### Data Collection and Analysis

- ➡ MethaneSAT will generate a substantial amount of data, disclosing the sources and trends of methane emissions over time.
- ➡ Data analysis will utilize cloud-computing and AI technology developed by Google, a mission partner, with the findings made publicly accessible through Google's Earth Engine platform.
- ➡ The availability of comprehensive methane emission data will empower stakeholders and regulators to take informed action to mitigate methane emissions, contributing to environmental conservation efforts.

## INDIA'S FIRST NATIONAL DOLPHIN RESEARCH CENTRE

India's first centre for research on conserving the endangered Gangetic river dolphin was inaugurated in Patna, Bihar.



### Objective

- ➡ Bihar is home to around half of the estimated 3,000 Gangetic dolphins in India.
- ➡ The NDRC seeks to serve as a central hub for research on diverse facets of Gangetic dolphins, including studies on their behavior, survival mechanisms, and factors contributing to mortality

### Ganges River Dolphins (also called 'Susu')

**Scientific Name:** Platanista Gangetica.

**Discovery:** Officially discovered in 1801.

**Habitat and Distribution:** Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers & their tributaries in India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

**Characteristics:** Only live in freshwater & does not have a crystalline eye lens, rendering it effectively blind.

- ➡ Navigation and hunting through a highly developed 'sonar system', using echolocation (ultrasonic sounds).
- ➡ The body is a brownish colour and stocky in the middle.
- ➡ They are usually found in turbulent waters, where there are enough fish for them to feed on.
- ➡ Gangetic dolphins live in a zone where there is little or no current, helping them save energy.

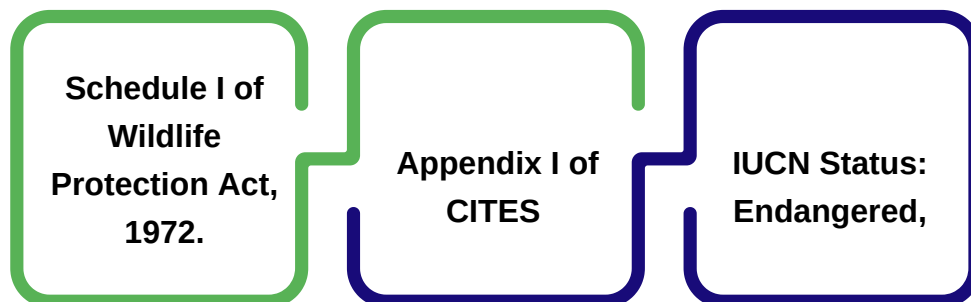
### Significance

- ➡ Indicator of the health of the entire river ecosystem.
- ➡ Controlling and maintaining healthy fish and crustacean populations
- ➡ GOI was declared National Aquatic Animal in 2009.

**Threats:** Habitat degradation via pollution, construction etc.

- ➡ Accidental deaths via entanglement in the nets (bycatch), Poaching.

### Conservation Status



### Steps Taken

- ➡ **Project Dolphin:** Conservation of dolphins & aquatic habitat through the use of technology (Pollution reduction & sustainable fishery).
- ➡ **National Dolphin Day:** October 5th has been designated as National Dolphin Day to be celebrated every year to create awareness for conservation of Dolphins.
- ➡ **Dolphin Sanctuary:** Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS) (Bihar)
- ➡ **Conservation Action Plan for Dolphins:** By the Wildlife Institute of India launched in 2016.



## Recently, Prime Minister visited Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR).

### About

**Location:** Golaghat, Karbi Anglong and Nagaon districts of the state of Assam.

It was declared a **Wildlife Sanctuary** in 1950 and notified as **Kaziranga National Park** in 1974 under the Wildlife (**Protection**) **Act, of 1972**.

- ➡ It was also recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.

**The Park is the abode of more than 70% of One Horned Rhinoceros in the world.**

- ➡ The **One-horned Rhino** is listed under the Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and vulnerable in the **IUCN Red List**.



### GOLDEN LANGURS

The most recent primate survey has disclosed that India is home to approximately 7,396 golden langurs.

#### About

- **Scientific Name:** Trachypithecus geei
- **Native to:** India and Bhutan.

**Geographic Range:** The geographic range of golden langurs is limited to **Assam, India and neighboring Bhutan** where they live year-round

- ➡ The area they inhabit is restricted to the region surrounded by four geographical landmarks: **the foothills of Bhutan (north), Manas river (east), Sankosh river (west), and Brahmaputra river (south).**

**Habitat:** Golden langurs occupy **moist evergreen and tropical deciduous forests** as well as some riverine areas and savannas in Assam and Bhutan

- ➡ They are very much **dependent on trees**, living in the upper canopy of sub-tropical forests in the south and in more temperate forests in the north.

**Food Habits:** Golden langurs are both leaf-eaters (folivores) and frugivores

#### Unique features

- ➡ Golden langurs can be most easily recognized by the **color of their fur**, after which they are named.
- ➡ It has been noted that their **fur changes colors according to the seasons**.
- ➡ Males also tend to be slightly larger than females.

#### Conservation Status

**IUCN Red List:** Endangered

**CITES:** Appendix

**Threats:** The survey report underlined an unstable situation in the **fragmented habitats** of the golden langurs, particularly due to the absence of non-breeding all-male bands.

- ➡ The primatologists highlighted the need for **corridor linkage among the fragmented habitats** through plantations and canopy bridges to offset potential threats the primates face from anthropogenic interactions.

## RISING GLOBAL SEA SURFACE TEMPERATURE

The average global Sea Surface Temperature (SST) for February 2024 stood at 21.06 degree Celsius, the highest ever in a dataset that goes back to 1979.



### Reasons for Rising SST:

Sea surface temperature is the temperature of the water at the ocean surface.

**Human Activities:** Since the Industrial Revolution kicked off in the 19th Century, human activities such as burning fossil fuels have released high levels of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.

- ➡ Carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, and nitrous oxide are some of the notable GHGs, which trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to global warming.
- ➡ As a result, the average global temperature has risen at least 1.2 degree Celsius above pre-industrial times.

**Absorption by Oceans:** Almost 90 percent of the extra heat trapped by GHGs has been absorbed by the oceans, making them steadily warmer over the decades.

**El Niño:** A weather pattern that refers to an abnormal warming of surface waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean — has contributed to both ocean warming and rising global surface temperatures.

**Weaker Winds:** There is also less dust blowing off the Sahara Desert recently due to weaker-than-average winds.

- ➡ Typically, the dust forms a “giant umbrella that shades” the Atlantic water and reduces ocean temperatures.

### Impact of Rising SST

**Ocean Stratification:** Warmer oceans lead to an increase in ocean stratification — the natural separation of an ocean’s water into horizontal layers by density, with warmer, lighter, less salty, and nutrient-poor water layering on top of heavier, colder, saltier, nutrient-rich water.

- ➡ Usually, ocean ecosystems, currents, wind, and tides mix these layers.
- ➡ The rise in temperatures, however, has made it harder for water layers to mix with each other.
- ➡ Due to this, oceans are able to absorb less carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and the oxygen absorbed.
- ➡ isn't able to mix properly with cooler ocean waters below, threatening the survival of marine life.

**Threat to Phytoplanktons:** Nutrients are not able to travel up to the surface of the oceans from below. This could threaten the population of phytoplankton single-celled plants that thrive on the ocean surface and are the base of several marine food webs.

- ➡ Phytoplankton are eaten by zooplankton, which are consumed by other marine animals such as crabs, fish, and sea stars.
- ➡ Therefore, if the phytoplankton population plummets, there could be a collapse of marine ecosystems.

**Marine Heat Waves:** Warmer oceans cause marine heat waves (MHWs), which occur when the surface temperature of a particular region of the sea **rises to 3 or 4 degree** Celsius above the average temperature for **at least five days**.

- ➡ Between 1982 and 2016, such heatwaves have doubled in frequency and have become longer and more intense, according to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- ➡ MHWs are devastating for marine ecosystems as they contribute to coral bleaching, and also impact the migration pattern of aquatic animals.

**Increase in Intensity of Cyclones:** Warmer temperatures lead to a higher rate of evaporation as well as the transfer of heat from the oceans to the air.

- ➡ That's why, when storms travel across hot oceans, they gather more water vapour and heat.
- ➡ This results in more powerful winds, heavier rainfall, and more flooding when storms reach the land — meaning heightened devastation for humans.

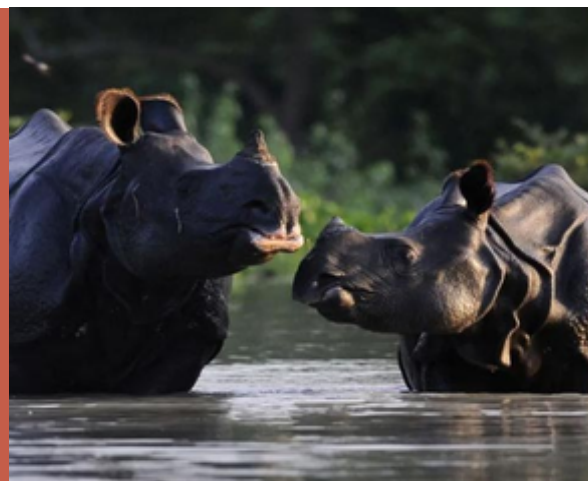
## POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

**Supreme Court froze the Assam government's move to denotify Pobitora wildlife sanctuary.**

**About**

**Location and Significance**

- ➡ Situated in the capital city of Guwahati, Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is renowned for its rich biodiversity and unique landscape.



- ➡ Often referred to as 'Mini Kaziranga' due to similarities in terrain, vegetation, and wildlife distribution with its larger counterpart, Kaziranga National Park.

### **Abundant Rhinoceros Population:**

- ➡ Pobitora boasts a dense population of the Great Indian one-horned rhinoceros, making it a vital habitat for the conservation of this iconic species.
- ➡ The sanctuary serves as a sanctuary for the rhinoceros population, contributing to their protection and survival.

### **Protected Area Status:**

- ➡ Originally declared a reserved forest in 1971, Pobitora attained the status of a wildlife sanctuary in 1987, recognizing its ecological importance and the need for conservation efforts.

### **Conservation Measures and Management:**

- ➡ Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is subject to conservation initiatives aimed at preserving its diverse flora and fauna.
- ➡ Management practices include habitat restoration, antipoaching measures, and community involvement to ensure sustainable conservation efforts.

### **Great Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros:**

- **Habitat:** It is confined to the tall grasslands and forests in the foothills of the Himalayas.
- **Distribution:** The Great one horned rhino is commonly found in Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan and in Assam, India.
- **Indian Habitat:** The Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park in Assam, Pobitora reserve forest in Assam (having the highest Indian rhino density in the world), Orang National park of Assam, Laokhowa reserve forest of Assam having a very small population and Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal are homes for this endangered animal.

### **Conservation Status**

- **IUCN Status:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix I (I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances).

## **ETHANOL 100**

Ministry of Petroleum has launched 'ETHANOL 100', an automotive fuel, at the IndianOil Retail Outlet.





## About

- Ethanol 100 offers a cleaner, greener fuel option with its blend of 92-94% ethanol, 4-5% motor spirit, and 1.5% Co-solvent higher saturated alcohol.
- It reduces greenhouse gas emissions by around 63% and is ideal for high-performance engines due to its high-octane rating.
- With the launch of ETHANOL 100 at 183 IndianOil outlets, India is nearing its target of achieving 20% ethanol blending by 2025-26.
- India's Ethanol Blending Program will enhance farmer incomes and rural employment also contribute to environmental sustainability, with significant reductions in CO2 emissions and foreign exchange savings.

## CAPTIVE ELEPHANT (TRANSFER OR TRANSPORT) RULES, 2024

Union government has notified a set of rules called the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024.



## About

- The rules liberalise the conditions under which captive elephants may be transferred within or between states.

**Conditions for Transfer:** When an owner is no longer in a position to maintain the elephant,

- ➡ the elephant will likely have a better upkeep than in the present circumstances; or when a state's Chief Wildlife Warden "deems it fit and proper" in the circumstances of the case
- ➡ for better upkeep of the elephant.

**Transfer within State:** Before a transfer within the state, an elephant's health has to be ratified by a veterinarian and the Deputy Conservator of Forests must establish that the animal's current habitat and prospective habitat are suitable.

- ➡ The Chief Wildlife Warden on receipt of such documents may choose to reject or approve the transfer.

**Transfer Between States:** If the transfer involves moving the elephant outside of a state, similar conditions apply.

- ➡ Before the transfer, the "genetic profile" of the elephant has to be registered with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

# STATE OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE 2023

Recently, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released the 'State of the Global Climate' for 2023.



## Key Findings

**Hottest Year on Record:** The report confirms that 2023 was the warmest year on record, with the global average nearsurface temperature at 1.45°C above the pre-industrial baseline.

- ➡ It is significantly higher than the 1.29°C increase from preindustrial times recorded in 2016.
- ➡ The last ten years, 2014 to 2023, was the warmest decade ever.

## Record-Breaking Changes

Records were broken for greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, sea level rise, Antarctic sea ice cover, and glacier retreat.

- ➡ The observed concentrations of three main greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide — also reached new records in 2022.

**Sea Level Rise:** Ocean heat content reached its highest level in the 65-year observational record.

- ➡ Global mean sea level reached a record high. The rate of sea level rise in the past ten years (2014–2023) has more than doubled since the first decade of the satellite record (1993–2002).

**Extreme Weather Events:** Heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires, and rapidly intensifying tropical cyclones caused significant disruption and economic losses.

- ➡ Wildfires in Hawaii, Canada and Europe led to loss of life, the destruction of homes and large-scale air pollution.
- ➡ Flooding associated with extreme rainfall from Mediterranean Cyclone Daniel affected Greece, Bulgaria, Türkiye, and Libya with particularly heavy loss of life in Libya.

**Socio-Economic Impact:** Food security, population displacement and impacts on vulnerable populations continue to be of mounting concern in 2023, with weather and climate hazards exacerbating the situation in many parts of the world.

## WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANISATION (WMO)

**Membership:** Comprised of 193 Member States and Territories.

**Origins:** Rooted in the IMO, emerging from the 1873 Vienna International Meteorological Congress.

**Establishment:** Formally established with the ratification of the WMO Convention in 1950, becoming the specialized agency of the United Nations for meteorology, operational hydrology, and related geophysical sciences.

**Headquarters:** The Secretariat, based in Geneva, is led by the Secretary-General. • Supreme Body: Governance is overseen by the World Meteorological Congress.

**Supreme Body:** Governance is overseen by the World Meteorological Congress.

## SOLAR WASTE

India's solar waste could reach 600 kilotonnes by 2030 as per a study published by Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

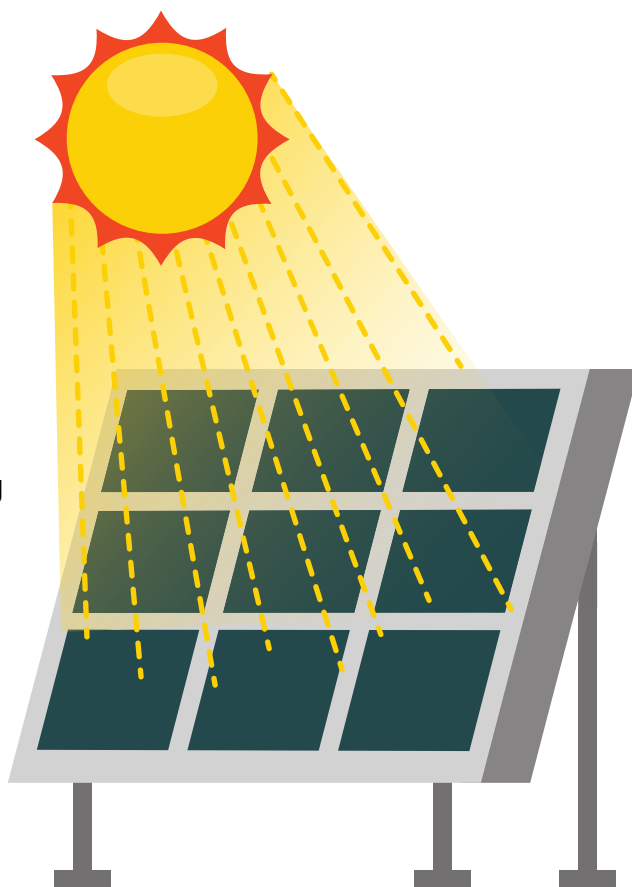
### Key Findings:

**Waste Generation:** India's installed 66.7 gigawatt (GW) capacity, as of FY23, has generated about 100 kilotonnes (kt) of cumulative waste, which will increase to 340 kt by 2030.

- ➔ This volume will increase 32 times by 2050 resulting in about 19000 kt of cumulative waste.

**States Contribution:** Around 67 percent of this waste is expected to be generated in five states: Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

- ➔ Rajasthan will account for 24 percent of the waste generated by 2030, followed by Gujarat accounting for 16 percent, and Karnataka accounting for 12 percent.



### India's Solar Capacity

- Globally, India has emerged as a significant player in renewable energy, ranking fourth in total renewable power capacity additions and fifth in solar power capacity.
- From 2014 to 2024, India also saw an expansion in its installed capacity for energy generation, increasing from 3.74 GW in FY 2014-15 to 74.31 GW in FY 2023-24 (till January).
- It is slated to jump to 292 GW of installed solar capacity by 2030.

## Solar Waste

Solar waste refers to the waste generated during the manufacturing of solar modules and waste from the field (project lifetime).

Manufacturing involves two streams of waste, including the scrap that's produced and the waste generated from PV modules failing quality tests.

### Waste from the field involves three streams of waste.

- waste from the field involves three streams of waste.
- Waste generated during transporting and handling — the damaged modules are considered as waste.
- Waste produced due to the damage incurred by solar modules during their lifetime. □ When the modules reach their end-of-life and are not usable anymore.

The **study only focused on waste from the field (project lifetime)** category and excluded waste generated during manufacturing.

## Key Recommendations

The policymakers should maintain a **comprehensive database** of the installed solar capacity, which would help in estimating solar waste in the following years.

The MoEFCC should **issue guidelines for collecting and storing solar waste**.

- ➔ Furthermore, it should also promote safe and efficient processing of stored waste.
- Solar cell and module producers should start developing waste collection and storage centres to adhere to the responsibilities assigned in the E-waste Management Rules 2022.
- Policymakers should incentivise recyclers, and push stakeholders to effectively manage the growing solar waste.

## Solar Waste Recycling Methods:

**Conventional Recycling or Bulk Material Recycling:** It involves mechanical processes like crushing, sieving, and shearing of the waste.

- ➔ **While the majority of recycled** materials consist of glass, aluminium, and copper, more valuable materials like silver and silicon cannot be recovered through this method.
- ➔ **High Value Recycling:** It involves the use of a combination of mechanical, chemical, and thermal processes to recycle the modules. Unlike conventional recycling, this method can recover silver and silicon also with the help of chemical processes.



## INDIA'S SOLAR WASTE MANAGEMENT POLICY

- The management of waste generated from solar PV modules, panels and cells is part of the **Electronic Waste Management Rules 2022**.
- The rules mandate solar PV module and cell producers to store the waste generated from **solar PV modules and cells up to 2034 – 2035** as per the guidelines laid down by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**.
- The rules also mandate the filing of annual returns on the e-waste management portal up to 2034 – 2035.
- Every recycler of solar PV modules and cells shall be mandated for the recovery of materials as laid down by the CPCB.

## ASBESTOS

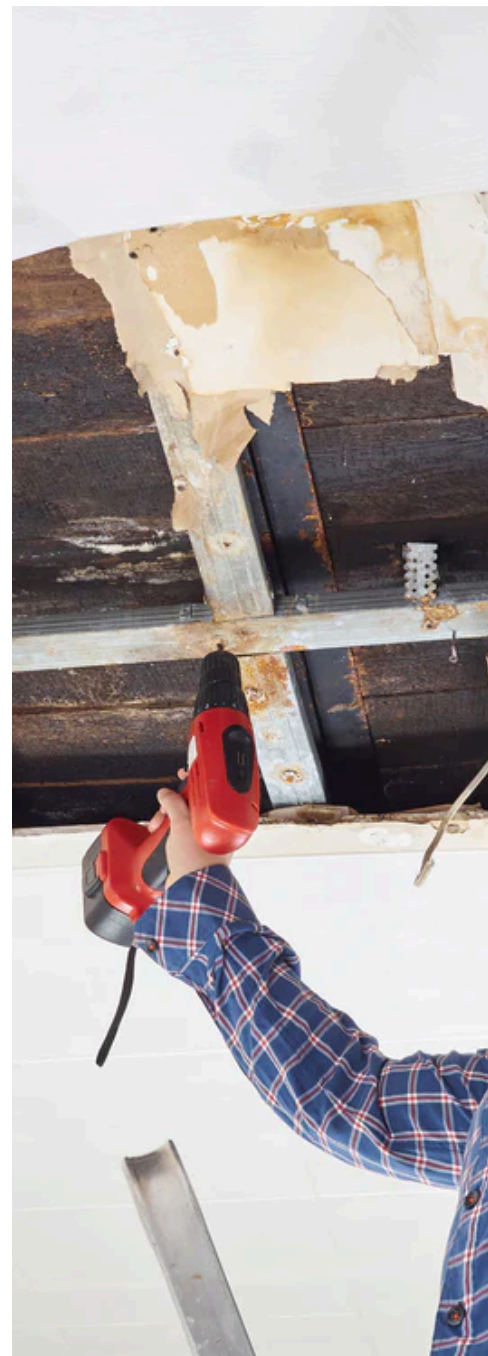
Recently, the United States' Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a comprehensive ban on all forms of the deadly carcinogen asbestos.

### About:

- It is a naturally occurring mineral, widely used in various industries due to its heat and chemical resistance, tensile strength, and insulating properties.
- However, it is a known carcinogen, and exposure to it can lead to serious health issues, including lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis, and it is linked to more than 40,000 deaths in the US each year.
- Currently, more than 65 countries, including the US, have imposed bans or severe restrictions on its use. It continues to be used in many other countries, including India.

### Status in India:

- India banned asbestos mining in 1993. However, there is no law in the country that prevents its use in construction, import, or trade.
- As a result, asbestos is widely used in industries from cement to brake parts.
  - ➡ In fact, India accounted for nearly half of global asbestos imports in 2021.



## GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

The Supreme Court constituted an expert committee to balance the conservation and protection of the Great Indian Bustard bird population.

### About:

**Scientific Name:** *Ardeotis nigriceps*

**Appearance:** The great Indian bustard can easily be distinguished by its black crown on the forehead contrasting with the pale neck and head.

- ➔ The body is brownish and the wings are marked with black, brown and grey.

**Diet:** They feed on grass seeds, insects like grasshoppers and beetles, and sometimes even small rodents and reptiles.

**Habitat:** Flat open landscapes with minimal visual obstruction and disturbance, therefore adapt well in grasslands.

**Distribution:** Its population is confined mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat. Small population occur in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

### Threats:

- Poaching outside Protected Areas,
- collisions with high tension electric wires, fast moving vehicles and free-ranging dogs in villages,
- habitat loss

### Conservation Status:

- Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972,
- Appendix I of CITES,
- Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

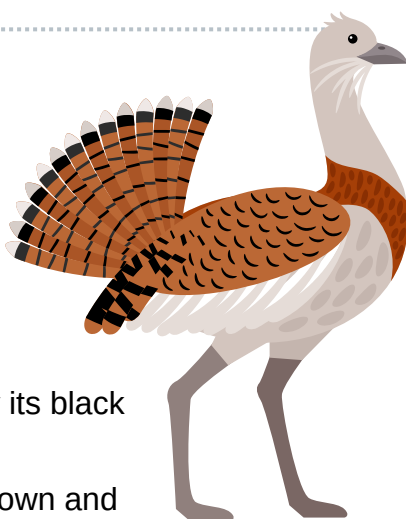
## ARSENIC CONTAMINATION

A new study by the University of Sheffield's Institute for sustainable food underlines the risk of using water contaminated with arsenic to cook rice.

### Major highlights of the study:

The study pointed out that some countries still follow the outdated WHO standard of 50 parts per billion as a safe threshold for arsenic in drinking water.

- ➔ Also 32 percent of the global population living in low and middle-income countries do not adhere to the World Health Organization's current recommended limits.



- India is among 40 other countries that adopted 10 parts per billion as its standard. However, 19 other countries have no evidence of any regulations.
- Rice contains more inorganic arsenic in comparison to other cereals.
  - ➔ The Inorganic Arsenic (iAs) is a Group 1 carcinogen according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a part of WHO.

### **Arsenic (As):**

- Arsenic is a naturally occurring trace element that occurs in many minerals, usually in combination with sulfur and metals.
- It is highly toxic in its inorganic form

### **Effects on Health**

- Long-term exposure to arsenic can cause cancer, skin lesions, cardiovascular disease, diabetes etc.
- In-utero and early childhood exposure have been linked to negative impacts on cognitive development and increased deaths in young adults.
- In Taiwan, arsenic exposure has been linked to “**Blackfoot disease**”. It is a severe disease of blood vessels leading to gangrene.

### **Permissible Limits**

- The World Health Organization's provisional guideline value for arsenic in drinking water is 0.01 mg/l (10 µg/l).
- In India the permissible limit of arsenic in the absence of an alternative source is 0.05 mg/l (50 µg/l).

### **Status of Arsenic Contamination in India**

- The occurrence of Arsenic in groundwater was first reported in 1980 in West Bengal in India.
- Maximum number of the arsenic-affected habitations are in the Ganga and Brahmaputra alluvial plains

## **CURBING BLACK CARBON EMISSIONS**

There is growing concern about the black carbon emission in India, and it needs to be curbed.



### **About**

It is a dark sooty material emitted alongside other pollutants when biomass and fossil fuels are not fully combusted, contributes to global warming and poses severe risks.

- ➔ It is part of fine particulate air pollution (PM<sub>2.5</sub>).

It has been found to have a direct link between exposure to black carbon and a higher risk of heart disease, birth complications, and premature death.

### Major Sources of Black Carbon:

Most black carbon emissions in India arise from burning biomass, such as cow dung or straw, in traditional cookstoves.

According to a 2016 study, the residential sector contributes 47% of India's total black carbon emissions.

- ➡ Industries contribute a further 22%, diesel vehicles 17%, open burning 12%, and other sources 2%.

### Related Concerns:

**Health Risks:** Exposure to black carbon has been linked to a higher risk of heart disease, birth complications, and premature death.

- ➡ Recent estimates have indicated that more than 6.1 lakh deaths per year from indoor exposure to air pollution.

**Environmental Impact:** Black carbon contributes to global warming and poses severe risks to the environment.

- It absorbs solar energy, warms the atmosphere, and when it falls to earth with precipitation, it darkens the surface of snow and ice, reducing their albedo (the reflecting power of a surface), warming the snow, and hastening melting.
- Black carbon deposition on snow contributes up to 39% of total glacier melting and 10% of glacier mass loss due to reduced precipitation as observed over the Tibetan Plateau.
- It disrupts hydrological cycles over monsoon systems and accelerates regional warming, particularly over the cryosphere.
- It fuels the feedback loop driving Arctic amplification, which has broader effects disrupting the Indian monsoon.

**Climate Change:** Black carbon is the second largest contributor to climate change after CO<sub>2</sub>.

- ➡ Unlike CO<sub>2</sub>, which can stay in the atmosphere for hundreds to thousands of years, black carbon, because it is a particle, remains in the atmosphere only for days to weeks before it returns to earth with rain or snow.

**Air Quality:** Black carbon affects air quality, visibility, and harms ecosystems. It also reduces agricultural productivity.

**Socio-Economic Impact:** The health and environmental impacts of black carbon can have significant socio-economic implications, including increased healthcare costs and reduced agricultural yields.

### Government Initiatives to Curb Black Carbon:

**Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY):** It provides free liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) connections to households below the poverty line.

- The primary objective of PMUY is to make clean cooking fuel available to rural and poor households and reduce their dependence on traditional cooking fuels.
- It has thus been able to play a vital role in reducing black carbon emissions, as it offers a cleaner alternative to traditional fuel consumption.



**Introduction of Cleaner/Alternate Fuels:** The government has introduced cleaner/alternate fuels like gaseous fuel (CNG, LPG etc.), ethanol blending.

**Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT):** It has been launched to set up 5000 Compressed Biogas (CBG) production plants and make CBG available in the market for use.

**Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization:** It is the Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for in-situ management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi', agricultural machines and equipment for in-situ crop residue management are promoted with 50% subsidy to the individual farmers and 80% subsidy for the establishment of Custom Hiring Centres.

**National Clean Air Programme:** The Union Government is implementing the National Clean Air Programme as a longterm, time-bound, national-level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner with targets to achieve 40% reduction in particulate matter concentrations by 2025-26.

**Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME):** FAME phase-2 scheme has been rolled out to promote the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles in the country.

## CARBON CREDIT SCHEME OF AUSTRALIA

A recent study found that a world-leading reforestation project under the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme had been an underperforming 'catastrophe'.



### About

- It is a key part of the Australian carbon market.
- It encourages individuals and businesses to undertake projects that reduce emissions or store carbon.
  - ➡ Individuals, sole traders, companies, local, state and territory government bodies, and trusts can participate in it.
- It can be achieved by using new technology, upgrading equipment, changing business practices to improve productivity or energy use, and changing the way vegetation is managed.

### How does it work?

- The participants run projects that reduce or avoid greenhouse emissions (emissions avoidance) or remove and store carbon from the atmosphere (sequestration).
- Participants can earn one ACCU for every tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (t CO<sub>2</sub> -e) emissions their project stores or avoids.

- These ACCUs can then be sold on the secondary market or to the Australian Government by entering a carbon abatement contract.

### Criticisms and Controversies

- The research found that across almost 80% of native forest in the deserts of Australia, forest growth was either stagnant or that woodlands were shrinking.
- On the other hand, it argued that Australia had used these projects to bank millions of tonnes in questionable carbon credits.

## NUCLEAR ENERGY AS CLIMATE SOLUTION

Recently, it was seen as a series of efforts to pitch nuclear energy as an important solution to global problems like climate change and energy security.

### About

**Low-Carbon Energy Source:** Nuclear power plants produce no greenhouse gas emissions during operation, and it remains the second largest source of low carbon electricity globally and has historically avoided around 70 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide.



- ➔ According to IAEA, the entire life cycle of nuclear power plants is considered – accounting for activities like reactor construction, uranium mining and enrichment, waste disposal and storage, and other processes – greenhouse gas emissions are only in the range of 5 to 6 grams per kilowatt hour.
- ➔ It is more than 100 times lower than coal-fired electricity, and about half the average of solar and wind generation.

### Other Benefits

**Reliable and Scalable:** Nuclear energy can be deployed on a large scale and is a reliable source of power, providing clean, consistent, and affordable electricity.

**Substitute for Fossil Fuels:** Nuclear energy can directly replace fossil fuel plants, avoiding the combustion of fossil fuels for electricity generation.

**Supports Economic Development:** The use of nuclear energy can support global economic development by supplying the large quantities of electricity needed.

**Contributes to Energy Security:** Nuclear power can contribute to energy security by providing a stable source of energy.

**Potential for Heat Applications:** Nuclear power plants have the potential to utilise more nuclear capacity for heat applications for future decarbonization efforts.

**Supports Decarbonization:** Nuclear power can play a key role in the transition to a clean energy future and in achieving carbon neutrality

### Global Efforts:

**Paris Agreement (2015):** It is to keep the rise in global temperatures to well below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels, and with the aim to limit the rise to 1.5°C.

- ➔ According to IAEA, the entire life cycle of nuclear power plants is considered – accounting for activities like reactor construction, uranium mining and enrichment, waste disposal and storage, and other processes – greenhouse gas emissions are only in the range of 5 to 6 grams per kilowatt hour.
- ➔ It is more than 100 times lower than coal-fired electricity, and about half the average of solar and wind generation.
- **Role of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):** It has launched an 'Atoms4Climate' initiative to talk about this and has begun an engagement with the climate community, especially at the COPs or the annual year-ending climate conferences.
- At COP28 in Dubai, about 20 countries pledged to work towards tripling global nuclear energy installed capacity by 2050

### THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

- India has 23 operable nuclear reactors, with a combined net capacity of 7.4 GWe.
  - ➔ In 2022, nuclear power generated 3.1% of the country's electricity.
- India in 2010 set an ambitious target to have 14.6 GWe nuclear capacity online by 2024.
  - ➔ At the end of October 2023 eight reactors were under construction in India, with a combined capacity of 6.7 GWe.
- India has a largely indigenous nuclear power program and is committed to growing its nuclear power capacity as part of its massive infrastructure development program.
  - ➔ India's long-term strategy to transition to a 'low emissions' pathway involves more nuclear power.

### Future Plans

- India is on the course to increase nuclear energy production capacity to 22,480 MW by 2031.
- It aims to produce more than three times nuclear power from the current level of 6,780 MW in the coming decade.

### Challenges of Nuclear Energy and Climate Solutions:

**Safety Concerns:** Incidents like the Fukushima accident in 2011 have raised safety concerns about nuclear power.

- ➔ The ongoing crisis at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant in Ukraine, the first nuclear facility to have been caught in a dangerous armed conflict, has also been a source of grave concern.

**Waste Disposal:** The long-term storage and disposal of radioactive waste is a complex issue that needs to be addressed.

- ➔ In 2021, Japan announced plans to release over one million tonnes of contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea over the next 30 years.

**High Initial Costs:** The initial costs of setting up a nuclear power plant are high.

- ➔ It includes costs for safety measures, which can make nuclear energy seem less economically viable compared to other energy sources.

**Public Perception:** There is often public opposition to nuclear power due to fears of radiation and nuclear accidents.

- ➔ It can lead to challenges in constructing new plants.

**Regulatory Hurdles:** Nuclear energy is heavily regulated, which can slow down the development and deployment of new reactors.

**Non-Proliferation Concerns:** There are concerns about the potential misuse of nuclear technology and materials for military purposes.

## GRAY WHALE

Gray whales were recently seen in the United States' New England region.



### About:

- It was last seen in the Atlantic Ocean in the 18th century.
- It is a primarily bottom feeders and are thus restricted to shallow continental shelf waters for feeding
- **Habitat and Distribution:** It is now regularly found in the North Pacific and adjacent seas.
  - ➔ The greatest numbers occur along the west coast of Canada, the United States and Mexico, but small numbers are observed every year in near-shore waters of eastern Russia and Japan.
- **IUCN Red List status:** Least Concern.



## PEBANISTA YACURUNA

**Recently, Scientists have discovered the fossilised skull of a giant river dolphin.**

### About:

- It was named Pebanista yacuruna after the Yacuruna, a Peruvian mythological being that lived in deep water.
- It belongs to the Platanistoidea, a group of dolphins that were common in the world's oceans between 24 and 16 million years ago
- It was the largest dolphin ever known to have lived in the waters of South America, measuring 3 to 3.5 meters long.
- Its closest living relatives are found today in South Asia.
  - ➔ The Ganges river dolphin (Platanista gangetica) is found in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.
  - ➔ The Indus river dolphin (Platanista minor) is found in the Indus and its tributaries in Pakistan and the Beas (also an Indus tributary) in India.

## SOCIETY

### PM-JANMAN

Implementation of PM Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN) has been slowing down due to simultaneous data collection of beneficiaries under the scheme.



### About:

- Implementation of PM Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN) has been slowing down due to simultaneous data collection of beneficiaries under the scheme.
- The Mission would provide **PVTG families and communities (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups)** essential services.
- The 11 crucial interventions including Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes **through 9 Ministries**, including the Ministry of Tribal Affairs include:

- Provision of pucca houses;
- Connecting roads;
- Providing Piped water supply;
- Ensuring Community water supply;
- Providing Mobile medical units with medicine cost;
- Construction of hostels;
- Providing Vocational education and skilling;
- Construction of Anganwadi Centres;
- Construction of Multipurpose Centres (MPC).

## PVTGs

- In 1973, the **Dhebar Commission** set up a separate category for **Primitive Tribal Groups** (PTGs).
- PVTGs are a more vulnerable group among tribal groups in India.
  - ➔ These groups have primitive traits, geographical isolation, low literacy, zero to negative population growth rate and backwardness.
  - ➔ Moreover, they are largely dependent upon hunting for food and a pre-agriculture level of technology.

**Population:** The 2011 census of India had put the Vulnerable Tribal Population at 10.45 Crore in 75 communities spread across 18 States and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands,

- ➔ Odisha has the largest population of PVTGs followed by Madhya Pradesh.

## About

- GII is a composite metric of gender inequality using three dimensions:
  - ➔ reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.

A low GII value indicates low inequality between women and men, and vice-versa.

## Findings

- Denmark topped the index followed by Norway, Switzerland and Sweden.
- India has registered a significant jump of 14 ranks in Gender Inequality Index 2022
  - ➔ It ranked 108 out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437 in GII 2022.
  - ➔ In 2022, India saw improvements across all HDI indicators — life expectancy, education, and gross national income (GNI) per capita and life expectancy rose from 67.2 to 67.7 years, expected years of schooling reached 12.6, mean years of schooling increased to 6.57 and GNI per capita saw an increase from USD 6,542 to USD 6,951.

## India's Progressive Improvement

- Over the last 10 years, India's rank in GII has become consistently better, indicating progressive improvement in achieving gender equality in the country.
- India's adolescent birth rate in 2022 was 16.3 (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19), an improvement from 17.1 in 2021.

- However, the country still has one of the largest gender gaps in its labour force participation rate — a 47.8% difference between women (28.3 %) and men (76.1 %).

#### **Major Initiatives Helping India in Improvement:**

- **Code on Social Security, 2020:** Provisions for women's social security across various aspects.
- **Mission Shakti:** Self-help mission for empowering women through promotion of Women Self Help Group
- **Others:** Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, reservations and legislative policies etc.

## **LISUS AND SINGPHOS COMMUNITIES**

It is observed that Children of the Lisu and Singpho communities are named according to the order they are born in the family, incorporating numbers into their names.



#### **About**

- **Lisus:** The Lisus belong to the Tibeto-Burman family and inhabit the contiguous hilly regions of Arunachal Pradesh, China, Myanmar, and Thailand.
  - ➡ They number about 5,000 in India.
  - ➡ Lisu boys and girls have separate sets of numbered names to indicate the order of their birth. The eldest girl in a family has Ana in her name, and the ones after her are called Angyi, Acha, Ado, Achhi, Ata, Akhu, Agu, Aju, and Apshi, for a tenth daughter
- **Singphos:** It is an ethnic group inhabiting 27 countries, including China's Yunnan province.
- In India, they mostly inhabit the Changlang and Namsai districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and the Tinsukia district of Assam.

## **YAOUNDE DECLARATION**

Health ministers of 11 African countries signed the Yaounde Declaration to end malaria deaths.

#### **About:**

- Globally, the number of malaria cases in 2022 surged significantly compared to the pre-COVID-19 era.

- Africa remains the epicentre of the malaria crisis, bearing an immense burden.
  - ➔ It accounts for 94 percent of all global malaria cases and a staggering 95 percent of global malaria-related deaths.
- The 11 African countries in the Yaoundé conference are— Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania.

### **Malaria**

- Malaria is an acute febrile illness caused by Plasmodium parasites, which are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. It is preventable and curable.
- Malaria is not contagious and cannot spread from one person to another; the disease is transmitted through the bites of female Anopheles mosquitoes.

## **NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF SNAKEBITE ENVENOMING (NAP-SE)**



**Union Health Ministry launched a National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAP-SE) in India.**

### **Snakebite Envenoming**

- The snakebite envenoming (poisoning from snake bites) was classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a highpriority neglected tropical disease.
- An estimated 1.8 – 2.7 million people worldwide are envenomed annually.

### **Snake Bites in India**

- In India, around 90% of snake bites are caused by the 'big four' among the crawlers – common krait, Indian cobra, Russell's viper and saw scaled viper.
- In India, around 50,000 deaths occur of an estimated 3-4 million snake bites annually which accounts for half of all snakebite deaths globally.
- India accounts for almost 50% of global snakebite deaths.



## About NAPSE

- **Vision:** “To prevent and control snakebite envenoming in order to halve the numbers of deaths and cases of disability that it causes by 2030”
- It aims at systematic reduction of snakebite envenoming risk through sustained availability of anti-snake venom, capacity building, referral mechanism and public education.
- NAPSE provides a broad framework for states to develop their own action plan for management, prevention and control of snakebites through the ‘One Health’ approach.

## ONE HEALTH APPROACH

- One Health is an approach that recognizes that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment.
- It brings different sectors together to solve the health, productivity, and conservation challenges.

## Strategy for Developing Anti-Venom

**Antivenoms:** Antivenoms are purified antibodies against venoms or venom components. Antivenoms are produced from antibodies made by animals to injected venoms. Antivenom is the only definitive treatment for effective bites by venomous snakes.

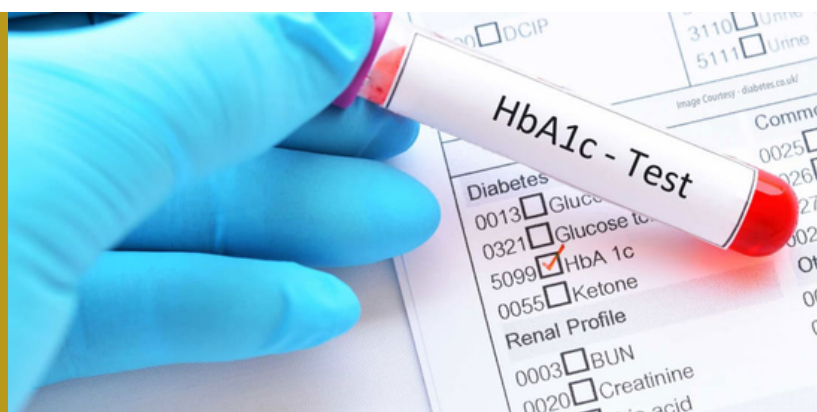
- They are included in the WHO Essential Medicines List.

**Antivenoms making process:** To make life-saving antivenoms, scientists enlist the help of horses that live on specialized ranches.

- The animals are injected with a tiny, harmless dose of venom, which causes their immune systems to produce antibody proteins that attack and disable the venom toxins.
- Then the antibodies are collected and used to treat people who have been bitten or stung.

## HBA1C TEST

To diagnose pre-diabetes and diabetes (both type 1 and type 2), the hemoglobin A1C (HbA1C) test, also known as the glycated hemoglobin or glycosylated hemoglobin test is used.



## Background

- India accounts for 17% of all diabetes patients in the world.
- Over 35% of Indians suffer from hypertension and nearly 40% from abdominal obesity, both of which are risk factors for diabetes.

## How does the test work?

- Sugar or glucose enters the bloodstream from the food it attaches to the hemoglobin in the red blood cells.

- **Hemoglobin is a protein that** transports oxygen to all the cells of your body.
- Everybody has some sugar attached to their hemoglobin. Those with pre-diabetes and diabetes, however, have more.
- The HbA1C test measures the percentage of the red blood cells that have sugar-coated, or glycated, hemoglobin.

## Test Results

- The HbA1C levels are provided as either a percentage or in mmol/mol (which stands for millimoles per mole).
- An HbA1C below 5.7% is considered normal; between 5.7 and 6.4% may indicate you are pre-diabetic; and 6.5% or higher can indicate diabetes.

## TYPES OF DIABETES

**Type 1 diabetes:** The body does not make insulin since the immune system attacks and destroys the cells in your pancreas that make insulin.

- ➔ Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and young adults, although it can appear at any age.
- ➔ People with type 1 diabetes need to take insulin every day to stay alive.

**Type 2 diabetes:** The body does not make or use insulin well.

- ➔ One can develop type 2 diabetes at any age, even during childhood. However, this type of diabetes occurs most often in middle-aged and older people.
- ➔ Type 2 is the most common type of diabetes.

## LACK OF REGULATIONS & SECURITY BENEFITS FOR GIGS: STUDY



A study conducted by the People's Association in Grassroots Action and Movements recently highlighted the plight of more than 10,000 Indian cab drivers, gig and platform workers.

## Major Highlights of the Study

**Long working hours:** Almost a third of app-based cab drivers work for over 14 hours a day, while more than 83% work more than 10 hours and 60% work over 12 hours.

**Reflects caste equations:** It noted that social disparities make the situation worse, with over 60% of the drivers from Scheduled Castes and Tribes working for over 14 hours a day, while only 16% from the unreserved category work such long hours.

**Low pay:** The study report says that over 43% of participants in the study earn less than ₹500 a day or ₹15,000 a month, after deducting all their costs.

- ➔ The study found that 34% of app-based delivery persons earn less than ₹10,000 a month, while 78% of them are spending over 10 hours each day at work

**Demographic trends:** Out of 5302 cab drivers and 5028 delivery persons across eight cities participated in a 50-question survey, 78% of the respondents were in the age group of 21 to 40 years

**Risky business:** Due to the demanding work hours, the study found that drivers are physically exhausted, and exposed to an increased risk of road traffic accidents, especially due to the '10-minute delivery at the doorstep' policy of certain e-commerce platforms.

- ➔ The report said that 86% of delivery persons found such policies "completely unacceptable". The lack of social and job security creates additional stress and leads to potential health issues.

**Expenses exceed earnings:** While 72% of the cab drivers said that they face difficulty in managing expenses, 76% of the delivery persons are struggling to make their ends meet.

- ➔ 68% of cab drivers' responses even show that their overall expenses exceed their earnings, which indicate how a vast number of app-based workers could be in debt-like situations.

**Huge deductions:** 35% of the respondents reported the companies are deducting between 31-40% of commission rate per ride, while the officially claimed figure by the companies themselves is 20%.

**Customer misbehavior:** Customer behaviour affects a significant majority (72%) of drivers in a negative way, while 68% of delivery persons are reportedly affected by it negatively," the report said.

**Inability to take leaves:** It added that 41% of the drivers said they are unable to take even a single day off in a week; 48% of delivery persons too reported their inability to take a weekly off.

**Issue of ID deactivation:** A glaring 83% of the drivers reported that the issue of ID blocking affects them negatively, 47% stated that this issue extremely affects them. In the case of delivery persons, this percentage is even higher at 87%.

- ➔ 68% of cab drivers' responses even show that their overall expenses exceed their earnings, which indicate how a vast number of app-based workers could be in debt-like situations.

## GIG ECONOMY

**Issue of ID deactivation:** A glaring 83% of the drivers reported that the issue of ID blocking affects them negatively, 47% stated that this issue extremely affects them. In the case of delivery persons, this percentage is even higher at 87%.

**Gig workers:** NITI Aayog defines 'gig workers' as those engaged in work outside of the traditional employer-employee arrangement.



**NITI Aayog's report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy' defines a gig worker as**

- "someone who engages in income-earning activities outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship, as well as in the informal sector".
- Additionally, it defines those working with platforms such as Ola, Uber, Dunzo, Swiggy, Zomato and Urban Company as platform workers.

## SIGNIFICANCE:

- The gig economy is based on temporary, or freelance jobs, often involving connecting with clients or customers through an online platform.
- The gig economy can benefit workers, businesses, and consumers by making work more adaptable to the needs of the moment and the demand for flexible lifestyles.
- **Time flexibility:** Workers operating in the gig economy are allowed to work any of the hours they desire.
- **Income flexibility:** It is an increasingly attractive market due to the sheer flexibility that allows individuals to earn extra income.
- **Size of the sector:** As per the report, 47 percent of gig work currently is in medium-skilled jobs, 22 percent in high-skilled, and about 31 percent in low-skilled jobs.
  - ➔ Drivers and sales persons accounted for more than 52 percent of the gig workers in 2019-20.
  - ➔ When workers are classified by industries, the report said that 26.6 lakh gig workers were involved in retail trade and sales in FY20, and about 13 lakh were in the transportation sector.
  - ➔ Roughly 6.2 lakh persons were in manufacturing and another 6.3 lakh in the finance and insurance activities.



## SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Social security measures:** Authors of the study recommended stronger social security for app-based workers.

- ➔ Social security measures are required like paid sick leave, health access and insurance, retirement/pension plans and other contingency benefits.

**Oversight mechanism:** They called on the government to exercise oversight on the fairness of algorithms and mechanisms used by platforms to monitor such workers.

**Skilling:** It is recommended that skill gaps be bridged by carrying out assessments periodically and partnering with platform businesses for onboarding skilled women and persons with disabilities.

- ➔ It is also suggested to make aggregate data public to enable decision-making.

**Women in the gig economy:** Companies should carry out gender sensitization and accessibility awareness programmes for workers and their families, particularly to promote the rights of women and persons with disabilities.

## INDIA'S DISABILITY LAW

Central Public Works Department (CPWD) recently asked its regional offices to ensure that “all public buildings are accessible to people with disabilities”.



**India's Disability Law:** Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016

- **The RPWD Act, 2016 provides that** “the appropriate Government shall ensure that the PWD enjoys the right to equality, life with dignity, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others.”
- Act replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- It fulfills the obligations to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.
  - ➔ The convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006, and entered into force in 2008. India ratified the convention in 2007.

- Disability has been defined based on an **evolving and dynamic concept**.
- **The types of disabilities covered are 21** and the Central Government has the power to add more types of disabilities.
- The Act provides for **penalties for offences** committed against persons with disabilities and also violation of the provisions of the new law.
- **Special Courts** will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning the violation of the rights of PwDs.

### PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)

- As per United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities PWDs include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- As per National Family Health Survey, India's population of people with a disability has reduced to 1% between 2019 and 2021, from the 2.2% (26.8 million) estimated by the Indian census in 2011.
  - ➔ As per 2011 population census, 20% of persons with disabilities in India have a disability in movement, 19% have a disability in seeing, etc.

### Issues / Challenges:

- **Social Stigma:** The word disability is being seen as a social stigma, according to which parents feel ashamed of their children, and in fear most of them feel uncomfortable in public upfront.
- **Institutional Failures:** Indian education system and Government institutions both are failing in making arrangements for the welfare for disabled persons to an extent. There should be proper seats for disabled persons at classrooms as well as at the exam centres.
- **Illiteracy** is particularly prevalent among disabled people and constitutes a double disadvantage. In addition to being disabled, they are isolated by illiteracy.
- **Unemployment:** Disabled persons are the ones who are scapegoats in getting fired at tenure of recessions. They are first to be discharged from their services when cost cutting methods are adopted by the companies.
- **Poor implementation:** According to PwDs and activists, the 2016 guidelines were never implemented, and the 2021 guidelines are being treated similarly. No state has implemented the harmonized guidelines released in 2021, in their building by-laws.
- **Lack of awareness and accountability:** The implementation of accessibility standards has been haphazard. There is no consistency, there is a lack of budgetary allocation, and no monitoring and sensitisation.

### Measures Needed:

**Change in approach from 'For' PWD to 'By' PWD:** "For" implies actions or initiatives done on behalf of persons with disabilities, while "by" signifies involvement and participation of persons with disabilities in the process.

**Formulation of Comprehensive Inclusive Policies:** With focus on addressing unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities that encompasses social, economic, and gender dimensions.

- ➔ The inclusion of persons with disabilities into the economy can help boost global GDP between 3% to 7%, as per the study by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

**Collaborative Process with PWDs and private sector:** Where persons with disabilities are not passive recipients but active contributors and the private sector as a key player in promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

- ➔ Opportunities Cafe in Kolkata is run by 16 young adults who have intellectual disabilities, who are trained in hospitality by the cafe itself.

**Attitudinal Shift and Social Justice:** The SPARK project by ILO with Women's Development Corporation in Maharashtra has contributed to an attitudinal shift towards PWDs by putting them in the lead and trained as Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs).

**Education system:** There should be reforms in Education system to build a better society through which disabled persons can face the challenges of life with courage and conscience.

**PWD-friendly infrastructure:** Universal accessibility should be incorporated in the site planning and detailed working drawings of public as well as private projects.

**Job-oriented training:** Job-oriented training is the need of the time. There should be well trained professionals for training who can ignite the minds and train them to cater the needs of the service industry.

**Vocal and linguistic teachers should be recruited for the overall well being of the people.**

### Government Schemes and Initiatives:

**The Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021:**

These guidelines are an enabling step towards strengthening the national mandate of an Accessible India and a self-reliant India with a vision for a universally accessible and inclusive India.

**Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities:** Understanding the special needs of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), the government carved out a special department under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

**'Divyang':** With a view to change the societal attitude towards PwDs and to encourage them to participate in the society without any feeling of inferiority, the Prime Minister coined the term 'divyang' to denote PwDs.

**Accessible India Campaign:** The campaign was launched in 2015 to create a barrier-free environment for divyangjan.

The project envisages creation of ramps, help desks and accessible toilets in public places.

**Sugamya Bharat:** To understand the problems of divyangjan, the Government has launched the Sugamya Bharat app. The app lets people provide feedback on accessibility issues for PwDs.

**Unique Disability Identity Project (UDID):** The Project is aimed at easing disability certification, while weeding out fraud in the process.

**Divya Kala Shakti:** It is a scheme of the Government of India to encourage divyangjan to participate in cultural activities.

**Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)**

**Scheme:** Under this programme, the Government provides aids and assistive devices to PwDs.

**Conclusion:**

- PwDs constitute one of the most vulnerable sections of the country. They also can be a source of untapped potential, which, if harnessed well, may increase the economic growth and development in the country.
- The need of the hour is proper sensitization of the community towards the issues faced by PwDs, as well as to remove the social stigma attached to their integration into the society.

**LANCET STUDY: RISE IN OBESITY RATES**

According to a new global analysis, published by the journal The Lancet, obesity rates are going up across the world.

**About**

Obesity, as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), is an abnormal or excessive accumulation of fat that poses health risks.

A Body Mass Index (BMI) over 25 is considered overweight and over 30 is obese.

- ➔ The BMI is a ratio of a person's weight to their height measured in kilograms per meter square of height.

Obesity has become the most common form of malnutrition in most countries.

**Global Scenario:**

- The total number of children, adolescents, and adults worldwide living with obesity has surpassed one billion.
- In total, 159 million children and adolescents, and 879 million adults were obese in 2022.

**Indian Scenario:**

- The obesity rate increased from 0.1% in 1990 to 3.1% in 2022 for girls, and 0.1% to 3.9%, for boys.
- In the prevalence of obesity category for girls and boys, India ranked 174th in the world in 2022.



- According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-2021, about 6.4 percent of women and 4.0 per cent of men aged 15-49 are obese.

### Causes of Obesity:

**Poor Diet:** Consuming high-calorie, low-nutrient foods such as fast food, sugary drinks, and processed snacks can contribute to weight gain. Diets high in refined carbohydrates and fats can lead to overeating and weight gain.

**Lack of Physical Activity:** Sedentary lifestyles, characterized by little to no physical activity, can contribute to obesity.

**Medications:** Certain medications, such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, corticosteroids, and some medications used to treat epilepsy and diabetes, can cause weight gain as a side effect.

**Sleep:** Poor sleep patterns or sleep disorders like sleep apnea can disrupt hormonal balance and increase appetite, leading to weight gain.

**Genetics:** Genetics play a role in determining an individual's susceptibility to obesity. Some people may have a genetic predisposition that makes them more likely to gain weight.

## DROP IN FERTILITY RATE IN INDIA

Recently, a research paper from Lancet has released the forecast of fertility rate in India.



### Major Findings:

**Drop in Fertility Rate:** India's fertility rate has dropped from nearly 6.2 in 1950 to just under 2 in 2021. It is projected to dip further to 1.29 in 2050 and 1.04 in 2100.

- **Depleting Working Population:** India's total fertility rate (TFR) — the average number of children born per woman — is dipping irreversibly to 1.29, far lower than the replacement rate of 2.1.
- This means a rapidly depleting working age population.
- **Increase in Senior Citizens:** By 2050, one in five Indians will be a senior citizen while there will be fewer younger people to take care of them.

### Reasons for Decline in Fertility Rate in India:

**Government Policy:** Post-independence, there was a need to restrict the population. So the Family Welfare Programme were intended to convince people to have no more than two children.

➡ Slowly that behaviour change started showing up.

**Decline in Infant Mortality:** Due to various maternal and child health-related programmes and successful immunisation infant mortality declined in India substantially and small families became the norm.

**Rise in Female Literacy:** Due to the rise of female literacy and women's participation in the workforce the career consciousness, financial returns and economic independence have increased in India which means that women are reconsidering their options of having a second child.

**Economic Factors:** Economic factors such as rising living costs, the need for dual incomes to support households, and the desire for better standards of living have contributed to smaller family sizes.

### Government Initiatives:

**National Health Mission (NHM):** National Health Mission (NHM): It is aimed at strengthening healthcare systems, including maternal and child health services.

- ➔ NHM provides essential healthcare services, including antenatal care, postnatal care, family planning services, and child immunization, which indirectly influence fertility rates by promoting maternal and child health.

**Family Planning Program:** India has a long-standing family planning program aimed at promoting contraceptive use and reproductive health awareness.

- ➔ The program provides various contraceptive methods free of cost or at subsidized rates, conducts family planning counseling, and promotes awareness about the importance of family planning.

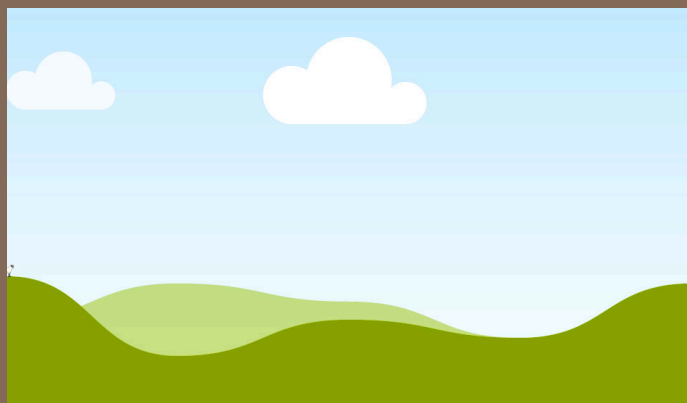
**Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Under the scheme financial assistance is provided to pregnant and lactating mothers for their first live birth.

- ➔ The scheme aims to improve maternal and child health outcomes and indirectly supports fertility by promoting safe motherhood.

## CULTURE & HISTORY

### LAHORE RESOLUTION

It is observed that the Pakistan National Day, the day the Lahore Resolution was adopted by the Muslim League to be celebrated in New Delhi.



### About the Lahore Resolution (aka the Pakistan Resolution):

- ➔ Adopted by the All-India Muslim League during a threeday session in Lahore from March 22 to March 24, 1940.

Formally presented as a political statement, it holds significant historical importance in Pakistan.

**Authorship:** Crafted and prepared by Muhammad Zafarullah Khan.

**Call for Independence:** Advocated for the creation of an independent state for India's Muslim population.

### Key Principles

- Stressed the necessity for any constitutional plan to adhere to specific principles.
- Proposed the formation of geographically contiguous units, with territorial adjustments if needed.
- Emphasized the grouping of regions where Muslims were numerically dominant, such as the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India.
- Envisioned these areas as "**Independent States**," with constituent units enjoying autonomy and sovereignty.

### Omission of 'Pakistan':

- Notably, the term 'Pakistan' is absent from the resolution's text
- Some scholars have debated whether the resolution implies the establishment of one or two separate nations.

### Aftermath and Legacy:

- The Lahore Resolution marked a significant shift in the political landscape of the Indian subcontinent.
  - It was the moment when Muhammad Ali Jinnah, once a proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity, irrevocably transformed himself for the cause of a separate Muslim homeland called Pakistan.
  - In 1956, on the same day, the country officially adopted its first Constitution, which transformed the Dominion of Pakistan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
- ➔ Adopted by the All-India Muslim League during a threeday session in Lahore from March 22 to March 24, 1940. Formally presented as a political statement, it holds significant historical importance in Pakistan. Authorship: Crafted and prepared by Muhammad Zafarullah Khan.

## AYYA VAIKUNDAR

Tamil Nadu Governor recent remarks about the 19th century social reformer Ayya Vaikundar have evoked sharp reactions in the state.

### About

- He was born in 1809 and is the founder of the Ayyavazhi sect, primarily in southern Tamil Nadu.
- His teachings focused on equality, fraternity, and the eradication of caste-based discrimination, challenging the established religious and social hierarchies of the time.

### Upliftment of Lower Caste:

- He organized Samapanthi-bhojana or community eateries for people from all backgrounds. He would send his disciples to the homes of lower castes to eat with them.
- When lower castes were not allowed to fetch water from wells used by upper caste Hindus, Vaikundar initiated the digging of common wells, called Muthirikinarus.
- Vaikundar also encouraged all devotees to wear turbans and dhotis, promoting equality.
- He pioneered education for the lower castes and opposed discriminatory taxes. One of his significant interventions was the introduction of simplified, inclusive marriage customs without a Brahmin priest or Sanskrit mantras.
- He established Nizhal Thangals as community worship spaces, which did not have any idol or deity, and only Tamil was used for worship.
- These community worship centers also had community kitchens and even basic schools.

## GORSAM KORA FESTIVAL

Recently, Gorsam Kora Festival was celebrated as 'IndiaBhutan Friendship & Shared Cultural Heritage of Himalayan Buddhism' in Tawang of Arunachal Pradesh.

### About

- It is an annual festival, celebrated in the scenic Zemithang Valley along the Nyanmjang Chu River of Tawang district in Arunachal Pradesh, India.
- It is held at the Gorsam Chorten, a 93-foot-tall Stupa built during the 13th century AD by a local monk, Lama Pradhar.
- This landmark is older than the Tawang Monastery, and is an icon for Himalayan Buddhism.

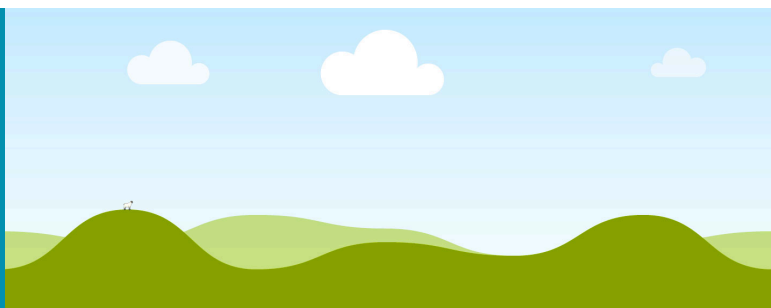


- It is observed during the last day of the first month of the Lunar calendar.
- It features a diverse array of events, including enthralling performances by local cultural troupes and the Indian Army bands, and martial performances like Mallakhamb and Zanjh Pathaka.
- It symbolises the enduring friendship between India and Bhutan.

### Historical Significance

- The 14th Dalai Lama found refuge upon his escape from Tibet in 1959 in Zemithang Valley.
- The Gorsam Chorten is modelled after the Boudhinath Stupa of Nepal and has a spiritual companion, the Chorten Kora in Trashiyangtse of Bhutan, built in 1740.

## SABARMATI GANDHI ASHRAM REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT



**Prime Minister launched a master plan for the Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram redevelopment project and inaugurated the redeveloped Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad on the anniversary of the Dandi March.**

### About

- The Union government and Gujarat government are jointly implementing the Gandhi Ashram Memorial and Precinct Development Project.
- The redevelopment and restoration plan is based on an aerial image from 1949 of the ashram and on the ashram's documented accounts.
- A 'Mohan to Mahatma Park', an arboretum that will have trees from "all states and Union Territories", a herbal garden shaped in the famous pose of Gandhi walking with his staff, a meditation hall, and a 'dhyana kendra': these have been proposed.

### Historical Importance of the Gandhi Ashram at Sabarmati:

**Setting up of Ashrams:** Mahatma Gandhi set up five settlements during his lifetime — two in South Africa (Phoenix Settlement in Natal, and Tolstoy Farm outside Johannesburg), where he lived from 1893 to 1914, and three in India, where he arrived in 1915

➡ He set up the first ashram in Ahmedabad in Kochrab in 1915.

**Sabarmati Ashram:** In 1917, Gandhiji founded the ashram at Sabarmati — his fourth ashram — on the western bank of the Sabarmati River.

➡ The location was to the north of the village of Juna Vadaj, beyond the Chandrabhaga rivulet, a tributary of the Sabarmati.

**Time Spent in Ashram:** Gandhi spent the most time here, and it was the cradle of eight major movements related to India's struggle for independence.

**Movements Launched:** Apart from the Dandi March that Gandhiji began from here on March 12, 1930, he also launched the Champaran Satyagraha (1917), the Ahmedabad mills strike and Kheda Satyagraha (1918), the Khadi movement (1918), the Rowlatt Act and Khilafat Movements (1919), and the Non-Cooperation movement (1920) while living in Sabarmati.

## SAVITRIBAI PHULE

**A pioneer who challenged oppressive social norms in her quest for women's education, equality and justice, Savitribai Phule is formally recognised as India's first woman teacher.**

### About

- A Dalit woman from the Mali community, Savitribai was born on January 3, 1831, in Maharashtra's Naigaon village. Married off at the tender age of 10, her husband Jyotirao Phule is said to have educated her at home.
- Later, Jyotirao admitted Savitribai to a teachers' training institution in Pune. Throughout their life, the couple supported each other and in doing so, broke many social barriers.

### Major Contributions

- **Country's first girls' school:** At a time when it was considered unacceptable for women to even attain education, the couple went on to open a school for girls in Bhide Wada, Pune, in 1848.
- **Quality education:** One report from 1852 in The Poona Observer states, "The number of girl students in Jotirao's school is ten times more than the number of boys studying in the government schools."  
➔ This is because the system for teaching girls is far superior to what is available for boys in government schools."

**Protectors of women and children:** Along with Jyotirao, Savitribai started the Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha ('Home for the Prevention of Infanticide') for pregnant widows facing discrimination.

**Marriage system reforms:** Savitribai Phule also advocated inter-caste marriages, widow remarriage, and eradication of child marriage, sati and dowry systems, among other social issues.

- ➔ This is because the system for teaching girls is far superior to what is available for boys in government schools."

**Satyashodhak Samaj:** In 1873, the Phule couple set up the Satyashodhak Samaj ('Truth-seekers' society'), a platform open to all, irrespective of their caste, religion or class hierarchies, with the sole aim of bringing social equity.

- ➔ As an extension, they started 'Satyashodhak Marriage' – a rejection of Brahmanical rituals where the marrying couple takes a pledge to promote education and equality.

**Rejection of caste system:** Urging women to break free of caste barriers, Savitribai encouraged them to sit together at her meetings.

**Rejection of patriarchal traditions:** At her husband's funeral procession on November 28, 1890, Savitribai again defied convention and carried the *titve* (earthen pot).

- ➔ Walking ahead of the procession, Savitribai was the one who consigned his body to the flames, a ritual which is still predominantly carried out by men.

**Relief work:** Setting an extraordinary example of living a life of compassion, service and courage, Savitribai became involved in relief work during the 1896 famine in Maharashtra and the 1897 Bubonic plague.

- ➔ She herself contracted the disease while taking a sick child to the hospital, and breathed her last on March 10, 1897.

**Literary works:** Savitribai Phule published her first collection of poems, called *Kavya Phule* ('Poetry's Blossoms'), at the age of 23 in 1854. She published *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar* ('The Ocean of Pure Gems'), in 1892.

- ➔ Besides these works, *Matushri Savitribai Phlenchi Bhashane va Gaani* (Savitribai Phule's speeches and songs'), and her letters to her husband have also been published.

## HYDERABAD LIBERATION DAY

Recently, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued gazette notification to celebrate 17th September as Hyderabad Liberation Day annually.

### About

- It commemorates the integration of the princely State of Hyderabad, encompassing Telangana, Marathwada, and Hyderabad-Karnataka into the Indian Union on September 17, 1948.
- The region was under the rule of the Nizam and did not gain independence for 13 months after India's Independence.

## Role of Freedom Fighters

- The liberation of Hyderabad was possible due to the swift and timely action by the first Minister of Home Affairs of India, Shri Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, under Operation Polo.
- It was the codename for the police action against the Princely State of Hyderabad.
- Mir Osman Ali Khan was the ruler of Hyderabad during the operation.
- The struggle is replete with illustrations of struggles in the entire freedom movement, including the fight of Ramji Gond against the British, the fight of Komaram Bheem, and the valour of Turrebaz Khan in 1857.

## People's Movement

- The liberation of Hyderabad transformed into a massive people's movement with the spontaneous participation of people chanting 'Vande Matram' and demanding the merger of the samsthan into the Indian Union.
- The struggle became vociferous after Indian independence.

## CHAUSATH KHAMBA

The liberation of Hyderabad transformed into a massive people's movement with the spontaneous participation of people chanting 'Vande Matram' and demanding the merger of the samsthan into the Indian Union.



## About

Built in 1623-24 AD, the structure houses the tomb of Mirza Aziz Koka, foster brother of Mughal Emperor Akbar.

- The structure also finds mention in Sir Gordon Risley Hearn's book The Seven Cities of Delhi.
  - ➔ Besides these works, Matushri Savitribai Phlenchi Bhashane va Gaani (Savitribai Phule's speeches and songs'), and her letters to her husband have also been published.
- As per the official conservation document by Aga Khan Trust for Culture:
- The tomb enclosure is entered through a lofty arched gateway and has a large sunken forecourt.
- The mausoleum is unique on account of it being built entirely of marble, with 25 marble domes supporting the flat roof of the structure.



The plan for Chausath Khamba could have been inspired from the wooden garden pavilions from Persia — such as the Chihil Sutun (Forty Columns), and in turn, the Chausath Khamba seems to have inspired the architectural design for Emperor Shahjahan's Diwan-i-Aam, Hall of Audience.

According to author and historian Sam Dalrymple, the structure is basically a piece of Gujarati/Ahmedabad style architecture in Delhi.

- It is the Urs Mahal, where festivals would be held during the anniversary of Nizamuddin's death.
- It shows how regional architecture travelled across India centuries ago.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### VENICE BIENNALE

60th edition of the Venice Biennale, known as “the Olympics of the art world”, will open on April 20, 2024.



#### About:

The Venice Biennale **is one of the biggest and most prestigious art fairs** in the world, **beginning in 1895**.

- Biennale is an Italian word which means ‘**every other year**’. Over the years, however, it has come to mean a large international exhibition that takes place every two years
- Biennales feature contemporary art by artists from various countries that are usually linked by a common curatorial theme, providing a framework for exploring contemporary social, economic and political ideas in an international context.

#### India's Participation:

India made its debut at the Biennale in 1954. Recording robust sales, the exhibition comprised over 50 paintings of masters such as M F Husain, S H Raza, Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil, and Francis Newton Souza.

- After 1954, the country officially participated in the event in 2011. The exhibition was organised by Lalit Kala Akademi and curated by Ranjit Hoskote.
- ➡ At the 2019 Venice Biennale, the Ministry of Culture, Confederation of Indian Industry, National Gallery of Modern Art, and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) in collaboration organised the Indian pavilion.

## ORDER OF THE DRUK GYALPO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the Order of the Druk Gyalpo.



### About

- Order of the Druk Gyalpo is Bhutan's highest civilian award.
- It was instituted as the decoration for lifetime achievement and is the pinnacle of the honour system in Bhutan, taking precedence over all orders, decorations and medals.
- The Prime Minister has been recognised for his contribution to the growth of India-Bhutan relations. PM Modi is the **first foreign Head of the Government to receive the honour**.

## UNITED NATIONS ON GLOBAL FOOD WASTE

Recently, United Nations released the report, titled 'Think Eat Save: Tracking Progress to Halve Global Food Waste'.

### Key Highlights of the Report:

**Scale of Food Waste:** In 2022, the world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food, amounting to one-fifth (19%) of food available to consumers being wasted at the retail, food service, and household level.

- ➡ Households were responsible for 631 million tonnes of food waste, equivalent to 60% of the total food wasted in 2022.
- ➡ **Food Insecurity:** Food waste occurs while 783 million people are hungry and a third of humanity faces food insecurity.

**Global Problem:** Food waste is not just a 'rich country' problem.

- ➡ High-income, upper-middle income, and lower-middle income countries differ in observed average levels of household food waste by just 7 kg/capita/year.



**Urban-Rural Disparities:** Middle-income countries display variations between urban and rural populations, with rural areas generally wasting less.

**Environmental Impact:** Food loss and waste generate 8-10% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, almost five times the total emissions from the aviation sector.

- ➡ Hotter countries appear to have more food waste per capita in households, potentially due to increased consumption of fresh foods with substantial inedible parts and lack of robust cold chain.

### FOOD WASTAGE IN INDIA

As per the United Nations Food Waste Index Report, 78.2 million tonnes of food every year despite India housing the world's largest hunger-population.

- ➡ It points out India's per capita food waste at 55 kg per year
- In South Asia, Bhutan (19 kg per year) has the lowest per capita food waste in the country while Pakistan has the highest (130 kg per year).
- As per Global Hunger Index Report (2023), food wastage became a serious issue in India as India housed 233.9 million out of the world's 783 million populations.
- ➡ India ranked 111 out of 125 countries, indicating a hunger severity level of 'serious' for the country.

### Solutions Highlighted in the Report:

**Measurement:** The report emphasises the need for improved data on food waste. Accurate measurement of food waste is the first step towards effective management.

- ➡ India, along with Indonesia and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) have only 'subnational estimates' regarding food waste.
- ➡ India, along with China, South Africa, Indonesia, and Mexico, needs representative national food waste studies given variance in data.

**Policy Interventions:** Governments are encouraged to establish national targets, policies, and initiatives to reduce food waste.

- ➡ This includes implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.3, which aims to halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels by 2030.
- ➡ At present, only four G-20 countries (**Australia, Japan, U.K., U.S.**) and the European Union have food waste estimates suitable for tracking progress to 2030

**Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** The report highlights the role of PPPs in reducing food waste. By working together, governments and businesses can develop and implement effective strategies to prevent and reduce food waste.

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**Consumer Awareness:** Raising awareness among consumers about the impacts of food waste and ways to prevent it is crucial. It can be achieved through education and awareness campaigns.

**Innovation and Technology:** The report underscores the potential of innovative solutions and technologies in reducing food waste.

- ➡ It includes advancements in food storage and packaging, improved supply chain management, and the use of apps to connect consumers with surplus food.