

Monthly

prepp IAS

# Current Affairs

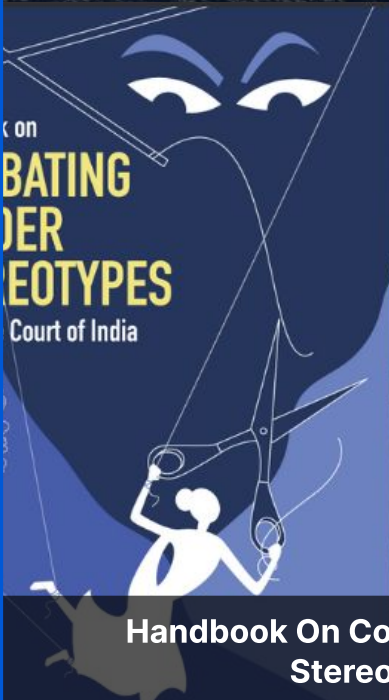
August 2023



Malabar Exercise, 2023



Zero FIR



Handbook On Combating Gender Stereotypes



Building Resilience Against Landslides

## Contents

### GENERAL STUDIES 1 .....4

Indian Society, Role Of Women And Women's Organization, Social Empowerment, Inclusive Growth, Social Justice .....4

Women Do 7 Hours Of Housework, Men Under 3 Hours.....4

Inclusion Of Transgenders In The Armed Forces? ...5

### GENERAL STUDIES 2 .....6

Indian Constitution —Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions And Basic Structure; Appointment To Various Constitutional Posts .....6

Bill Moved To Remove CJI From Panel To Select Election Commissioners.....6

J&K Constitution Limited Executive Powers Of Union Of India, Says Supreme Court .....7

Role of Judiciary and Executive .....8

Supreme Court Says Hate Speech Will Be Prosecuted Equally, No Matter The Faith Of The Offender.....8

To Remove Gender Stereotypes From The Law, A New SC Handbook .....10

Issues Related to Federalism.....11

Tamil Nadu-Karnataka Cauvery Row | Supreme Court To Form New Bench For River Dispute .....11

Government Policies & Interventions; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions And Bodies Constituted For The Protection And Betterment Of These Vulnerable Sections ..13

The Dangers In The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill .....13

Biological Diversity Amendment Bill Passed In Lok Sabha .....14

Rajya Sabha Passes Cinematograph Amendment Bill, 2023 Aimed At Curbing Film Piracy ..... 15

States' Lax Response To Lynching ..... 16

Should The Age Of Consent Be Revised In India?.. 17

Revised Manufacturing Rules For Drug Firms: What Changes, And Why ..... 18

Causing Floods Is A Terrorist Offence In Proposed Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill To Replace Indian Penal Code..... 20

Issues Relating To Development And Management Of Social Sector/Services Relating To Health, Education, Human Resources ..... 21

Karnataka Reported More Than 45,000 Teen Pregnancies From January 2020 To June 2023: RTI Reply ..... 21

WHO Asks Countries To Work Towards Unlocking The Power Of Traditional Medicine ..... 23

Welfare Schemes For Vulnerable Sections Of The Population By The Centre And States And The Performance Of These Schemes; ..25

Needed, A Well-Crafted Social Security Net For All ..... 25

Rohini Panel Submits Long-Awaited Report: What Is 'Sub-Categorisation' Of OBCs? ..... 26

Chhattisgarh Cabinet Paves Way For 32% Tribal Quota In Education..... 27

Who Are The Paharis And Paddaris, Proposed For ST Status In J&K? ..... 28

International Relations ..... 29

Over The Borderline: On Pakistan and Its Security Situation With Afghanistan ..... 29

India, ASEAN Agree To Review FTA by 2025 ..... 30

The BRICS Test For India's Multipolarity Rhetoric. 32

A 'Fab' Way To Conduct India-Japan Tech Diplomacy..... 33

Jeddah: Hope for Peace In Ukraine? ..... **Error!**

**Bookmark not defined.**

The Myanmar junta's empty gesture .....	35	Science And Technology- Developments	
As Modi Reiterates Power Devolution in Sri Lanka, Ruling Party Says No 13-A.....	36	And Their Applications And Effects In	
The Saudi Arabia-UAE Divide Becomes Public.....	37	Everyday Life, Achievements Of Indians In	
<b>GENERAL STUDIES 3</b> .....	39	Science & technology, Intellectual Property	
<b>Indian Economy And Issues Relating To</b>		Rights.....	56
<b>Planning, Mobilization, Of Resources, Growth,</b>		No Rights For AI: Copyright Law Was Not Meant To	
<b>Development And Employment,</b>		Cover Nonhuman Actors, Rules US District Judge	56
<b>Government Budgeting, Changes In</b>		Trial Done In India Shows Nutrition Support	
<b>Industrial Policy And Their Effects On</b>		Prevents TB, Related Deaths .....	57
<b>Industrial Growth; Growth And Development</b>		<b>Environment And Conservation,</b>	
.....	39	<b>Environmental Pollution And Degradation,</b>	
GST Council Sticks To Its Guns, Imposes 28% Tax On		<b>Environmental Impact/Assessment</b> .....	58
Online Gaming .....	39	What Will The Amended Forest (Conservation) Act	
Govt Imposes Curbs On Import Of Laptops, Tablets		Change? .....	58
.....	40	Climate Finance Adds Another Layer Of Inequity To	
Shedding More Light On The Debt Dilemma .....	41	Climate Change .....	60
<b>Effects Of Liberalization On The Economy,</b>		India Among The 12 Countries Responsible For 52%	
<b>External Sector</b> .....	42	Of The World's Mismanaged Plastic Waste .....	61
Will The Federal Fund Hike Impact Developing		Madras High Court Bats For Right Of Animals To	
Country Debt?.....	42	Live Without Fear And Distress; Orders Relocation	
Textile Exports Continue To Decline .....	44	Of 495 Families In Thengumarahada.....	63
Govt. Allows Indian Companies To List On Foreign		No More 'Deemed Forests', Says Odisha	
Exchanges Through IFSC .....	45	Government .....	65
The Grammar Of Commerce In A New Age Of		The State Of Climate In Asia, 2022 .....	67
Geopolitics .....	46	<b>Disaster Management</b> .....	69
Global Headwinds.....	48	Building Resilience Against Landslides .....	69
<b>Agriculture</b> .....	49	<b>GENERAL STUDIES 4</b> .....	70
India's Excess Sugar Production Is Guzzling		<b>Civil Service Values And Ethics In Public</b>	
Groundwater .....	49	<b>Administration</b> .....	70
Three Years On, Only 15% Of Rs 1 Lakh Crore Agri		Manipur Officials Told To Quit Social Media Groups	
Infrastructure Fund Disbursed.....	51	.....	70
<b>Energy &amp; Infrastructure</b> .....	52	<b>PRELIMS</b> .....	72
India's Mining Policy Shift.....	52	<b>Indian Polity</b> .....	72
Unviable Arunachal Hydro Projects Have Been		No-Confidence Motion Against Modi Government	
Dumped On Central PSUs, Say Experts.....	55	.....	72
		What Is A Zero FIR And Why It Is Registered .....	72

In Independence Day speech, PM announces Vishwakarma Yojana, Lakhpati Didi and A Scheme To Help The Urban Poor Build Houses In Cities.....	73	Coups In Niger; Causes And Concerns.....	95
Kerala Assembly Passes Resolution Urging Centre To Change State Name To Keralam .....	74	Japan To Release Water From Fukushima Nuclear Plant.....	98
<b>Economy</b> .....	75	The Katchatheevu Controversy .....	99
China's Deflation A Sign Of Economic Slowdown?	75	Dispute Over Kuril Islands .....	100
Full-Reserve Banking: Where Banks Act Solely As Custodians Of Customers' Money .....	77	Four Australian F-35 Jets Join Malabar Naval Exercise.....	101
Windfall Tax On Crude Oil, Diesel Hiked.....	78	<b>Places in News</b> .....	102
GI Tags For Goan Mangoes And Bebinca, Crafts From Rajasthan and U.P .....	79	<b>Places in News - India</b> .....	102
National Handloom Day.....	80	Guwahati .....	102
<b>General Science</b> .....	81	Kuno National Park.....	102
Centre To Look Into 'Havana Syndrome': What It Means And The Term's History .....	81	Ajnala.....	102
Single-Pill Strategy To Beat Cardiovascular Diseases Gets WHO Recognition .....	82	Gandhinagar .....	102
The Quest For A Room Temperature Superconductor .....	83	Yelagiri .....	102
What Is The Akira Ransomware, And Why Has The Government Issued A Warning Against It .....	85	Nuh .....	103
<b>Environment</b> .....	86	Umiam Lake.....	103
39 MNCs Come Together For Circular Economy Coalition.....	86	Kabini reservoir .....	103
Asian Elephant Expert Raman Sukumar Now A Vice-Chair Of The IPCC.....	87	<b>Places in News - World</b> .....	103
5% Of Birds In India Are Endemic, Reveals Zoological Survey Of India Publication .....	87	Niger .....	103
Himalayan Vulture Bred In Captivity For The First Time In India .....	88	Novorossiysk Port.....	103
Amazon Nations To Jointly Fight Deforestation ....	90	Lampedusa .....	104
Drilling In The North Sea — History And Environmental Concerns.....	92	Belem.....	104
How One Health Can Help India Respond Better To Health Crises .....	93	Red Sea .....	104
<b>Current Events of National and International Importance</b> .....	95	South China Sea.....	104
		Balochistan .....	105
		Tripoli.....	105
		Ecuador.....	105
		Israel .....	106
		South Africa .....	106
		Murmansk Port.....	106

## GENERAL STUDIES I

### Indian Society, Role Of Women And Women's Organization, Social Empowerment, Inclusive Growth, Social Justice

#### Women Do 7 Hours Of Housework, Men Under 3 Hours

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is Labour Force Participation Rate?

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Need For Recognition Of Unpaid Work Done By Women

#### Context:

- Recently, the **Government has highlighted the issue of unpaid care and domestic work performed by women in India.**
- Women, **regardless of employment status, spend over 7 hours daily on domestic work**, while men spend less than three hours.
- India's female labor force participation rate has been declining for more than 20 years, despite the share of educated women surging in this period.

Chart 1 | The chart shows female LFPR in India and the enrolment rate for girls in Class 10 since 1990

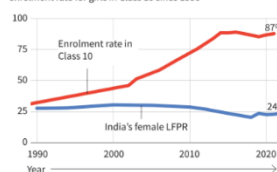


Chart 2 | The chart compares India's 2022 female LFPR to that of other BRICS countries and select South Asian countries

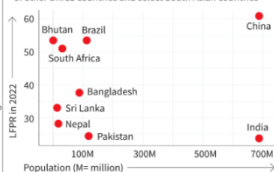


Chart 3 | Average time (in minutes) spent on unpaid care during a day for men and women across employment groups

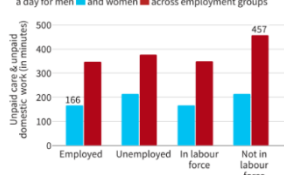
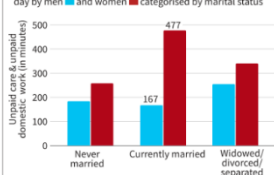


Chart 4 | Average time spent (in minutes) on unpaid care in a day by men and women categorised by marital status



#### India's Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)

- Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is defined as the **percentage of the population in working age-groups** that is employed, or is looking for work, but is unemployed.
- As per OECD, it is calculated as the labour force divided by the total working-age population, hence estimating an economy's active workforce.
- Data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey shows that 29.4% of women (aged 15-59) were part of India's labour force in 2021-22, as compared to 29.8% in the preceding year.
- In contrast, men's LFPR improved from 80.1% in 2020-21 to 80.7% in 2021-22.

#### Why is the recognition of Unpaid Work needed?

- Restricting opportunities:** The relentless efforts of women in performing household work, without any financial compensation, promotions, or retirement benefits, often go unnoticed. This invisible labor creates a 24-hour job for women, which impacts their opportunities in the economy and life.
- Impact on Female Labor Force Participation:** The lack of recognition for unpaid household work is one of the factors contributing to the low female labor force participation rate in India, currently at around 25%.
- Social Justice:** In a report, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also suggested that if women's participation in the economy was raised to that of men, then India's GDP can grow by 27%. Hence, recognition of unpaid work is needed to ensure social justice.
- Enhance quality of life:** Recognizing unpaid work is crucial for enhancing the quality of life for those involved. For women, it often becomes a compulsion rather than a choice due to the patriarchal societal setup, limiting their potential and self-realization.
- Gender Inequality:** Unpaid domestic work disproportionately falls on women, perpetuating gender inequality. Traditional gender roles and cultural norms often expect women to be responsible for household duties, leading to a disproportionate burden on them, which affects their ability to participate in paid work and pursue education and career opportunities.

#### Recent Efforts Made by the States

- Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana:** This scheme was launched by the Madhya Pradesh government. Under this scheme, each woman will be given ₹1000 per month and women in the age group of 23 to 60 years will be eligible for this scheme.
- Punjab Rs. 1000 Scheme for Women:** The AAP government in Punjab will disburse Rs 1,000 a month to all women in the state.
- In June 2023, the **Madras High Court held that homemakers are entitled to equal share in household properties** purchased by the husband.
- Kalaingar Magalir Urimai Thittam' Scheme:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, recently, inaugurated a camp to facilitate registration of applications by women to avail the Rs 1,000 monthly basic income scheme (Kalaingar

Magalir Urimai Thittam), a flagship programme which is set to be launched in September, 2023.

### Way Ahead

- Women should be encouraged and helped to reach their full potential through quality education, access and opportunities of work.
- Efforts to address the domestic unpaid issue involve raising awareness about the importance of unpaid domestic work, promoting gender equality and advocating for policy changes to recognize and value domestic work.
- Initiatives like affordable childcare facilities, and promoting the sharing of household responsibilities can contribute to reducing the burden of unpaid domestic work on women in India.

### Inclusion Of Transgenders In The Armed Forces?

**Priority: Medium**



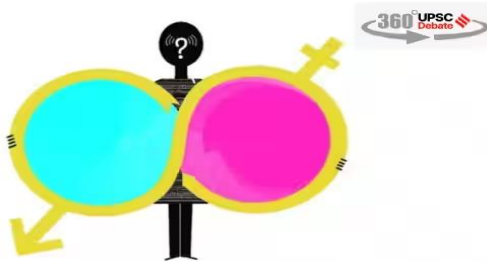
**Primary Source:** Indian Express

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Provisions of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Transgender Population And Employment, Arguments Related To Inclusion Of Transgenders In Rmed Forces

#### Context:

- Recently, a report presented by the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice to the Rajya Sabha on August 3 proposed that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) should consider extending reservation benefits to transgender people in the Central Armed Police Forces.
- According to the National Human Rights Commission, 96% of transgender individuals face employment discrimination limiting their access to decent career opportunities.



### Transgender Population and Employment

- India's 2011 census recorded a transgender population of 4.88 lakh individuals.
- However, a significant portion of this community faces employment challenges, often being

compelled to engage in low-wage occupations or undignified livelihoods like sex work and begging due to limited job opportunities.

### Education and Employment Barriers

- According to the NHRC, 52% of transgender individuals experience harassment from peers in educational institutions, with 15% facing harassment from their lecturers, leading many to discontinue their education.
- A study revealed that 92% of transgender individuals, including those with qualifications, lack access to economic activities.
- Over 89% of them perceive a scarcity of job opportunities, even if they possess the necessary qualifications.
- About 50-60% of transgender individuals have limited or no formal education, with those attending schools encountering severe prejudice.
- Only 6% of transgender individuals find employment in the private sector or NGOs, and just 1% earn a monthly salary exceeding ₹25,000, while 23% are forced into sex work, resulting in a significantly higher risk of HIV infection.

### Legal Recognition and Challenges

- In 2014, the Supreme Court recognized transgender individuals as a distinct gender category under the Constitution, followed by the nullification of Section 377 in 2018.
- The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 aimed to protect transgender rights, prohibiting discrimination in employment. However, challenges persist in implementation.

### Arguments Surrounding Transgender Inclusion in the Armed Forces

#### Cultural and Psychological Considerations

- Some argue that the unique hierarchical structure and psychological dynamics within the armed forces demand careful consideration before integrating transgender individuals.
- Constitutional provisions empower Parliament to establish laws limiting fundamental rights for armed forces personnel to ensure effective fulfillment of their duties and order maintenance.

#### Lack of Empirical Evidence

- While historical positions fluctuated, there is a lack of empirical evidence supporting the argument that transgender individuals are unfit for military service.

- Studies like the RAND study in the US and the stance of the Brookings Institution emphasize the importance of inclusive policies.

### Conclusion

- The debate over transgender inclusion in the armed forces must weigh cultural and operational challenges against the principles of inclusivity and equality.
- While recognizing transgender individuals' capabilities, creating a more supportive and inclusive environment can help mitigate social discomfort and foster diversity within the armed forces, contributing to broader societal shifts toward inclusivity and equality.
- India can draw from the policies of other nations that allow transgender troops to serve openly to address opposition and improve representation within the armed forces.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## GENERAL STUDIES 2

**Indian Constitution —Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions And Basic Structure; Appointment To Various Constitutional Posts**

### Bill Moved To Remove CJI From Panel To Select Election Commissioners

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Issues Related To Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions Of Service And Term Of Office) Bill, 2023

#### Context:

- Recently, the Union Government moved a bill in the Rajya Sabha to remove the Chief Justice of India from the panel that selects the Chief

Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.

### How were the members of the Election Commission selected earlier?

- The Constitution does not set out any specific legislative process for the appointment of the CEC and ECs.
- The President used to appoint the members of the Election Commission on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.
- In March 2023, a **Constitutional bench** of the Supreme Court ruled that the members of the Election Commission were to be chosen by a three-member high power committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India as members.
  - The Court had stated that its order would stay valid until a law concerning the matter was enacted by Parliament.

### What does the Bill propose?

- The **Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023** aims to create a structured legislative process for the appointment of members to the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**.
- **Search Committee:** A committee headed by the **Cabinet Secretary** and comprising two other governmental officials who are experienced in election affairs.
  - The committee must create a list of five potential candidates for consideration by the Selection panel.
- **Selection Panel:** The panel will consist of the **Prime Minister of India** as chairperson, a **Cabinet Minister**, and the **Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha** as members.
  - The government replaced the **Chief Justice of India** in the panel.
  - In case, there is no Leader of the Opposition in the Lower House, the statement and objectives of the Bill states that the leader of the single largest opposition party will be considered the LoP.

### What are the concerns raised about the bill?

- There are concerns that the inclusion of two members of the ruling party in the selection panel could compromise the **neutrality** and **independence** of the Election Commission.

- An independent and neutral appointment process for the members of the Election Commission is necessary to ensure the conduct of **free and fair elections**.
- This will also neutralize the opinion of the LoP as the majority of the panel are from the ruling party.
- The Bill goes against the spirit of the directions Supreme Court by replacing the Chief Justice of India on the selection panel.
- The SC had stated that the Executive should not have a central role in the appointment of Election commissioners.
- The Constitution mandates that the Judiciary, EC, and investigative agencies be independent from the Executive.



### Conclusion

- The government has proposed the legislation with the aim of streamlining the appointment of Election Commissioners which is part of the powers of Parliament.
- The Election Commission is one of the most important pillars of democracy in the country. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain the independence and integrity of the selection process so as to ensure free and fair elections in the country.

### Election Commission of India

- The Election Commission of India is a permanent, autonomous, quasi-judicial, and constitutional body that is responsible for administering the election process in the country.

### Constitutional provisions:

- **Article 324 of Part XV** of the Constitution states that the EC is responsible for the superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections to the office of President and Vice-President, and the Parliament and state legislatures.

One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## J&K Constitution Limited Executive Powers Of Union Of India, Says Supreme Court

**Priority: Medium**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is Article 370?

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Special status given to J &K, Article 35A and Separate Rights, Removal of Special Status of J&K Challenged in the SC

### Context:

- The Supreme Court of India has initiated the hearing of the constitutional challenge against the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, which conferred special status upon the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- This historic development raises fundamental questions regarding the integration of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution into the Indian Constitution.

### Unique Status of Jammu and Kashmir

- Jammu and Kashmir was the only state in India with a separate constitution, dating back to 1957.
- This constitution substantially restricted the executive powers of the Union of India and curtailed the legislative authority of the Indian Parliament over the years.

### Article 35A and Separate Rights

- In 1954, the Indian Constitution was amended to include Article 35A, granting the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature the power to define "permanent residents" and bestow them with special rights concerning employment, property ownership, and scholarships.

### Article 370: A Temporary Provision

- Article 370, located in Part XXI of the Indian Constitution, served as a temporary provision that accorded special autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir.
- It permitted the state to have its own constitution, a separate flag, and considerable autonomy in



internal matters, excluding defence, foreign affairs, finance, and communications.

### Abrogation of Special Status

- In 2019, the Indian government issued the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 2019, effectively nullifying the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.
- This move was followed by the bifurcation of the region into two Union Territories: Jammu and Kashmir, with a Legislative Assembly, and Ladakh, without one.

## FOR

Article 370 was a temporary provision of Constitution

Special privileges were temporary, cannot confer rights

In opposition with Article 14 which guarantees equality

Can be revoked through Presidential order

## AGAINST

The same provision of Article 370 cannot be used to dilute it

Parliament cannot replace state legislature with the governor

Not seeking state legislature's nod is against spirit of consultation

SC precedents cite Parliament's approval for abrogation

### Supreme Court's Perspective

- During the ongoing hearing, the Supreme Court emphasized that the Indian Constitution's powers and provisions cannot be restricted by the former Jammu & Kashmir Constitution.
- It pointed out that the transfer of sovereignty to India by the acceding states, including Jammu and Kashmir, was absolute, as explicitly stated in Article 1 of the Indian Constitution.

### Constitutional Implications

- This landmark legal battle will determine the constitutional implications of the abrogation of Article 370.
- While some argue that the special status could only be removed with the concurrence of the State Assembly (which was dissolved in 1957), others contend that it could be done through a Presidential Order.
- In essence, this Supreme Court hearing is poised to reshape the constitutional landscape of Jammu and Kashmir and may provide clarity on

the scope and permanence of Article 370's revocation.

### ACCESSION AND AFTER

**OCT 26, 1947:** Following the invasion by tribesmen supported by Pak army, Maharaja Hari Singh sought Indian assistance, eventually leading him to sign Instrument of Accession (IoA).

**MAY 27, 1949:** Constituent Assembly of India cleared draft Article 370, as per the terms in the IoA.

**MAY 1, 1951:** Dr Karan Singh issued a proclamation convening the Constituent Assembly for the State.

**1952:** Delhi Agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expanded the relationship between India and J&K.

**MAY 15, 1954:** Art. 35A introduced through a Presidential Order to protect laws passed by state legislature regarding permanent residents.

**NOV 17, 1957:** Constitution of State of J&K adopted; came into force on Jan 26, 1958.

### Role of Judiciary and Executive

## Supreme Court Says Hate Speech Will Be Prosecuted Equally, No Matter The Faith Of The Offender

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Concept of Hate Speech

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Challenges Faced In Stopping Hate Speech, Viswanathan Committee Recommendations, Supreme Court Cases Related To Hate Speech

### Context:

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India stated that all incidents of hate speech would be punished regardless of the religious beliefs of the offender.
- In 2018, the court condemned hate crimes and held that it was the "sacrosanct duty" of the State to protect the lives of its citizens.

### What has the Supreme Court said about hate speech?

- A bench of Supreme Court Justices headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna stated that all instances of hate speech would be treated equally regardless of who was committing it.

### Hate speech on the rise

- The Court was hearing petitions regarding the increase in instances of hate speech throughout the country.
- According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, the cases registered related to hate speech have risen from 323 cases in 2014 to 1,804 cases in 2020.
- The Court recently asked the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the governments of Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana to respond to a petition filed by the National Federation of Indian Women seeking an explanation for their "consistent failure" to act against lynching and mob violence.

### State's duty

- In 2022, the SC noted that a climate of hate was prevailing in the country and directed the police and other authorities to immediately register cases against hate speech makers and offenders who committed acts of communal violence without waiting for a complaint to be filed.
- In 2018 the SC issued guidelines to the states and police to prevent, control, and deter mob violence and lynchings in its verdict in the **Tehseen S. Poonawalla vs Union Of India case**.

### What is hate speech?

- **Hate speech** can be defined as an incitement to hatred primarily against a group of persons on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, etc.
  - It is most likely to result in violence.
  - It covers any form of expression including words, images, cartoons, objects, gestures, and symbols, and can be disseminated offline or online.
- In the **Pravasi Bhalai Sangathan v. Union of India case (2014)** the Supreme Court defined hate speech as an "effort to marginalize individuals based on their membership in a group that seeks to delegitimize group members in the eyes of the majority, reducing their social standing and acceptance within society".

### Legislative status:

- **Article 19(2) of the Constitution:** Reasonable restrictions on the Freedom of Speech such as public order, decency or morality, defamation, or incitement to an offense.
- **Section 153(a) of IPC** punishes the promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc. with imprisonment up to 3 years.
- **Section 153(b) of IPC** punishes assertions prejudicial to national integration with imprisonment of up to 3 years.
- **Section 295(a) of IPC** punishes deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage the religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs with imprisonment for up to 3 years.
- **Section 505(2) of IPC** punishes statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred, or ill will between classes with imprisonment for up to 3 years.
- **Section 8 of the Representation of People's Act, 1951 (RPA)** prevents a person convicted of the

illegal use of the freedom of speech from contesting an election.

- **Sections 123(3A) and 125 of the RPA** bar the promotion of animosity on the grounds of race, religion, community, caste, or language in reference to elections and include it under corrupt electoral practices.

### Why should hate speech be stopped?

- **Equality:** Hate speech directly weakens the idea of social equality and strengthens historical marginalization, oppression & discrimination.
- **Harm:** Hate speech leads to violence which results in the loss of life, property, and public infrastructure.
  - It can also have long-lasting effects on the mental health of victims.
- **Terror:** Hate speech can be directly linked to acts of terrorism, genocide, ethnic cleansing etc.

### What suggestions have been made to counter hate speech?

- The **Bureau of Police Research and Development** has recently released a manual for investigating agencies on cyber harassment cases, which defined hate speech as a language that denigrates, degrades, threatens, or targets an individual based on their identity or other traits (such as sexual orientation or disability or religion, etc.).
- The **Law Commission of India** has proposed two new sections in IPC to criminalize hate speech specifically.
  - **Section 153C:** Covers crimes committed when someone threatens someone with remarks meant to incite fear, hatred, or violence based on someone's race, caste, religion, sex, gender identity, or other characteristics.
  - **Section 505A:** Provisions that make inciting fear, alarm, or violence a crime.
- The **Viswanathan Committee (2019)** recommended amending the IPC to include **Sections 153 C (b) and 505 A** for incitement to commit an offense on the basis of religion, race, caste or community, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, residence, place of birth, language, disability, or tribe.
  - It proposed a sentence of up to two years imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 5,000.
- The **Bezbaruah Committee, 2014** proposed amending Section 153 C of the IPC which is punishable by five years and a fine or both, as

well as Section 509 A of IPC which is punishable by three years and a fine or both.

### Challenges faced in stopping hate speech

- **Lack of definition:** There is no universally accepted definition of hate speech while Indian laws have not explicitly defined hate speech either.
- As a result, it is difficult to establish clear guidelines about hate speech.
- **Free speech:** Hate speech laws have been opposed by some as they are believed to restrict free speech.
- This leads to legal challenges and criticism from civil liberties groups.
- **Online hate speech:** It is difficult to identify and remove hate speech content on social media.
- This could be due to the difficulties in identifying cultural and linguistic terms which could be hate-inducing.
- **Politics:** It is difficult to hold politicians and public figures to account for their statements.
- **Implementation:** Countries lack the resources and legal framework to effectively address hate speech.
- Due to the difficulty in enforcement, offenders believe they are immune leading to increases in instances of hate speech.

### Other Supreme Court cases related to Hate Speech

- **Ramji Lal Modi Case (1957):** A five-judge Supreme Court bench upheld the validity of Section 295(A) on the grounds of public order.
- **S. Rangarajan Etc vs P. Jagjivan Ram (1989):** The Court ruled that the right to free speech cannot be restricted unless it creates a situation that endangers the community or the public interest.
- **Ramlal Puri v State of Madhya Pradesh (1973):** The Supreme Court ruled that the test of hate speech should be if it offends the "ordinary man of common sense" and not the "hypersensitive man".
- However, these determinations are made by the court and the distinction can often be vague and vary from one judge to the other.
- **Amish Devgan v. Union of India (2020):** The Supreme Court ruled that hate speech has no valid or redeeming motive other than hostility toward a specific group.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50

students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

### To Remove Gender Stereotypes From The Law, A New SC Handbook

Priority: Low



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Mains Booster: Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; Indian Society

#### Context:

- Recently, the Supreme Court released a 30-page **Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes**.
- It aims to **free the judiciary and the legal community from the mechanical application** of gender-stereotypical language in judgments, orders, and court pleadings.

#### What is the significance?

- **Combats Gender Stereotypes:** It aims to combat gender stereotypes in language used within the judiciary and legal community.
- For instance, terms like "career woman," "fallen woman," "faithful or obedient wife," "eve-teasing," and "hermaphrodite" have been identified as gender-unjust terms.
- The Supreme Court suggests using more neutral and respectful terms like "woman," "wife," "street sexual harassment," and "intersex" instead.
- **Promoting Equity and Justice:** Promoting a more just and equitable society. CJI mentioned that relying on predetermined stereotypes in judicial decision-making goes against the duty of judges to decide cases impartially, based on their merits.
- **Addresses false assumptions:** The handbook addresses false assumptions about women's characteristics. It emphasizes that a person's gender should not determine their capacity for rational thought.
- **Addresses Prejudices:** The handbook discusses **assumptions made about a woman's character based on her clothing choices and sexual history**.
- These assumptions can influence how the court assesses her actions, particularly in cases involving sexual violence, and may undermine the importance of consent in such cases.

- **Significance of language:** The Chief Justice pointed out that language used by judges reflects **not only their interpretation of the law but also their perception of society.**
- The example of changing the term "pauper" to "indigent" in the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 was cited to demonstrate how language can impact the dignity and humanity attributed to individuals.
- The handbook aims to raise awareness about the role of language in perpetuating gender stereotypes within the legal system and provides guidance on using more respectful and neutral terms to promote fairness and equality.

### Issues Related to Federalism

## Tamil Nadu-Karnataka Cauvery Row | Supreme Court To Form New Bench For River Dispute

**Priority:** Medium



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Location of River Cauvery and its Tributaries

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Inter State Dispute between Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the Union Territory of Pondicherry, Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)

### Context:

- Recently, the Chief Justice of India agreed to constitute a new bench to hear the State of Tamil Nadu's plea on the Cauvery River water dispute.
- Tamil Nadu urged the Supreme Court to issue directions to Karnataka to release the stipulated amount of water for September as per the Cauvery Tribunal Award as amended by the Supreme Court.



### Why has Tamil Nadu approached the Supreme Court?

- On August 10<sup>th</sup>, Karnataka was directed to release 15,000 cusecs of water from its reservoirs at **Billigundulu** on August 11 for 15 days.

- However, this was arbitrarily reduced to 10,000 cusecs by the **Cauvery Water Management Authority** in its 22nd meeting held on August 11 due to Karnataka's insistence.
  - This amounted to around 0.86 TMC a day or a total of 12.9 TMC in 15 days.
- Tamil Nadu has claimed that Karnataka has not complied with the directive to release this lowered quantity of water from the **KRS and Kabini reservoirs.**
  - According to Karnataka, there has been a poor inflow to its reservoirs due to the lower rainfall in the Cauvery catchment region including Kerala.
- Tamil Nadu urged the Court to constitute a bench to direct the release of Cauvery water for August as per the Cauvery Water Management Authority order as the water was necessary to meet the pressing demands of the standing crops.

### Tamil Nadu's Requests:

- Direct Karnataka to release 24,000 cusecs of water from its Billigundulu reservoirs for the remainder of August.
- Ensure the release of stipulated water for September 2023 (36.76 TMC).
- Karnataka should compensate for the shortfall of 28.849 TMC water during the current irrigation year.
- Direct the Cauvery Water Management Authority to ensure that the directions issued to Karnataka are implemented.

### Court's response

- The Chief Justice of India stated that a bench would be constituted immediately to hear the State's plea.

### What is the Cauvery water dispute?

- The Cauvery water dispute is a long-standing dispute over the sharing of river water from the Cauvery River among the states of **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the Union Territory of Pondicherry.**
- The major point of contention among the parties is the distribution of river water among them for various purposes such as irrigation, drinking water, and industrial purposes.

### History

- The origin of the dispute can be traced back to British rule in the form of a dispute between the **Presidency of Madras** and the **erstwhile Princely state of Mysore.**
- An agreement was reached for the sharing of water between the two states in 1924.

- However, the agreement was valid only for 50 years and expired in 1974.
- Following the expiry of the 1924 agreement, Karnataka began to divert water into its four reservoirs.
- This resulted in a dispute among the states on the use of riparian water.

### Tribunal

- The **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)** was established in 1990 as per Section 4 of the **Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956**.
- The CWDT issued its final award in February 2007.
- It specified the amount of water to be received by each state during different periods of the year.
- **Award:** Assuming that the total availability of water in the Cauvery basin is 740 TMC in a normal year – Tamil Nadu (419 TMC), Karnataka (270 TMC), Kerala (30 TMC), Pondicherry (7 TMC).
- 10 TMC was reserved for environmental purposes and 4 TMC for inevitable release into the sea.
- However, the CWDT has not given a detailed formula of distribution when there is shortage of water due to insufficient rains.
- The award states that the allocated shares should be proportionally reduced during water shortages.

### Subsequent verdict of the SC

- The order of the tribunal was notified only in 2013 following the directions of the Supreme Court.
- Tamil Nadu approached the Supreme Court through a **special leave petition** under Article 136 because Karnataka was not adhering to the provisions of the award.
- In 2018, the SC declared the river Cauvery a national asset and upheld the water-sharing arrangements which had been finalized by the CWDT.
- It ruled that Karnataka would get 284.75 TMC, Tamil Nadu 404.25 TMC, Kerala 30 TMC and Puducherry 7 TMC.
- The Union Government was directed to notify the Cauvery Management Scheme
- The **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)** and the **Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC)** was established to implement the decision of the Court and the tribunal.

#### River Cauvery

- **Origin:** The River Cauvery (Kaveri) originates at Talakaveri at Talakaveri in the Brahmagiri hills located in the Western Ghats in Karnataka.

- It is the third largest river of South India behind the Godavari and the Krishna.
- It is a perennial river with very few fluctuations in water flow making it an important river for irrigation and hydroelectricity generation.
- **Extent:** The Kaveri river extends for 800 Kms from its origin to the Bay of Bengal.
- The majority of this lies in Tamil Nadu (416 Kms) and Karnataka (320 Kms).

#### Tributaries:

- **Left Bank:** Harangi, Hemavathi, Shimsha, and Arkavathi
- **Right Bank:** Lakshmanthirtha, Kabini, Suvarnavathi, Bhavani, Noyil, Amaravathi

#### Geography of the basin:

- It is made up of the Western Ghats, the Mysore plateau region, and the Kaveri delta.
- The delta areas is extremely fertile and is mainly composed of alluvial soils while the largest portions of the basin consist of red soils.
- Other major types of soil in the region are black soils, laterites, mixed soils and forest soils.

#### Source of the water:

- The Kaveri basin receives rainfall from both the South-West Monsoon and North-East Monsoon.
- Karnataka receives rainfall mostly from the South-West Monsoon while Tamil Nadu receives rainfall primarily from the North-East Monsoon.



To know more about the Kaveri, click the [link](#).

To know more about river water disputes in India, click the [link](#).

## Government Policies & Interventions; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions And Bodies Constituted For The Protection And Betterment Of These Vulnerable Sections

### The Dangers In The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Provisions of Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Issues With The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill and Key Features

#### Context:

- The Indian government is on the verge of introducing the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill in Parliament, signifying a major milestone in data privacy legislation. However, the process surrounding the Bill and its potential impact have raised questions about transparency and citizens' rights.

#### What are the issues with the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill?

- Impacting fundamental rights:** The DPDP Bill of 2022 includes provisions that may impact citizens' fundamental rights, especially the [Right to Information \(RTI\) Act](#).
- The DPDP Bill 2022 proposes amendments to Section 8(1)(j) to exempt all personal information, jeopardizing transparency and accountability.
- Justice A.P. Shah Report on Privacy** noted that data protection law doesn't require changes to the RTI Act.
- Excessive discretionary powers to the government:** The DPDP Bill, 2022, grants the central government the **power to exempt any government or private sector entity from the law's provisions** through a simple notification.
- This opens the possibility of arbitrary exemptions for favored entities, and government bodies like the UIDAI, leading to potential privacy violations. However, smaller organizations, including NGOs, research institutions, and Opposition parties, would face stringent data fiduciary obligations without exemption.
- Lack of autonomy to the Data Protection Board:** The Data Protection Board, responsible for enforcing the law, lacks sufficient autonomy as the central government holds significant power over its composition, selection, and removal of members.

- The chief executive responsible for managing the board is to be appointed by the government.
- The idea of a government-controlled **Data Protection Board** with the power to **impose hefty fines raises** concerns about possible misuse to target political opposition and dissenters.
- The **Right to Information (RTI) Act** empowers citizens to hold public institutions accountable by granting access to critical information. For example,
  - Integrity of elections:** Regular disclosure of voters' lists with personal data prevents electoral fraud.
  - Social Audits:** The **Public Distribution System (PDS) Control Order** acknowledges the importance of public scrutiny and social audits by making ration card holders' details and ration shop records public.
- Jeopardizing transparency and accountability:** The RTI Act includes an exemption clause (Section 8(1)(j)) to **balance the right to information with the right to privacy**. Personal information can be withheld if it doesn't relate to public activity, public interest, or may cause unwarranted invasion of privacy without larger public interest.

#### Key features of Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

- Applicability:** The Bill will apply to the processing of digital personal data within India where such data is:
  - collected online, or collected offline and is digitised.
  - It will also apply to the processing of personal data outside India, if it is for offering goods or services or profiling individuals in India.
- Personal data is defined as any data about an individual who is identifiable by or in relation to such data.
- Processing has been defined as an automated operation or set of operations performed on digital personal data. It includes collection, storage, use, and sharing.
- Consent:** Personal data may be processed only for a lawful purpose for which an individual has given consent. Consent will be deemed given where processing is necessary for:
  - performance of any function under a law,
  - provision of service or benefit by the State,
  - medical emergency,
  - employment purposes, and

- specified public interest purposes such as national security, fraud prevention, and information security.
- For individuals below 18 years of age, consent will be provided by the legal guardian.
- **Rights and duties of data principal:** An individual, whose data is being processed (data principal). The Bill grants certain rights to individuals including the right to obtain information, seek correction and erasure, and grievance redressal.
- **Obligations of data fiduciaries:** The entity determining the purpose and means of processing, called data fiduciary will be obligated to maintain the accuracy of data, keep data secure, and delete data once its purpose has been met.
- **Transfer of personal data outside India:** The central government will notify countries where a data fiduciary may transfer personal data. Transfers will be subject to prescribed terms and conditions.
- **Exemptions:** The central government may exempt government agencies from the application of provisions of the Bill in the interest of specified grounds such as security of the state, public order, and prevention of offences.
- **Data Protection Board of India:** The central government will establish the Data Protection Board of India. The central government will prescribe the composition of the Board, selection process, terms and conditions of appointment and service, and manner of removal.

### Functions

- monitoring compliance and imposing penalties,
- directing data fiduciaries to take necessary measures in the event of a data breach, and hearing grievances made by affected persons.
- **Penalties:** The schedule to the Bill specifies penalties for various offences such as:
  - up to Rs 150 crore for non-fulfilment of obligations for children and
  - up to Rs 250 crore for failure to take security measures to prevent data breaches.
  - Data fiduciaries are subject to fines of up to Rs 500 crore for non-compliance.
- Penalties will be imposed by the Board after conducting an inquiry.

### Conclusion

- It is crucial that the data protection law addresses the flaws of the previous draft and

ensures the protection of people's fundamental rights, including the right to information and privacy. These concerns must be addressed urgently before enacting the DPDP Bill.

## Biological Diversity Amendment Bill Passed In Lok Sabha

**Priority: High**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Biology Diversity Amendment Bill, 2021

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Key Provisions Of The Biology Diversity Amendment Bill, 2021 And Related Concerns

### Context:

- Recently, the **Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was passed in the Lok Sabha, aiming to amend the existing Biological Diversity Act, 2002.**
- The act was initially introduced with the objective of ensuring sustainable and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of biological resources and traditional knowledge.
- However, over the years, various stakeholders, including traditional medicine practitioners, the seed sector, industry, and researchers, raised concerns about the compliance burden and restrictions hindering research and investments.

### Key Provisions of the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- **Exemption for AYUSH Medical Practitioners:** The bill seeks to allow AYUSH practitioners to use certain natural resources for the treatments without having to go through extra paperwork or approval processes with biodiversity boards.
- **Approval of Intellectual Property Right (IPR):** For Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) related to Indian biological resources, National Biodiversity Authority approval is needed before the grant of IPR, not just before application.
- **Benefit Sharing:** The users of codified traditional knowledge and AYUSH practitioners will be relieved from the obligation of sharing benefits with local communities. It excludes the obligation to share the benefits from research and bio-surveys.
- **Offenses and Penalties:** The Bill decriminalizes all offenses previously stipulated under the Act, bringing about a significant change in the legal aspect and substitutes them with monetary penalties.

### What are the concerns raised?

- Environmentalist organizations such as Legal Initiative for Forests and Environment (LIFE) state that the amendment seems to be done with the sole intention of providing benefit to the Ayush industry.
- The term codified traditional knowledge is not clearly defined.
- The Bill takes away the involvement of local communities in deciding how benefits should be shared.
- Under the Bill, offenses previously considered illegal would no longer be treated as crimes but would carry various penalties.
- The Bill changes the adjudicating authority from a Judge to a government official. The penalty decisions will be based on an inquiry instead of a judgement after arguments in an open court.

#### About Biological Diversity Act, 2002

- It is a law passed by the Indian Parliament to protect biological diversity and to provide a system for the fair distribution of the advantages brought about by the utilization of traditional biological resources and knowledge.
- To fulfill requirements under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Act was passed. This law is necessary to safeguard India's biological legacy because it is one of the most biologically varied countries in the world.
- It was framed to give effect to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992, that strives for sustainable, fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge.
- The act envisaged a three-tier structure to regulate the access to biological resources:
  - The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)
  - The State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)
  - The Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)

### Rajya Sabha Passes Cinematograph Amendment Bill, 2023 Aimed At Curbing Film Piracy

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Need For The Amendment Of The Cinematography Amendment Bill And Its Provisions

#### Context:

- Recently, the Rajya Sabha passed the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which aims to tackle film piracy, overhaul age-based certification provided by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), and provide consistency in categorizing films and material across platforms.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Cinematography Act 1952.

#### Need For The Amendment Of The Cinematography Amendment Bill

- The Cinematograph Act, of 1952 needed to be amended due to several reasons:
  - to harmonize the law with various executive orders,
  - Supreme Court judgments, and other legislations;
  - to improve the procedure for licensing films for public exhibition by the CBFC;
  - and to expand the scope of categorizations for certification.
  - to address the issue of unauthorized recording and exhibition of films and curb the menace of piracy, which is causing them huge losses.

#### What are the provisions of the bill?

- **Tackling Piracy:** The Bill prohibits carrying out or abetting the unauthorised recording and unauthorized exhibition of films. Attempting an unauthorised recording will also be an offence.
- **Unauthorised recording:** It means making or transmitting an infringing copy of a film at a licensed place for a film exhibition without the owner's authorization.
- **Unauthorised exhibition:** It means the public exhibition of an infringing copy of the film for profit at a location not licensed to exhibit films or in a manner that infringes upon the copyright law.
- **Certifications:** It introduces three certifications under the 'UA' category, UA 7+, UA 13+ and UA 16+, which means that children younger than the given age limits can access such movies with parental guidance.
- **Board of Film Certification:** The Act constitutes the Board of Film Certification for certifying films for exhibition. Such certifications may be subject to modifications/deletions. The Board may also refuse the exhibition of films.



- **Separate certificate for television/other media:** Films with an 'A' or 'S' certificate will require a separate certificate for exhibition on television, or any other media prescribed by the central government. The Board may direct the applicant to carry appropriate deletions or modifications for the separate certificate.
- **Validity of certification:** Under the Act, the certificate issued by the Board is valid for 10 years. The Bill provides that the certificates will be perpetually valid.
- **Revisional powers of the central government:** The Act empowers the central government to examine and make orders in relation to films that have been certified or are pending certification. The Board is required to dispose of matters in conformance with the order. The Bill removes this power of the central government.



### States' Lax Response To Lynching

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Mains Booster:** What Is Mob Lynching, Tehseen Poonawala Versus Union Of India, Remedial Directions Given By The SC And Associated International Associated

#### Context:

- Recently, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Governments of Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana based on a petition filed by the **National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)**.
- The **petition seeks an explanation for the failure to address lynching and mob violence against Muslims** by cow vigilantes despite a landmark judgment in **Tehseen Poonawala versus Union of India in 2018**.

#### What is Mob Lynching?

- Mob lynching is when common people take the law into their own hands, violating human rights by killing others without due process.
- It is caused by intolerance, biases, vigilantism, and a lack of speedy justice.
- In India, it can be related to communal violence, cow-related issues, suspicion of child lifting, theft cases, etc.
- It constitutes a grand failure on part of the State which must prevent the violation thereof and must further protect the fundamental rights (Article 14, 15 and 21) guaranteed to its citizens under the Constitution.
  - **Articles 14** (equality before the law),
  - **Article 15** (religious non-discrimination) and
  - **Article 21** (right to life)

#### About Tehseen Poonawala Judgment

- The Supreme Court, under Justice Dipak Misra, emphasized that it is the state's duty to protect its citizens.
- The judgment condemned incidents of lynchings and their glorification on social media, questioning whether tolerance and diversity values were eroding.
- The court warned against vigilantism, stating that states must prevent any form of it, including cow vigilantism, as it leads to anarchy and a violent society. Vigilantism should not be tolerated under any circumstances.

#### Example of Cases Highlighted in NFIW Petition

- In early 2023, several incidents of violence against Muslims were reported in different parts of India.
- These alleged attacks included a Muslim man being lynched in Haryana for transporting a cow, two men being lynched and set on fire in Rajasthan, and a 56-year-old man being lynched in Bihar over suspicions of carrying beef.
- In April, Asif Qureshi was allegedly assaulted in Latur, Maharashtra, in the presence of two constables and three home guards, an attack on a bus carrying Hajj pilgrims in Rajasthan, and the brutal assault of two Muslim men in Odisha.
- The violence culminated in June with the fatal assault on two men suspected of smuggling beef, leaving one dead and the other undergoing treatment in Mumbai.
- These incidents sparked outrage and raised concerns about communal tensions in the country.

#### Remedial directions given by the SC

- **Appointment of Nodal Officer:** The designated nodal officer, not below the rank of Superintendent of Police (SP), will be appointed to address measures against prejudice-motivated crimes like mob violence and lynching.
- **Immediate Lodging of FIR:** Local police must immediately lodge a First Information Report (FIR) upon noticing an incident of lynching or mob violence.
- **Duties of the Nodal Officer and Station House Officer:** The appointed nodal officer in the district must be informed by the Station House Officer (SHO) after registering the FIR. The nodal officer is responsible for ensuring the victims' families are protected from further harassment.
- **Personal Monitoring of Investigation:** The nodal officer must personally monitor the investigation of the crime to ensure its proper handling. The investigation and chargesheet filing should be completed within the stipulated period as per the law.
- **Compensation Scheme for Victims:** A compensation scheme should be established to provide support to the victims of prejudice-motivated crimes.
- **Non-compliance Consequences:** Failure by police or district administration officers to comply with court directions will be considered deliberate negligence and misconduct.
- **Disciplinary Actions:** States should take appropriate disciplinary action against officials who fail to prevent mob lynching incidents despite prior knowledge.

### What are the steps taken by the government and the judiciary to prevent this?

- In 2018, the Supreme Court of India issued a comprehensive set of guidelines aimed at addressing the alarming issue of mob lynching and cow vigilantism in the country.
- These guidelines encompass preventive, remedial, and punitive measures to effectively combat this menace.
- The preventive measures recommended by the Supreme Court include the identification of vulnerable areas, the deployment of police patrols in such regions, and the prompt registration of FIRs whenever incidents of mob violence occur.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs issued an advisory in 2019 to all the states and union territories to

implement the Supreme Court's guidelines and take effective action against mob lynching.

- In response to the gravity of the situation, some states like Rajasthan, Manipur, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh have introduced or proposed specific anti-lynching laws.
  - These laws define mob lynching as a distinct criminal offense and prescribe stringent penalties for those involved in such acts.

### International Laws to Deal with Mob Lynching

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

### Should The Age Of Consent Be Revised In India?

**Priority: Medium**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is POCSO Act?

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Misuse of the POCSO Act and Related concerns

#### Context:

- In a recent appeal hearing, the Bombay High Court raised concerns about the age of consent in India's Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.
- The court emphasized that the enforcement of the POCSO Act has led to the prosecution of adolescents engaged in consensual relationships with minors, sparking calls for a reevaluation of the age threshold.

#### Defining a Child

The POCSO Act defines a child as any person below 18, aligning with international conventions.

#### Challenges

- Child sexual abuse is a complex issue exacerbated by digital threats.
- The conviction rate remains low, and consensual cases under POCSO pose legal challenges due to the Act's stringent provisions

#### Understanding the POCSO Act

- Under the POCSO Act, anyone engaging in penetrative sexual assault with a child under 18 can face imprisonment ranging from seven years to life.

- Even if a girl is 16, her consent is not considered, and any sexual activity is treated as rape, aligning with Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

### Misuse of the POCSO Act

- Instances of misuse have come to light where parents, seeking to control their children's choice of spouse, led to elopement.
- This resulted in charges under the POCSO Act for rape and other related laws. The Vijaylakshmi vs. State case in 2021 prompted discussions on redefining the term "child" and potentially lowering the age of consent to 16.

### Features of the POCSO Act

- The POCSO Act, enacted in 2012, aims to protect children from sexual offenses, harassment, and pornography.
- It establishes a gender-neutral framework, allows reporting of abuse at any time, mandates reporting by witnesses, and provides safeguards for child victims.

### Related Initiatives

- Various initiatives like the Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Juvenile Justice Act, Child Marriage Prohibition Act, and Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act complement the POCSO Act.

### Handling Consensual Cases

- Courts have been hesitant to convict in consensual cases due to the Act's severe penalties, leading to concerns about its dilution.
- Recent High Court verdicts have questioned victim consent in such cases.

### Impact

- If consensual cases continue to be quashed, it could undermine the POCSO Act's effectiveness.
- Police responsibilities in cases involving missing children or other cognizable offenses would persist

### The Way Ahead

- Courts and rights activists advocate for changes in age of consent rules, calling on the government to address the issue.
- Education efforts for adolescents are essential to ensure awareness of the Act's provisions.
- High Courts can use their powers to ensure justice and prevent misuse of legal processes.
- Age-wise analysis of cases nationwide can inform a potential reduction in the age of consent.

- While Parliament holds jurisdiction, Supreme Court intervention may bridge the gap between the law and High Court verdicts, ensuring a balanced approach to age of consent issues.

## Revised Manufacturing Rules For Drug Firms: What Changes, And Why

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Mains Booster:** What Are The Revised Manufacturing Rules For The Pharmaceutical Industries And Need For Improved Standards

### Context:

- Recently, the Jan **Vishwas Bill** was passed by both houses of Parliament with the aim to improve the **ease of doing business in the pharmaceutical sector**.
- The bill seeks to amend two provisions of the **law governing the manufacture, storage, and sale of medicines in India**. It will amend 183 provisions across 42 laws to do away with **imprisonment or fines for certain offenses**.

### What was the need for improved standards?

- The Jan Vishwas Bill proposes two important changes to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- The first change involves replacing imprisonment with fines for companies repeatedly using government analysis or test reports to promote their products. The second allows for the "compounding" of offences under specific sections of the existing law.
- **Rationalization of standards:** The implementation of the new norms will bring the Indian Pharmaceutical industry on par with global standards.
- The improved standards will ensure that pharmaceutical companies follow **standard processes, and quality control measures**, and do not cut corners, improving the quality of medicines available in India as well as sold in the global market.
- **Recent contamination incidents:** A series of incidents has emerged involving alleged contamination in syrups, eye drops, and eye ointments manufactured in India which have been linked to significant fatalities, including 70 children in the Gambia, 18 children in Uzbekistan, three individuals in the United States, and six deaths in Cameroon.
- **Deficiencies:** Government inspection of 162 manufacturing units identified deficiencies:
  - unchecked incoming raw materials,

- o lacking product quality reviews,
- o inadequate quality issue investigation,
- o cross-contamination risk,
- o flawed manufacturing/testing areas,
- o professional shortages, and inadequate documentation.
- **Promotion of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP):** Out of the current 10,500 drug manufacturing units in the country, only 2,000 are WHO-GMP certified and meet global standards. After a series of incidents, a Chitan Shivir proposed implementing **revised good manufacturing practices (GMP) from the 2018 draft schedule M** of drugs and cosmetics rules.
- **Ensure uniformity across states:** Stakeholders also recommended establishing a nationwide IT platform to ensure uniform processes for licensing, inspection, and quality assurance across states, aiming for consistent medicine quality throughout the country.

#### What are the major changes?

- The revised GMP guidelines focus on quality control measures, proper documentation, and IT backing to maintain the quality of medicines produced.
- **Focus on Quality:** Companies will now be required to
  - o conduct regular quality reviews for all products,
  - o ensure consistency in quality and processes,
  - o thoroughly investigate deviations or suspected defects, and
  - o implement preventive actions.
- Additionally, a change control system **will evaluate any modifications affecting production or product quality.**
- **Documentation:** The guideline emphasizes proper documentation practices to meet global standards.



- **Stability studies:** The companies will also have to carry out stability studies as per the **climate conditions.**

- The companies will be needed to mandatorily maintain the drugs in a stability chamber, set the proper temperature and humidity, and carry out an accelerated stability test as well.
- **Implementation of GMP-related computerized systems:** The guidelines stipulate that companies must implement GMP-related computerized systems to safeguard data from tampering.
- These systems serve as barriers against unauthorized access and changes to process-related data enhancing the accuracy and reliability of records.
- **Accuracy:** Sensitive data manually entered into the system will undergo additional validation checks, **confirming the precision of the input.**

#### How will the changes help?

- **Quality:** Instituting the same quality across the industry will give confidence to regulators from other countries and will improve the quality of drugs in the domestic markets.
- **Reduce repeated inspections:** It will ensure that all the manufacturing units in the country are at par with global standards, thereby reducing the need for repeated inspections by different regulators.
- This initiative will position India as a quality pharmaceutical hub of the world. Moreover, it guarantees that our citizens will access medicines of export-quality medicines.
- **Implementation:** The bigger companies with a turnover of over 250 crores will need to implement these measures within six months and smaller companies within a year.

#### What are the issues?

- **Impact on smaller companies:** The **smaller companies** have to make drastic changes within a year which may lead to increased expenses for the company and reduce their profitability.
- **Compounding:** Under this amendment, companies violating certain provisions will still face potential imprisonment and fines, but they **have the option to pay a fine instead of going through a court trial.**
  - o Compounding allows companies to pay a fine instead of undergoing criminal proceedings.
- The new amendment raises questions about whether penalties for violations like drugs leading to death or injury, adulterated medicines, and spurious medicines should be subject to compounding.

## Causing Floods Is A Terrorist Offence In Proposed Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill To Replace Indian Penal Code

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill (BNS)

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Section 111(6) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill (BNS) and Associated Concerns

### Context:

- The recently, proposed **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill (BNS)** introduced new provisions, including defining causing "**floods**" as a terrorist offense.
- The bill aims to replace the **British-era Indian Penal Code, 1860** and establishes a separate definition of terrorism within general law, **distinct from the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967**, which is focused on terrorist activities.
- The bill is currently under examination by a Parliamentary Committee on Home Affairs.



### Section 111(6) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill (BNS)

- Section 111 (6) (a) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill (BNS) identifies terrorist as a any person who "develops, manufactures, possesses, acquires, transports, supplies or uses weapons, explosives, or releases nuclear, radiological or other dangerous substance, or cause fire, floods or explosions."

### What are the Concerns?

- **Lack of protection against false implications:** Experts argue that the proposed law lacks safeguards against false implication as available under the UAPA and the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).
  - Under the MCOCA and the UAPA, there is a provision that before filing of FIR there has to be an approval by a senior police officer.
  - The investigation can only be carried out by an officer of a particular rank and there is a bar on

the court to take cognisance of the case without government sanctions. If these safeguards are not there, the trial cannot proceed.

- Any police officer **can register an FIR against an individual as a terrorist without prior approval.**
- The language, ingredients, and interpretation of the new law closely resemble the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.
  - The UAPA has often been criticised for draconian provisions. Under the anti-terror law, 4,690 persons were arrested between 2018 and 2020, but only 3% were convicted.
- The bill proposes stringent punishments for terrorist offenses, including a minimum five-year imprisonment and the possibility of the death sentence.

### Other Key changes proposed in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill

- **Sedition:** The Bill removes this offence. It instead penalises the following:
  - exciting or attempting to excite secession, armed rebellion, or subversive activities,
  - encouraging feelings of separatist activities, or
  - endangering sovereignty or unity and integrity of India.
  - These offences may involve exchange of words or signs, electronic communication, or use of financial means.
  - These will be punishable with imprisonment of up to seven years or life imprisonment, and a fine.
- **Terrorism:** The Bill defines terrorism as an act that intends to threaten the unity, integrity, and security of the country, to intimidate the general public or disturb public order. Terrorist acts include:
  - using firearms, bombs, or hazardous substances (biological or chemical) to cause death, danger to life, or spread a message of fear,
  - destroying property or disrupting essential services, and
  - activities included in the treaties listed in the Second Schedule of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 such as unlawful seizure of aircraft or taking of hostages.
- Punishment for attempting or committing terrorism includes:
  - death or life imprisonment, where the offence has resulted in death of any person,
  - imprisonment term between five years and life in other cases.

- An offender will also be liable to a fine of at least five lakh rupees.
- The Bill also penalises conspiring, organising, or assisting in preparation of any terrorist act with an imprisonment term between five years and life imprisonment, and a fine of at least five lakh rupees.
- **Organised crime:** The Bill defines organised crime as:
  - a continuing unlawful activity such as kidnapping, extortion, contract killing, land grabbing, financial scams, and cybercrime,
  - carried out by use of violence, intimidation, or other unlawful means,
  - to obtain material or financial benefit, and
  - carried out by individuals acting singly or jointly, as members of or on behalf of a crime syndicate.
- Attempting or committing organised crime will be punishable with:
  - death or life imprisonment, where the offence results in death of any person, and
  - imprisonment term between five years and life, in other cases.
  - The offender will also be liable to pay a fine.
- **Petty organised crime:**
- The Bill makes attempting or committing petty organised crime punishable with imprisonment between one and seven years, and a fine.
- Petty organised crimes are those which cause **general feelings of insecurity among citizens**, and are committed by organised criminal groups/gangs.
- These include **organised pick pocketing, snatching, and theft.**
- **Murder by a group of persons on grounds of caste or race:** The Bill specifies separate penalty for murder committed by five or more people on specified grounds.
- These include race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, or personal belief. Each offender will be punishable with imprisonment between seven years and life, or death. It will also attract a fine.
- **Death penalty for gang rape of minor:** IPC allows death penalty for gang rape of women below 12 years of age. The Bill allows death penalty for gang rape of women below 18 years of age.
- **Sexual intercourse by deceitful means:** The Bill penalises the act of sexual intercourse with a woman (not amounting to rape) through

deceitful means or a promise of marriage without intending to fulfil it. It will be punishable with simple or rigorous imprisonment up to 10 years, and a fine.

- **Extending applicability of certain offences to boys:** Under the IPC, importing girls under the age of 21 years for illicit intercourse with another person is an offence. The Bill specifies that **importing boys under the age of 18 years for illicit intercourse** with another person will also be an offence.
- **Mob lynching:** The act defines mob lynching as a crime specifying that the mob has to be a "group of five or more persons."

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

**Issues Relating To Development And Management Of Social Sector/Services Relating To Health, Education, Human Resources**

**Karnataka Reported More Than 45,000 Teen Pregnancies From January 2020 To June 2023: RTI Reply**

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Mains Booster: Concerns Associated With Teenage Pregnancies

**Context:**

- According to information obtained through an RTI request by **Odanadi Seva Samsthe, an NGO** dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating sexually exploited women and children, the Commissionerate of Health and Family Welfare Services of Karnataka has revealed a **significant increase in teenage pregnancies over the past three years.**
- The total count of teenage pregnancies reported in Karnataka from January 2020 to June 2023 stands at 45,557.

- In the first half of 2023 alone, there have been an additional 2,736 reported cases of teenage pregnancies in the state.
- Teenage pregnancy is pregnancy in a woman 19 years of age or younger.

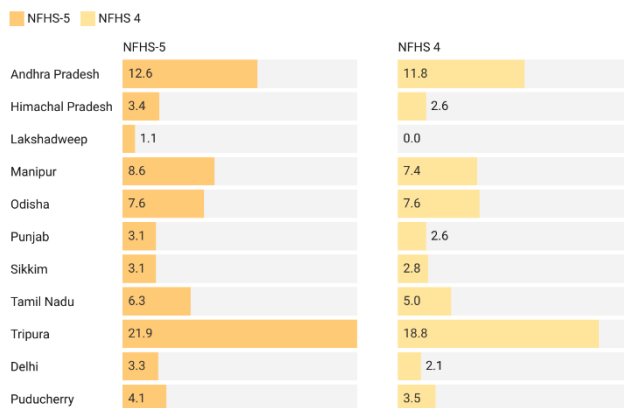
### Reasons

- **Child marriage and child sexual abuse:** Some families marry off their daughters to reduce their economic burden or earn income.
- **Lack of access to contraceptives:** In many places, barriers to **obtaining and using contraceptives prevent adolescents** from avoiding unintended pregnancies.
- Lack of information about sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Lack of education or school drop-out.

### Consequence of Teenage Pregnancy

- Pregnancy among underage girls will not only lead to discontinuation of their **education**
- **Malnutrition: Teenage pregnancy** poses a threat of **malnutrition** among mothers and children.
- Babies of adolescent mothers face higher risks of **low birth weight, preterm birth, and severe neonatal condition.**
- **Health of Mother:** Pregnant teens also have a higher chance of becoming anemic. Anemia is a reduction in the number of red blood cells (RBCs).
- **Increases Inequity:** Adolescent pregnancy tends to be higher among those with less education or of low economic status. Further, leading to increasing inequity.

#### States & UTs With Increase In Prevalence Of Teenage Childbearing



Source: National Family Health Survey (2019-2021) • Created with Datawrapper

### Suggestions

- **Family counseling and guidance:** Underaged mothers not only require family counseling and guidance on taking care of the child, but also ensuring its survival and bringing them into the mainstream.

- The government needs to pay attention to these aspects arising out of teenage pregnancies.
- **Awareness:** Utilizing mass media campaigns to promote safer sex may reduce teen pregnancy and improve outcomes for youth who may be more likely to have a teen birth.

### Steps taken by Government of Karnataka

- According to data from the **Karnataka State Legal Services Authority (KSLSA)**, a total of **584 minor victims** who suffered sexual violence were compensated over the last three years: 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23.
- **2020-21:** A compensation of ₹5.84 crore was provided to 219 minor victims, with 45 from Kalaburgi district alone.
- **2021-22:** ₹5.29 crore was paid as compensation to 187 victims, including 23 from Ramanagaram district and 21 from Kalburgi district.
- **2022-23:** In the most recent year, 2022-23, a compensation of ₹6.68 crore was disbursed to 178 victims, including 17 from each of the districts Mysuru, Dakshina Kannada, and Kolar.

### Conclusion

- Preventing pregnancy among adolescents and pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity are foundational to achieving positive health outcomes across the life course and imperative for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to maternal and newborn health.

### National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

- It is a statutory body set up under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.
- It works under the Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- **Members:** A chairperson who is a person of eminence and has done outstanding work for promoting the welfare of children.
- Six members were appointed by the Central Government out of which at least two are women, who are having experience in Education, Child Health, Juvenile justice Elimination of child labour, Child psychology or sociology Laws relating to children.
- **Mandate:** The Commission ensures that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms align with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- The Child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.

## WHO Asks Countries To Work Towards Unlocking The Power Of Traditional Medicine

**Priority: Medium**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** WHO Global Centre for Traditional medicine

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Significance Of Traditional Medicine And Cognizance Taken By World

### Context:

- Recently, the Director General of the WHO asked countries to work towards unlocking the benefits of traditional medicine and establishing its role in addressing global health challenges through evidence and action-based global strategy.
- India has six recognized systems of traditional medicine - **Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Yoga, Naturopathy, and Homoeopathy.**
- India currently has a medical workforce of 13 lakh allopathic doctors, 8 lakh AYUSH doctors, and 34 lakh nurses, auxiliary nurses, and midwives.



### WHO's Traditional Medicine Global Summit

- The first WHO global summit was organized in Gandhinagar on the 17th and 18th August as part of the G-20 Health Ministers' meeting.
- It has the theme "**Towards Health and Well-being for All**", and will explore the role of traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine in addressing pressing health challenges and sustainable development.

- **Aim:** Showcase the interconnectedness of Traditional Medicine with the natural environment in the form of '**Kalpavriksha**' and the scientific and technological advancements led by the Ministry of Ayush and WHO regional centers.
- The Director General of the WHO expressed hope that the **Gujarat Declaration** would help countries integrate traditional medicines in national health systems.
- He also acknowledged India's efforts to enhance **Universal Health Coverage** through the **Ayushman Bharat scheme** and the adoption of telemedicine.
- The Union Minister for Health suggested that a healthy blend of ancient knowledge and modern science could help the **G-20** countries achieve the UN's health-related **Sustainable Development Goals** while fostering an ethos of '**One Earth, One Family, One Future**'.
- He also conducted bilateral meetings with
  - **EU:** Fortifying healthcare systems, enhancing disease surveillance capacities, Ayurveda Telemedicine; clinical trials and research, Medical Value Travel.
  - **Saudi Arabia:** Exchanging experiences and best practices on regulatory requirements, joint ventures, technology transfer, de-risking supply chains, and boosting resilience.
  - **Germany:** Cooperation in the Pharmaceutical sector, strengthening Value-based Healthcare through Medical Value Travel, cooperation in traditional medicine, promotion of digital health

### WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine

- It is the first and only global outpost for traditional medicine in the world and is a collaborative project of the **Ministry of Ayush** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
- It was launched by the WHO in 2022 with the support of the Ministry of Ayush and is being constructed at Jamnagar, Gujarat.

### Objectives:

- Provide leadership on all global health matters related to traditional medicine
- Extend support to member countries in shaping public health and traditional medicine policies.
- Serve as a knowledge hub to integrate ancient wisdom with modern science.
- Supplement the WHO's core functions and accelerate the advancement of traditional medicine across the world.

### Significance of traditional medicine



- **Potential benefits:** AYUSH is doing evidence-based research to supplement modern medicine in order to develop scientific methods to deal with diseases like cancer, TB, and other communicable diseases and promote women's and child health.
- **Popularity:** Around 80% of the world's population use traditional medicine, such as herbal medicines, indigenous therapies, etc.
  - It is decentralized and thus easily accessible for rural people and the urban poor for whom other methods are inconvenient, time-consuming, and costly.
- **Access:** More than 12,500 Ayush-based Health & wellness centers are expected to be functional across the nation by 2026, out of which 8,500 are already in place.
  - The Ministry of Home Affairs recently notified the creation of a new visa category, the **Ayush Visa**, for foreign nationals to visit India for medical treatment including therapeutic care, wellness, and yoga.
- **Links with modern medicine:** Modern drugs have been inspired by the traditional medicine methods used by indigenous communities across the world.
  - Eg: Willow bark, and periwinkle form the basis for aspirin, and cancer drugs.

#### Other steps taken by India

- In 2014, the Union government established the Ministry of AYUSH, a separate ministry dedicated to traditional medicine and treatment.
- The **National AYUSH Mission** was launched to promote cost-effective AYUSH services, strengthen educational systems, enforce quality control of AYUSH drugs, and ensure sustainable availability of raw materials.
- The **FSSAI** introduced the **AYUSH Aahar** to help the producers of herbal nutritional supplements.
- The **AYUSH Export Promotion Council** has been set up recently to encourage exports and help find foreign markets.
- A network of AYUSH Parks is being established to encourage research and promote AYUSH manufacturing.
- An incubation centre has been developed by the All-India Institute of Ayurveda to encourage entrepreneurship in traditional medicine.



#### Medical Travel

- The **Advantage Healthcare India portal – One Stop Digital Portal For Patient** and **'Workforce Mobility'** was launched by the Union Minister of Health.
  - These two portals would allow India to offer a tangible solution to the most, pressing challenges in healthcare today.
- **Advantage Healthcare India (AHCi)** is the leading event in South East Asia focused on the medical value travel industry.
- The medical value travel sector is expected to grow at a CAGR of 29.3 % to reach a market size of ₹15 lakh crores by 2026 from ₹3.9 lakh crores in 2021.
- The Asia Pacific region including India accounts for nearly 46% of the sector.
- India has been ranked 10th out of the top 46 countries, 12th out of the world's top 20 wellness tourism markets, and 5th out of 10 wellness tourism destinations in Asia-Pacific on the **Medical Tourism Index 2020–21**.
- Bangladesh (54%), Iraq, Maldives, Afghanistan, Oman, Yemen, Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania account for 88% of the total international patients visiting India.
- The government has implemented various initiatives to promote India as a hub of medical tourism by developing awareness about the benefits of Ayurveda, yoga, and other Indian systems of medicine in the international market

#### Significance:

- Medical value travel will enable greater knowledge-sharing, sustainable partnerships, and increased synergies which will help build a

stronger and more efficient global health architecture.

- It will allow countries to offer and patients to access specialized resources and services that may not be available, affordable, or accessible in other parts of the world.

### Welfare Schemes For Vulnerable Sections Of The Population By The Centre And States And The Performance Of These Schemes; Needed, A Well-Crafted Social Security Net For All

**Priority: High**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Social security benefits

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Challenges Related To Historical Neglect Of Social Security By Indian Policymakers, Poor Utilization Of Budgetary Allocations

#### Context:

- India faces significant challenges in providing adequate social security to its workforce. According to the PLFS Annual Report 2021-22, approximately 91% of India's workforce operates in the informal sector, lacking access to social security benefits.
- Furthermore, around 53% of salaried workers do not enjoy any form of social security coverage, including provident fund, pension, healthcare, and disability insurance.

#### Current State of Social Security

- The state of social security in India is far from satisfactory. Only a mere 1.9% of the poorest 20% of the workforce has access to any social security benefits.
- Gig workers, constituting approximately 1.3% of India's labor force, face particularly poor social security prospects.
- Mercer CFS, which evaluates global pension systems, ranked India's social security system 40th out of 43 countries in 2021.

#### Budgetary Neglect and Underutilization

- One of the main challenges is the historical neglect of social security by Indian policymakers, resulting in poor utilization of budgetary allocations.
- This is evident in continued budget cuts to schemes like MGNREGA.
- The National Social Security Fund, established for unorganized sector workers, started with an initial

allocation of just ₹1,000 crores in FY11, falling far short of the estimated ₹22,841 crores needed.

- An audit revealed that ₹1,927 crores remained unutilized.
- Similarly, old-age pension schemes receive minimal contributions, stagnating at ₹200 per month since 2006, well below the minimum daily wage.

#### Comparative Global Perspective

- Comparatively, countries like Brazil have robust social security schemes.
- Brazil's General Social Security Scheme is contribution-based and covers a range of situations, including accidents, disabilities, illness, and family burdens.
- The Brazilian Constitution mandates national intervention in case of fund shortages, ensuring easy access to benefits with minimal bureaucracy.

#### Steps for India

To address its social security challenges, India should adopt a three-pronged approach:

1. **Expand EPFO Contributions:** Expanding contributions to the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) by both employers and employees can provide enhanced benefits and a stronger safety net.
  2. **Incentivize Informal Sector Participation:** Encourage partial contributions from informal workers, including the self-employed, to formalize their operations and contribute to social security.
  3. **Government Intervention:** The government must step in to support the unemployed, underemployed, and those with insufficient earnings, ensuring comprehensive social protection.
- Additionally, existing schemes like the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESI), and the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) should be expanded and receive reinforced budgetary support.
  - Awareness campaigns and funding for worker facilitation centers can help inform workers about their rights and available schemes.

#### Conclusion

India must prioritize comprehensive and accessible social security systems to protect the livelihoods and well-being of all workers, ultimately fostering equitable growth and enhanced social protection in

the country. Lessons from successful international models, like Brazil's, can guide India in this endeavor.

## Rohini Panel Submits Long-Awaited Report: What Is 'Sub-Categorisation' Of OBCs?

Priority: High 

Primary Source: Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Rohini Panel on Backward castes

Prepp Mains Booster: Findings Of The Rohini Panel Report And Challenges

### Context:

- Recently, the **long awaited report for the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC) caste groups was submitted to the President Droupadi Murmu.**
- A **four-member commission headed by Justice G Rohini was appointed to examine this issue and suggest corrective measures** to ensure equitable distribution of benefits among OBC communities.

### About Justice Rohini Commission

- The commission was set up on October 2, 2017, **under Article 340 of the Constitution.**
- It was tasked with **sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** and equitable distribution of benefits reserved for them.
- It was **headed by former Delhi High Court judge, Justice G. Rohini.**

### What are the Terms of Reference of the Rohini Commission?

- Examining Inequitable Distribution:** The commission was to assess the extent of uneven allocation of reservation benefits among various OBC castes or communities included in the Central List.
- Mechanism for Sub-Categorization:** It was mandated to devise a scientific approach, criteria, norms, and parameters for the sub-categorization within the broader OBC category.
- Identifying and Classifying:** The commission was required to identify and classify specific castes, communities, sub-castes, or synonyms in the Central List of OBCs into their respective sub-categories.
- Identifying any discrepancies or errors:** The commission was tasked with examining the entries in the Central List of OBCs and suggesting necessary revisions to address issues such as

repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies, and errors in spelling or transcription.

### Findings of the Report

- The Commission's analysis of 1.3 lakh central jobs and OBC admissions to central higher education institutions unveiled a significant disparity.
- Unequal Distribution:** It showed that 97% of the total opportunities were concentrated by only 25% of the OBC sub-castes and 24.95% of these jobs and seats have gone to just 10 OBC communities.
- Underrepresented OBC Communities:** Around 37% of the total OBC communities, amounting to 983 groups, were identified as having absolutely no representation within both job positions and educational institutions.
- Limited Representation:** Within the framework of OBC sub-castes, a mere 2.68% representation in terms of recruitments and admissions was observed among 994 OBC sub-castes.

### Challenges faced by the Rohini Commission

- Absence of data:** The analysis suffered with the lack of accurate and updated data regarding the population of various OBC communities.
- Delayed in data collection:** While the Census 2021 was intended to collect data on OBCs, the pandemic delayed the process.
- Demand for Caste Census:** Various political parties and OBC groups have advocated for a caste census to provide accurate population data for informed policy decisions.
- The [Patna High Court's recent dismissal of a challenge paved the way for a caste survey in Bihar.](#)

### What is Sub-categorization of OBCs?

- The term "**Other Backward Class (OBC)** refers to a category of socially and educationally disadvantaged communities.
- The concept of OBC is used in the context of affirmative action and reservation policies to address historical social and economic inequalities among different groups in the country.
- Sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) involves the segmentation of the current OBC list into more specific groups,** considering factors like socioeconomic status and educational achievements.
- The **goal is to guarantee that the advantages of reservation policies extend to the most disadvantaged and marginalized segments**

within the OBCs, rather than benefiting only a select few dominant communities.

### What is the need for sub-categorisation of OBCs?

- **OBCs in India receive a 27% reservation** in central government jobs and educational institutions.
- However, **concerns emerged over time that only a few affluent OBC communities were disproportionately benefiting from this reservation**, leaving the majority with limited access to its advantages.
- To address this, the concept of "sub-categorization" within the OBC quota was proposed.

### Status of OBC Reservation developed over the years

- **Kalelkar Commission:** It was set up in 1953 and was the first to identify backward classes other than the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at the national level.
- **Mandal Commission Report:** In 1980, it estimated the OBC population at 52% and classified 1,257 communities as backward.
- 102nd Constitution Amendment Act, 2018: It provided constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).

### Conclusion

The sub-categorization of OBCs aims to address the unequal distribution of reservation benefits within this group. The Justice Rohini Commission's efforts to classify and balance opportunities for various OBC communities reflect the need for more equitable representation.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## Chhattisgarh Cabinet Paves Way For 32% Tribal Quota In Education

Priority: Medium



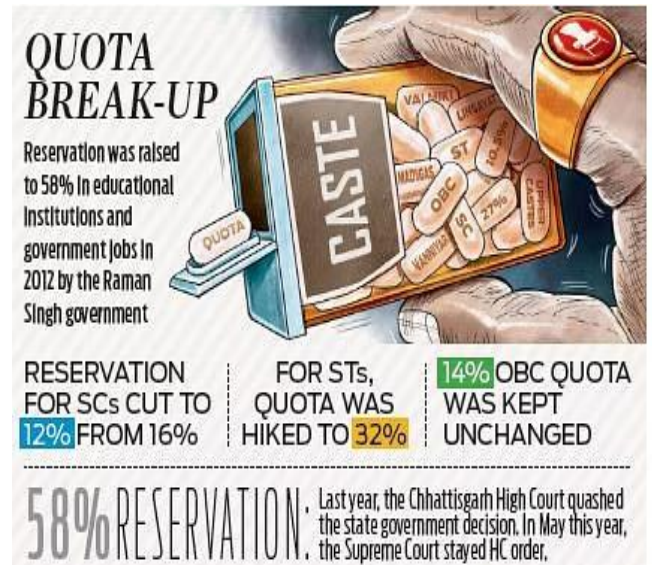
Primary Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Constitutional Framework related to STs, Major Tribes in Chhattisgarh

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Government Initiatives for Tribal development, availing Equality of status and Opportunity

### Context:

- In a recent move, the Chhattisgarh cabinet decided to implement a 58% reservation policy in the admission process for educational institutions within the state.
- This decision has raised considerable debate and scrutiny due to its implications on representation and constitutional limits.



### Changing Reservation Quotas

- Under this new policy, the reservation quotas for different groups have been adjusted.
- The reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs) has been reduced from 16% to 12%, while the quota for Scheduled Tribes (STs) has been increased to 32%. Other Backward Classes (OBCs) will retain their 14% reservation.

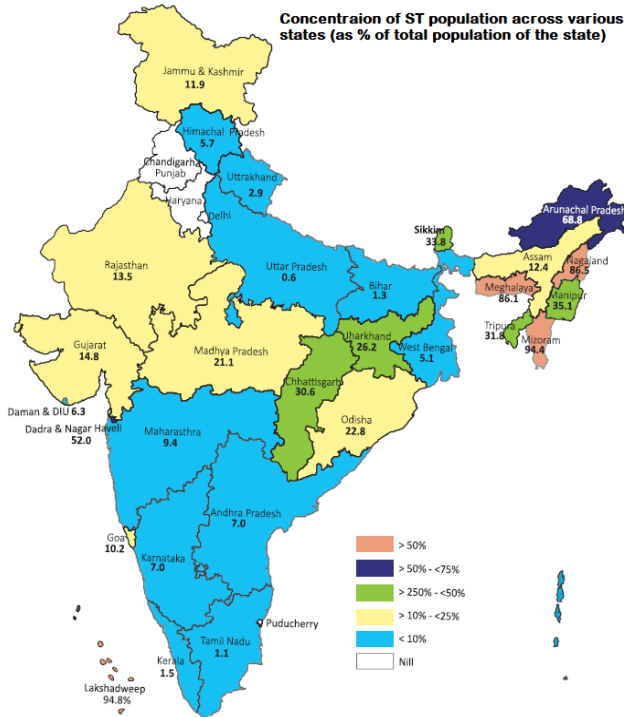
### Legal Battles and Interim Relief

- The background of this reservation policy dates back to 2012 when similar changes were made.
- However, in September 2022, the Chhattisgarh High Court declared the government's decision to reserve 58% of seats as "unconstitutional" since it exceeded the 50% cap set by legal precedent.
- In May 2023, the Supreme Court granted interim relief, allowing the state to maintain the existing reservation system for appointments, selections, and educational admissions while the matter remains under review.

### Constitutional Framework

- The Indian Constitution deals with reservation through several articles.

- Article 15(4) and Article 15(5) provide for special provisions to advance backward classes and allow for reservations in educational institutions.
- Article 16(3) and Article 16(4) permit reservations in public employment for different categories of citizens. These provisions aim to promote social justice and equal opportunities.



### Importance of Equality

- The Constitution of India enshrines the fundamental right to equality, ensuring equal treatment irrespective of caste, religion, or place of birth.
- The preamble emphasizes "equality of status and opportunity," making reservation policies a means to rectify historical inequalities.
- Chhattisgarh's recent decision, while addressing historical disparities, also highlights the ongoing debate surrounding the constitutionality of reservation quotas and their adherence to legal limits.

### Government Initiatives for Tribal Development

- Eklavya Model School
- Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana
- Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme (RGNF)
- Vocational Training Center in Tribal Areas
- Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
- MGNREGA

### Who Are The Paharis And Paddaris, Proposed For ST Status In J&K?

Priority: Medium



**Primary Source:** Indian Express

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Tribes in J&K, Paharis and Paddaris

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Why is Gujjar-Bakerwal Community opposing the ST status for Paharis And Padari Tribes

**Context:**

- Recently, the Government has introduced the **Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023**, which aims to **include four communities in the Scheduled Tribes (STs) list** in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The communities being considered for inclusion are "**Gadda Brahmin**," "**Koli**," "**Paddari Tribe**," and "**Pahari Ethnic Group**."



### Who are the Paharis and Paddari Tribe?

#### Pahari Ethnic Group

- This group includes Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, and consists of people of Kashmiri origin who **settled in the Rajouri and Poonch districts** over a period of time.
- Among the Paharis, there are upper caste Hindus and also people who were displaced from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.
- In 2012-13 J&K government commissioned a study by Prof Amin Peerzada of Kashmir University, which supported the ST status of Paharis but the centre rejected the demand at that time.
- The Paharis finally got 4% reservation in jobs and educational institutions in 2019.
- In 2019, Justice (ret'd) G.D. Sharma commission was appointed to identify groups that were socially, educationally and economically backward. The Commission recommended ST

status for Gadda Brahmins, Kolis, Paddari Tribe, and Pahari Ethnic Group.

#### Paddari Tribe

- They reside in the **remote Paddar area of the Kishtwar district**, sharing **borders with Zaskar (Ladakh) in the north and the east, Pangi in Himachal Pradesh in the south**, and the rest of J&K in the west.
- As per 2011 census, Paddari population is 21548 comprising 83.6% Hindus, 9.5% Buddhists, and 6.8% Muslims.
- The people of this area speak the Paddari language.

#### Dominant ST communities in J&K

- The **primary Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities in Jammu and Kashmir are the Gujjars and Bakerwals**.
- These communities are predominantly nomadic, migrating with their livestock to higher reaches in the summer and returning before winter.
- With a **population of around 18 lakh, the Gujjar-Bakerwal communities constitute the third-largest group in J&K after Kashmiris and Dogras**.
- They were **granted ST status in 1991**, providing them with various benefits, including reservations in government jobs and educational institutions.

#### Why is Gujjar-Bakerwal Community opposing the ST status for these communities?

- Gujjar-Bakerwal leaders stated that the Gadda Brahmins and Kolis, although being relatively small communities, are already designated as ST.
- It emphasizes that the Gadda Brahmins are a sub-caste of the Gaddis, while the Kolis are categorized as a sub-caste of Sippis signifying that both these communities are already in the ST list.
- Along with granting of ST status to the Paharis, the potential inclusion of the Paddari Tribe in the ST list is rooted in the argument that this group doesn't constitute a unified ethnic entity.
- Instead, they perceive the Paddari Tribe as a diverse amalgamation of individuals from various castes and religious backgrounds who share a particular language.

#### What is the process of inclusion in the ST list?

- The **procedure for adding tribes to the ST (Scheduled Tribe) list commences with recommendations put forth by the relevant State governments**.

- These suggestions are subsequently forwarded to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for thorough evaluation. Upon review, the recommendations are then sent to the Registrar General of India for further evaluation.
- This is followed by the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** approval before the list is sent to the Cabinet for a final decision.
- Hence, the final decision rests with the President's office issuing a notification specifying the changes under powers vested in it from Articles 342.
- The **inclusion of any community in the Scheduled Tribes come into effect only after the President assents to a Bill** that amends the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, as is appropriate, **after it is passed by both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha**.

#### International Relations

### Over The Borderline: On Pakistan and Its Security Situation With Afghanistan

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Geographical Location of Taliban

**Prepp Mains Booster:** How The Security Situation In Afghanistan Is Impacting Pakistan? Rise Of Taliban And Its Impact On India

#### Context:

- Recently, a suicide attack at a political rally by the hardline party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, a key member of Pakistan's ruling coalition, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, resulted in 44 fatalities and over 200 injuries.
- The attack was carried out by the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), which has **escalated its attacks in Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021** and has targeted both Taliban-affiliated groups and Afghanistan's minorities.
- The JUI-F, with ideological ties to the Afghan Taliban, has also been a previous target of IS-K's attacks.

#### How the Security Situation in Afghanistan is impacting Pakistan?

- Pakistan is facing the consequences of its past support to Islamist extremists for geopolitical purposes.

- Pakistan aided the Mujahideen, during Afghanistan's anti-communist civil war and later backed the emerging Taliban during the intra-Mujahideen conflict.
- After the Taliban's fall in 2001, Pakistan played a double game, supporting the U.S. war while harboring the Taliban.
- **Radicalisation of youth:** The prolonged civil war radicalized Muslim youth in the Af-Pak region, posing security threats to Pakistan.
- In 2014-15, Pakistan conducted an operation to crush the Pakistan Taliban, but the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan empowered their Pakistani counterparts (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) and enabled IS-K to become a formidable opposition to the Taliban in Kabul.
- **Porous Afghanistan-Pakistan borders:** The porous Afghanistan-Pakistan borders, previously used to support militancy, are now exploited by terrorists.
- Pakistan now faces a two-front security challenge from the Pakistani Taliban and IS-K, while dealing with political gridlock and a struggling economy.
- A crackdown on terrorism may bring temporary calm in the border region.



### Rise of taliban and its impact on India

- The Taliban's reemergence in Afghanistan has opened a Pandora's box of **radicalism, extremism, and narco-trafficking**.
- **Use of technology:** Social media and cyberspace for propaganda will be used to attract the disgruntled youth and may catalyze further terrorist violence in India.
- Radicalization through the Internet and social media, along with **terror financing through cryptocurrencies and crowdfunding**, has intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- According to a RAND report in 2019 terrorist organizations like al Qaeda and its affiliates, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Hezbollah as well as lone-wolf attackers have used


cryptocurrencies for drug trafficking, fund-raising, among other activities.

- **Haven for terrorist activities:** The Taliban regime views many terrorists and terror groups as 'brothers of faith' and has also helped them maintain their training camps in the country.
- **Pakistan:** The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan gives Pakistan "strategic depth" against India and serves as a recruiting ground for militants and terrorists.
- For example, in the first six months of 2022, 32 of the 118 terrorists killed in Jammu and Kashmir were foreigners. In contrast, of the 182 terrorists killed there in 2021, only 20 were foreigners.

### Conclusion

- Categorizing terror acts by **religious or ideology** will dilute the shared global commitment to fighting terrorism.
- The menace of terrorism **cannot be associated with any religion, nationality, civilisation or ethnic group**.
- Therefore, Pakistan should stop differentiating between Islamist militants as "good terrorists" and "bad terrorists" based on its geopolitical interests.

### India, ASEAN Agree To Review FTA by 2025

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Concepts of FTA's

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Trade Relations Between India And ASEAN And Need Of Revival Of FTA's

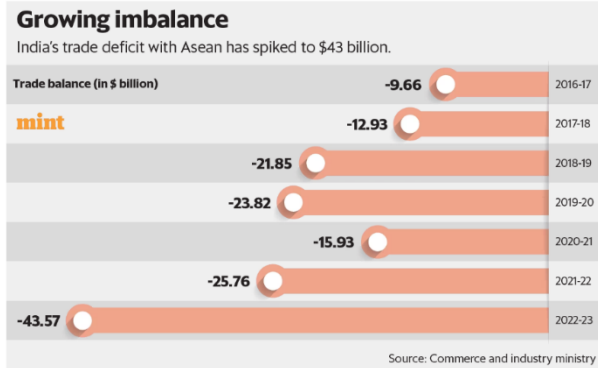
### Context:

- Recently, India and the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** have agreed to conclude the review of the existing **Free-Trade Agreement (FTA)** in goods by 2025
- The FTA between India and the 10-nation bloc came into effect 13 years ago. Indian businesses have long been pushing for its review.

### History

- The **ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement** entered into force on January 1, 2010. It created one of the world's largest free trade areas.
- This was followed up by the **ASEAN-India Trade in Services Agreement** and another pact on investments both of which were implemented in 2015.
- India's trade balance with ASEAN has deteriorated after the implementation of the FTA.

- While there was a surplus in trade balance with some ASEAN countries like Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Myanmar, a trade deficit emerged with countries like Vietnam. The trade balance has raised concerns due to the increasing asymmetry.



Graphic: Mint

### What does review encompass?

- A review exercise typically includes matters like
  - implementation issues,
  - rules of origin;
  - verification process and release of consignments;
  - Customs procedures;
  - further liberalisation of trade in goods; and
  - sharing and exchange of trade data.

### Trade between India and ASEAN:

- Exports:** In 2022-23, India's exports to ASEAN increased to \$44 billion from \$42.32 billion in 2021-22. India's non-oil and non-mineral export to ASEAN continued to increase
- Imports:** The imports jumped to \$87.57 billion in 2022-23 against \$68 billion a year ago. These imports have been dominated by non-oil and non-mineral products. The imports include products like textiles, electronic goods, chemicals, and machinery.
- These products are vital to India's manufacturing and services sectors, and the significant increase in their imports in 2021 suggests the growing demand for these products in India.

### What is the purpose of reviewing FTA?

- Eliminate trade barriers:** India has asked for a review of the agreement with the aim to eliminate barriers of the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement, which came into effect on January 1, 2010.
- Prevent Misuse of tariffs:** Goods from third countries are being channeled through ASEAN member nations to capitalize on duty advantages provided by trade agreements

- Address trade deficit:** The trade deficit widened to \$43.57 billion in the last financial year, from \$25.76 billion in 2021-22. It was just \$5 billion in 2010-11.
- India's exports to ASEAN have been affected due to non-reciprocity in FTA concessions, non-tariff barriers, import regulations and quotas.
- Non-reciprocity:** According to India the trade agreement with ASEAN was an "ill-conceived" agreement and unfair to the Indian industry.
- India's exports to ASEAN have been affected due to non-reciprocity in FTA concessions, non-tariff barriers, import regulations and quotas.

### India- ASEAN Relations

- Act East policy:** India's relationship with ASEAN is a key pillar of our foreign policy and the foundation of our Act East Policy
- Indian PM at the 12th ASEAN India Summit and the 9th East Asia Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, in 2014, formally enunciated the Act East Policy.
- Member of Regional forums:** Apart from ASEAN, India has taken other policy initiatives in the region that involve some members of ASEAN like **BIMSTEC, MGC etc.**
- India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting + (ADMM+) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).
- Economic Cooperation:** India-ASEAN trade and investment relations have been growing steadily, with ASEAN being India's fourth largest trading partner. India's trade with ASEAN is approx. 10.6% of India's overall trade. India's export to ASEAN stand at 11.28% of our total exports.
- ASEAN India Business Council (AIBC)** was set up in March 2003 in Kuala Lumpur as a forum to bring key private sector players from India and the ASEAN countries on a single platform for business networking and sharing of ideas.
- Connectivity:** Trade and connection with Southeast Asian countries via the North East have been a priority. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is one example along with these:
  - Kaladan Multimodal Transport
  - Mekong Ganga Corridor
  - The BCIMM Corridor.
  - IMT Highway



## The BRICS Test For India's Multipolarity Rhetoric

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What are BRICS countries?

Prepp Mains Booster: Increase In The Relevance Of Forum's Like BRICS

### Context:

- The article explores India's dilemma of simultaneously engaging with various groups while safeguarding its **national interests and navigating the complexities of an evolving geopolitical landscape**.
- The 15th BRICS summit will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- The summit is significant because it will be the **first in-person meeting** since 2019 and the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the first since the **Russian war in Ukraine**, and the first time that Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi will take part in such a restricted gathering of just four leaders since the **LAC stand-off** began in 2020.
- Moreover, it will discuss the **expansion of the grouping** by including countries like Iran, Bangladesh, and other developing economies

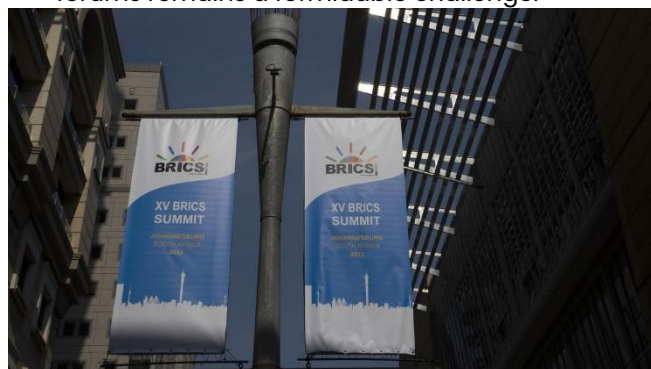
### What is leading to an increase in the relevance of forum's like BRICS?

- BRICS holds the potential for shaping future world politics, the recent global developments and challenges faced by the United Nations have rekindled the relevance of BRICS.
- Lack of inclusivity:** BRICS is more globally represented than the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the G-7, though less than the G-20 which is dominated by the West.
- Therefore**, the choices that BRICS makes could have major implications for the international system.
- Deficit in global governance:** The existing global governance structures are often criticized for being undemocratic and unrepresentative. This has created a void in addressing the concerns and interests of many countries, prompting the need for alternative platforms.
- The interest of around 40 countries in an expanded BRICS reflects the global South's frustration and discontent with their global position.
- Global geopolitical uncertainty:** Amid global uncertainty and shifting orders, BRICS serves as a

platform for nations to strategize, interpret geopolitics, and influence outcomes. Recent events like the Ukraine conflict and China's rise have revived BRICS' significance, making it a key arena for international collaboration.

### New Delhi's dilemmas

- Addressing Historical Inequities:** India's active participation in non-western multilateral forums such as [BRICS](#), [SCO](#), and global South must be seen as **India's response to the undemocratic and inequitable governance structures of post-Second World War** institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the UNSC. However, it is not to create or belong to an anti-U.S./West bloc either.
- Developmental, historical, and geographical context:** India's alignment with BRICS, SCO, and the global South is a natural fit given its developmental, historical, and geographical context. However, China's dominant presence in these forums introduces complexities, hindering India's perfect fit.
- Strategic Aspirations and Structural Hurdles:** Aspirations towards G-20, G-7, and Quad reflect India's structural and aspirational goals. However, achieving significant influence in these influential forums remains a formidable challenge.



### Challenges

- Geopolitical Faultline:** India is located right in the middle of an emerging geopolitical faultline with interests on either side, welcomed by either side, but fully belonging to neither.
- This could either make India a bridge between the great divides or its lack of loyalty to neither could make it a victim of emerging geopolitical contestations.
- Rise of competing blocs in the international system:** China and Russia are forging alliances that could lead to a clash between their affiliated organizations and the established U.S.-led order.

This alignment poses a challenge to the existing status quo.

- **Against multipolarity:** The Indian historical notion of multipolarity emphasizes equity, inclusion and representation, not bloc rivalry, ideological or otherwise. Despite its strong resistance to bloc politics, New Delhi will inevitably find itself pulled into such dynamics

### The China Question

- **Promotion of Chinese interests:** While a multi-polar world requires alternative forums and de-dollarization attempts, these efforts can also benefit China and its currency.
- **Divergence of interests:** Despite finding value in non-western institutions, ultimate Indian and Chinese objectives diverge.
- China's influence in expanded BRICS due to its size, economic clout, and initiatives like the Belt and Road poses a challenge for India, which lacks comparable resources.
- India's efforts to strengthen non-western institutions may indirectly support China's revisionist agenda and weaken the post-World War II order.

### Way forward

- **Balance global governance and national interest:** India must promote a more representative and equitable global governance on the one hand and ensure that such an order does not end up undercutting its own national interests.
- **Moderate Chinese influence:** India needs to balance curbing China's influence in non-western forums while not isolating other global South nations that find value in China's forum expansion efforts.
- New Delhi faces a complex challenge of simultaneously asserting itself in non-western forums like BRICS and SCO, countering China's growing influence, addressing Western norms, and securing a place in Eurocentric groups like UNSC and G-7.
- The challenge before India is to choose between a **China-centric world order or a West-centric world order**, or balance the two. If the latter is too preachy for India, the former is too Machiavellian.

## A 'Fab' Way To Conduct India-Japan Tech Diplomacy

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Semiconductor initiatives, QUAD

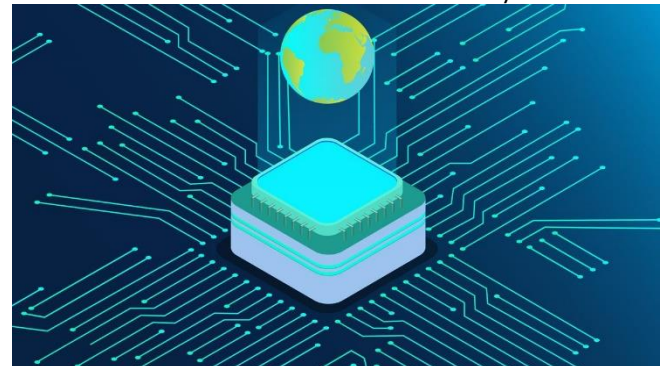
**Prepp Mains Booster:** International Supply Chain Disruptions And Geopolitical Tensions, What Are The Areas Of Focus Of The India-Japan Tech Partnership, India's International Partnerships In Semiconductors

### Context:

- Recently, India and Japan agreed to work together to create a resilient supply chain for semiconductors and develop the semiconductor ecosystem.
- Previously, India had agreed to a technology partnership with the U.S.A. which included the long-term strategic development of complementary semiconductor ecosystems.
- This has coincided with countries like the U.S.A., Japan, and the Netherlands imposing restrictions on the exports of semiconductor manufacturing materials to China.

### What are the areas of focus of the India-Japan tech partnership?

- The Indo-Japan partnership based on an MoU signed in July will focus on five areas:
  - **Semiconductor design,**
  - **Semiconductor manufacturing,**
  - **Equipment research,**
  - **Semiconductor supply chain resilience**
  - **Talent development.**
- The partnership is expected to enable government-to-government and industry-to-industry collaborations in semiconductors.
- It is necessary to boost both the available talent pool in the semiconductor industry and the number of **fabs**.
- The partnership aims to facilitate technology transfer and encourage research, and innovation.
- This will enable the two countries to emerge as leaders in the semiconductor industry.



### Challenges

- The partnership will contribute to addressing dynamic and emerging challenges such as

semiconductor miniaturization, AI integration, and quantum computing.

- **Semiconductor Miniaturization:** Making smaller and more powerful semiconductor components to satisfy demand for compact and efficient devices
- **AI Integration:** Integrating AI requires specialized semiconductors with high computational power and energy efficiency.
- **Quantum Computing:** Developing semiconductors to support quantum computing is difficult because of the delicate nature of quantum states and the need for advanced error correction mechanisms.

### An alignment of policies

- India and Japan have aligned their policies to support semiconductor manufacturing and research.
- **India's Make in India** and **Japan's Society 5.0** aim to achieve technological self-reliance and foster innovation-driven growth.
- The two countries have signed bilateral agreements to facilitate technology transfer, research, and reciprocal trade in semiconductor-related products.

### Harnessing Synergies

- India and Japan have recognized the importance of semiconductors in driving innovation, economic growth, and national security.
- **Japan has an advanced semiconductor industry** and has been a global leader in semiconductor manufacturing.
- On the other hand, **India has a growing IT sector** and subsequently rising demand for semiconductors.
- Therefore, the partnership leverages Japan's technological prowess and India's innovation and design capacities to create a mutually beneficial relationship.

### Supply Chain Disruptions and Geopolitical Tensions

- Geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions, particularly in the Indo-Pacific have led to countries attempting to diversify their supply chains and collaborate with other countries.
- Joint research initiatives allow countries to pool resources and expertise to tackle complex challenges in semiconductor design, manufacturing processes, and materials science.

- This would encourage the innovation and development of cutting-edge solutions, while also focusing on human resource development through skill exchange programs and training.

### The American partnership

- India and the U.S.A. have set up a technology partnership to cover investment, innovation, and workforce development.
- The U.S.A. recently introduced the **CHIPS and Science Act (2022)**, which imposes strategic curbs on the expansion of semiconductor manufacturing in countries that could pose a direct threat to the U.S.A. such as China.
- Similarly, Japan and the Netherlands have restricted exports of semiconductor manufacturing materials to China.
- There is a synergy among like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific such as **India, the U.S.A., Japan, and Australia (QUAD members)** to invest in critical technologies due to geostrategic and national security concerns associated with them.

### Opportunity

- Although the tighter export controls on China's chip manufacturing abilities are likely to impact the sales of Japanese chip companies, Japan has supported the move because of the geopolitical concerns associated with China's expanding capabilities.
- India's partnership with the leaders of the semiconductor industry could significantly diversify the semiconductor industry and provide an alternative to China.

### India's semiconductor initiatives

**India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)**  
It is a comprehensive decadal strategy with a \$10 billion budget that aims to catalyze the Indian semiconductor industry and digital and innovation economy.

**SEMICON 2023:**  
Annual conference of the India Semiconductor Mission which aims to highlight India's capabilities and innovations in semiconductor and chip design.  
◦ futureSKILL and futureDESIGN

**Modified Programme for Semiconductors and Display Fab Ecosystem (PLI) - 2021**  
The government will fund 50% of the project cost across all technology nodes for setting up semiconductor fabs.

**SEWFAP**  
Semiconductor Wafer FAB Acquisition Program  
Financial assistance to Indian companies for acquiring fabs outside India.

**Initiatives to Boost Semiconductor Industry in India**

**Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) programme:**  
It aims to develop new-generation processors as part of the government's commitment to encouraging open source in the country's innovation ecosystem.

**SPECS**  
Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors  
It aims to support the manufacturing of electronic components and semiconductors in India.

**Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme**  
It financially incentivizes and offers design infrastructure support in the development of semiconductors.

**Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (M-SIPS)**  
It incentivizes capital expenditure investments by 20% in SEZs and 25% in non-SEZs in Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) Industries.

prepp  
by design@prepp

### India's international partnerships in semiconductors

- **U.S.A:** As part of the **Initiative on Critical Emerging Technologies (iCeT)** which was launched in January 2023, India and the U.S.A. have agreed to cooperate in focus areas including semiconductors, scientific research and

- development, quantum and AI, defense innovation, space, and advanced telecom.
- India is also set to sign an agreement with Georgia Tech University, following an **MoU with Micron Technology** to establish a semiconductor unit and a research and development center in Ahmedabad.
  - **Japan:** In July 2023, India and Japan signed the MoU on semiconductor development, which will include design, manufacturing, equipment research and talent development.
  - **Taiwan:** Taiwanese chipmaker Foxconn signed an MoU with Indian firm Vedanta to set up a ₹1,54,000 crore semiconductor plant in Gujarat.
  - However, Foxconn withdrew from the project in July 2023.
  - ISMC, a joint venture between the Abu Dhabi-based Next Orbit Ventures and Israel's Tower Semiconductor has proposed to set up a \$3 billion plant in Karnataka.
  - The Singapore-based IGSS Ventures has proposed to set up a \$3.5 billion plant in Tamil Nadu.
  - The Government Of India has invited applications to set up Semiconductor Fabs and Display Fabs in India under the Modified Semicon India Programme.
  - It provides a fiscal incentive of 50% of the project cost to companies or joint ventures for setting up of Semiconductor Fabs in India.

### Conclusion

- The agreements between India and its QUAD partners indicate confidence in India's manufacturing and innovation capabilities.
- India can utilize Japan's technological skills and enhance its own innovation and design capacities to emerge as a leader in the global technological industry.
- This will allow India to cement its status in a future that will be characterized by advanced electronics, enhanced connectivity, and technological excellence.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## The Myanmar junta's empty gesture

**Priority: Medium**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Geographical Location Of Myanmar, India's Neighbouring Countries, Important Communication Points Between Neighbouring Countries

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Transition Of Military Rule In Myanmar And Issues, India – Myanmar Relations

### Context:

- The top decision makers of the army of Myanmar, currently bunkered in the capital, Naypyidaw, struggle to maintain control of enough territory to seriously contemplate even a heavily staged nationwide poll.
- With things being so unstable, many people are fleeing the country or joining armed groups.
- The military recently made headlines by announcing a reduction in the jail terms of figures such as Aung San Suu Kyi. However, this move should not be mistaken for a change in the military's behavior. Such amnesties have been used in the past to create a façade of goodwill, both domestically and internationally.



### Transition of Military rule in Myanmar and issues

- In 1948, the nation declared independence from the British. From 1962 to 2011, it was administered by the **military** forces.
- The **military leadership** (Junta) decided to move the country towards democracy in 2010. Despite the fact that the military forces remained dominant, political opponents were liberated and elections were permitted.
- Also drafted a law that is 75% seats for the elected members and 25% seats for the **military officials**.
- The **National League of Democracy (NLD)** won the 2015 election, the country's first free and fair election in which many parties competed, and established the government, increasing optimism

that the country is on its road to full democratic transition.

- The **Myanmar military** (also known as the Tatmataw) conducted a coup against the civilian government on 1 February 2021, calling the November 2020 general election results illegitimate and proclaiming a **state of emergency**. And arrested the democratic leaders.
- Due to the **state emergency**, protests started around the country against the military and their leadership. But the military still doesn't have control over large parts of the country.
- Recently, Myanmar's military regime commuted **Aung San Suu Kyi's** prison sentence by six years after the 78-year-old leader of the country was deposed in a coup in February 2021.
- However, Aung San Suu Kyi is still facing a 27-year prison sentence on spurious allegations.

### International organisations to bring normalcy in Myanmar

- In August 2022, **ASEAN** banned Myanmar's generals from attending meetings unless the organisation's ostensible peace plan made headway.

Previously, in April 2021, **ASEAN** issued a **five-point framework** on the Myanmar conflict, which included:

- Ending violence;
- Organising a meaningful conversation among all stakeholders;
- Appoint a designated ASEAN Envoy to facilitate the all-party engagement.
- Acceptance of help;
- The **Special ASEAN Envoy** will accompany the Military Leader to Myanmar.
- Maintaining contacts with China and Russia is an important strategy for Myanmar. Still, there is no clear road to full **ASEAN membership** while the officials commit such atrocities against their own people.
- The **UN Security Council** passed its first resolution on Myanmar in December 2022.
- The resolution called for the cessation of violence and the release of all political detainees, including **Aung San Suu Kyi**.
- India, along with Russia and China, had voted against the resolution.

### India and Myanmar – Diplomatic view point

- India's stance towards Myanmar walks a fine line between democratic promises and regional

security concerns. India needs Myanmar to go back to democracy.

- **Border Control:** Myanmar citizens have been accused of inciting unrest in Manipur. Due to concerns about human trafficking and drug smuggling in Myanmar, India suspended the **Free Movement Regime** in September 2022. India's Myanmar policy walks a fine line between democratic promises and regional security concerns.
- Also India has a number of projects with Myanmar – **Kaladan Multimodal project and India-Myanmar-Thailand highway project**.
- In addition, if there is any insurgency in North-eastern regions, India can use Myanmar as a shelter.
- **Influence of China on Myanmar:** India's commitment to democracy in Myanmar runs against its security worries in the northeast and its complicated relationship with China.
- The **Sairang-Hmawngbuchhuah railway project**, near the Myanmar border, is part of India's Act East Policy and intends to offset China's railway access in Myanmar via Yunnan and the planned China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

### As Modi Reiterates Power Devolution in Sri Lanka, Ruling Party Says No 13-A

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Location of Sri Lanka Relations & important Communication points,

**Prepp Mains Booster:** India – Sri Lanka Bilateral relations, 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to Sri Lankan Constitution



#### Context:

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently discussed the issue of Tamil aspirations during a meeting with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe.
- He urged Sri Lanka to implement the 13th Amendment, highlighting the importance of addressing the long-standing ethnic conflict.

## Understanding the 13th Amendment

- The 13th Amendment, a legislation passed in 1987, is a significant component of the Indo-Lanka Accord. It was designed to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, which had escalated into a civil war.
- The amendment created Provincial Councils across nine regions and established a power-sharing arrangement, granting these provinces the ability to self-govern.
- Their responsibilities included education, health, agriculture, housing, land, and police. However, limitations on financial powers and the President's overriding authority have hindered effective implementation.

### Controversy and Opposition

- The implementation of the 13th Amendment has faced opposition from Sinhalese nationalists who resist power-sharing with the Tamils.
- They view it as an imposition and argue for its abolition, asserting that provincial matters can be managed more efficiently by the central government. Meanwhile, Tamil groups believe the provisions fall short of meeting their aspirations.

### New Proposal and Reactions

- President Ranil Wickremesinghe proposed implementing the 13th Amendment without granting police powers.
- The proposal also included various infrastructure projects and legislative bills aimed at empowering provincial councils. However, it faced rejection from Tamil alliances, who argue that without a change in the unitary constitution, true devolution of powers cannot be achieved.

### India's Role and International Perspective

- India has consistently supported political and economic stability in Sri Lanka. It has called for the fulfillment of Tamil aspirations, emphasizing reconciliation and the 13th Amendment's implementation to protect the rights of all Sri Lankans.
- The United Nations Human Rights Council has also adopted a resolution urging Sri Lanka to adhere to commitments regarding devolution of political authority and provincial council elections.

### India-Sri Lanka Relations

- India and Sri Lanka share deep cultural, religious, and economic ties. The two countries have strong trade relations, and India is Sri Lanka's largest trading partner.

- Defense cooperation, joint military exercises, and maritime security initiatives underscore the importance of their strategic relationship.
- Challenges such as incidents involving Indian fishermen and Chinese investments in Sri Lanka continue to shape this complex bilateral relationship.

### Recent Programs and Agreements

- During the latest meeting, India announced a ₹75 crore development package for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.
- Additionally, an agreement on digital transactions was signed to facilitate the acceptance of UPI in Sri Lanka, further strengthening economic cooperation between the two nations.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## The Saudi Arabia-UAE Divide Becomes Public

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Saudi Arabia, UAE  
Geographical Location

**Prepp Mains Booster:** What Is Saudi Arabia – UAE Divide & How Saudi Arabia-UAE Divide Will Have An Impact On India?

### Context:

- In mid-July the Wall Street Journal disclosed that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, commonly known as MbS, expressed strong discontent towards the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.
- The reported tensions seemingly stemmed from the UAE ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ), being conspicuously absent from a pivotal **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** summit meeting during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit. This absence has raised questions about the underlying dynamics of the Saudi-UAE relationship.

## Areas of convergence

- The two countries collaborated in the war in Yemen,
- worked together to strengthen al-Sisi's regime in Egypt,
- viewed Iran as a regional threat,
- disliked the Muslim Brotherhood, and then collaborated closely to implement the blockade of Qatar.
- In 2019, they also subverted the nascent democratic process in Sudan by backing the armed forces against the civilian Prime Minister.



## Obvious differences in regional politics

- **Oil production:** In July 2017, the UAE rejected an "OPEC +" proposal to reduce oil production, citing the need to significantly increase its own base production. This move aligned with Abu Dhabi's efforts to enhance its oil production for maximum monetization.
- **Yemen:** The UAE withdrew its troops from Yemen in 2019, but continued to pursue a separate agenda of supporting the secessionist movement in the south and mobilising local fighters backing the independence of the south.
- The UAE set up **military bases in Eritrea and Somaliland**, creating a formidable strategic network connecting the **Gulf with the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa**. In contrast, Saudi Arabia took on the burden of military engagement in Yemen but achieved limited results over an eight-year period.
- The UAE also expanded its maritime footprint in the region by taking control of Yemeni ports and Socotra Island in the Gulf of Aden, and Perim Island at the mouth of the Bab al-Mandab.
- Saudi Arabia faced challenges in Syria due to Russian intervention in 2015, which prevented the overthrow of the Assad government.
- **Iran and Qatar:** Saudi Arabia encountered difficulties in dealing with Iran, as the United States did not respond to missile and drone

attacks in 2019. These setbacks prompted Saudi Arabia to shift towards de-escalation and regional dialogue.

- This shift began with the removal of the Qatar blockade in January 2021 and the initiation of talks with Iran in Baghdad in April 2021.
- However, the UAE showed reluctance to participate in these efforts, maintaining a reserved stance towards Qatar and pursuing its own approach to engaging with Iran.
- **Israel:** The UAE's normalization of ties with Israel in August 2020 marked a departure from the Saudi-backed Arab Peace Initiative, which prioritizes Palestinian interests before Arab-Israeli normalization.
- **Syria:** Saudi Arabia facilitated Syria's re-entry into the Arab League in May, though UAE's leader MbZ did not attend the summit.
- **Sudan:** In Sudan, the two Gulf nations are supporting different leaders — Saudi Arabia backs Army chief al-Burhan, while the UAE supports militia leader Dagalo, contributing to the ongoing civil conflict. The UAE reportedly feels uneasy about Saudi Arabia's swift normalization of ties with Iran in March of this year.

## Competition in the same sectors

- **Sectoral supremacy:** Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE aspire to establish their dominance in key sectors such as global business, tourism, finance, and technology.
- Saudi Arabia seeks to position itself as the primary hub for regional trade, a move that directly challenges the UAE's current position as the dominant player in this field.
- **Development of Ports:** Both nations are engaged in ambitious plans to develop ports within the Gulf and the Red Sea, with the aim of asserting their presence in logistical connectivity projects aligned with China's Belt and Road Initiative.

## Strengths of UAE and Saudi Arabia

- **UAE:** Despite its smaller size, the UAE is determined not to be viewed as a junior partner to Saudi Arabia in political, economic, and logistical spheres.
- The UAE capitalizes on the **visionary leadership, dynamism, and ambition** of its leaders to compensate for its size limitations.
- The UAE's head start in global engagements across **trade, connectivity, tourism, finance**, and technology strengthens its competitive stance.

- **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia's leadership role in the Arab and **Islamic world remains prominent**
- The kingdom's pivotal role in **global energy, business, and finance** secures its preeminent position in both regional and global political and economic dynamics.

### How Saudi Arabia-UAE divide will have an impact on India?

- **Energy Security Concerns:** India heavily relies on Gulf countries for energy needs. Any turmoil disrupting energy flow, as witnessed in past conflicts, could impact India's energy security and economic stability.
- **Impact on Indian Workers:** The potential travel bans, such as those affecting Qatar Airways, could hinder the movement of Indian workers in the region. This might not only affect their livelihoods but also have an impact on remittances.
- **Balancing Act in Diplomacy:** India's historical ties with Saudi Arabia and UAE makes it challenging to take sides in the growing rivalry. Maintaining balanced relations while safeguarding its interests will require adept diplomatic manoeuvring.
- **Impact on counter-terrorism:** In recent years, India has forged closer counter-terrorism cooperation with West Asian countries, notably Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This collaboration has proved effective in intercepting and repatriating individuals linked to terrorist organizations like the Islamic State.

### Conclusion

- The relationship between Saudi Arabia and the UAE is more likely to be defined by competition rather than collaboration, as they vie for influence and power.

## GENERAL STUDIES 3

Indian Economy And Issues Relating To Planning, Mobilization, Of Resources, Growth, Development And Employment, Government Budgeting, Changes In Industrial Policy And Their Effects On Industrial Growth; Growth And Development

### GST Council Sticks To Its Guns, Imposes 28% Tax On Online Gaming

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is GST Council?

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Concerns Associated With Increased GST Taxes On Online Gaming, Similar Taxation Systems In Other Countries

### Context:

- Recently, the GST Council announced a 28% tax on the full-face value of bets placed in casinos, horse races, and online gaming.
- The online gaming industry has claimed that this could lead to the loss of billions of dollars of investments and thousands of jobs in the industry, which is a sunrise sector.

### What is online gaming?

- According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, online gaming refers to games offered through the internet and accessible through an intermediary.
- It can be fantasy, skill, or e-sport based platforms.
- The gaming industry in India is estimated to be worth around \$ 2.8 billion (FY22) and is expected to grow into a \$5 billion industry by 2025.



### What is the latest decision of the GST Council?

- The **GST Council** clarified that the 28% tax will be imposed on the full face value as gambling, gaming, and lottery are actionable activities under the GST law.
- The Union Government has stated that it will attempt to amend the GST law in the present Parliamentary session, states will also have to amend their GST laws to enable the implementation of the new changes by October 1st.

### State's Response

- Sikkim and Goa dissented over the process of the law and its implications for casino goers i.e. they wanted the 28% levy to apply to **gross gaming revenue** and not the entire face value.
- As they were small States and needed consideration, the Council agreed to revisit and review the implementation after 6 months.
- Tamil Nadu raised concerns about the law's impact on the state's ban on online gaming.



- The Union Finance Minister assured that the amended act would explicitly state that it was not applicable in regions where online gaming is banned.
- Delhi sought a review for the online gaming sector.

### How will the new taxation work?

- The gaming platform charges users an entry fee to allow them to participate.
- A percentage of this entry fee, known as the **gross gaming revenue (GGR)**, is deducted by the platform as part of its running costs and the rest is transferred to the prize pool.
- **Example 1:** Suppose a platform paid an entry fee of ₹100.
- Earlier the GGR was taxed at 18%. This meant that the operator would have to pay ₹3.6 as taxes on a GGR of ₹20.
- Following the changes, taxes will be levied on the entry bet i.e. ₹100 at 28%, raising the tax burden to ₹28.
- **Example 2:** Consider a customer who purchases chips worth ₹1,000 to enter a casino and then wins ₹300.
- In this case, the tax levied on the customer will not be levied on the whole ₹1,300, but only on the entry amount of ₹1,000.

### What is the government's justification for the new tax?

- **Money laundering:** The increased popularity of wagering and games of chance has led to an increase in instances of **user harm** and **money laundering**.
- **Social evil:** The GST Council opined that **online gaming is a social evil** and should be discouraged.
- The resultant reduction in revenue could serve a social and economic purpose.
- **Sin tax:** The 28% tax imposed on online gaming and betting on total consideration is similar to the **sin tax** imposed on cigarettes and alcohol.

### Concerns associated with the new taxation

- **Rising prices:** The higher and uniform tax rate will make it more expensive for people to participate in online gaming.
- Taxes may have to be passed on to consumers by raising ticket prices.
- **Illegal avenues:** The rising prices is likely to make the industry unviable and push customers to offshore and illegal platforms where taxes are not imposed.

- **GST burden:** The new taxation system could **lead to an increase in GST by 350%** which would adversely affect the industry in a substantial way.
- **Definition:** The High Court of Karnataka has not upheld the stand of the Revenue Department that online gaming, horse racing, and casinos are betting and dismissed a ₹21,000 crore tax demand against Gameskraft Technologies.
- The Union Government has not differentiated between **games of skill** and **games of chance**.
- **Industry viability:** There will be less money available for platforms to charge the necessary platform fee thereby reduce the available pool of resources to be distributed as winnings.
- The existing 30% taxation levied on the final winnings is another disincentive.

### Similar Taxation systems in other countries

#### European Union:

- Tax rate revenue is set at 15-20% while taxation on winning is between 15-50% depending on the amount and the state.

#### United Kingdom:

- 15% for the first \$3.5 million earned on the Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR), and up to 50% for amounts over \$17.8 million.
- Gambling winnings are tax-free but e-sports are taxed at 40-45%

#### United States of America:

- Online gaming is taxed 10% in most states but a 30% tax is imposed on any winnings through online gaming and e-sports winning.

### Conclusion

- Most of the states in the country agree that gambling is a social menace and must be discouraged.
- The new tax structure will give gaming companies an opportunity to innovate and rebuild in India while clarifying uncertainties about the sector.

### Govt Imposes Curbs On Import Of Laptops, Tablets

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is HSN Code 8471?

Prepp Mains Booster: Impact Of Imposing Restrictions, Benefits Of Production Linked Incentives Scheme (PLI)

#### Context

- The Indian government has recently imposed immediate restrictions on the import of electronic

devices, including personal computers, laptops, and data processing machines.

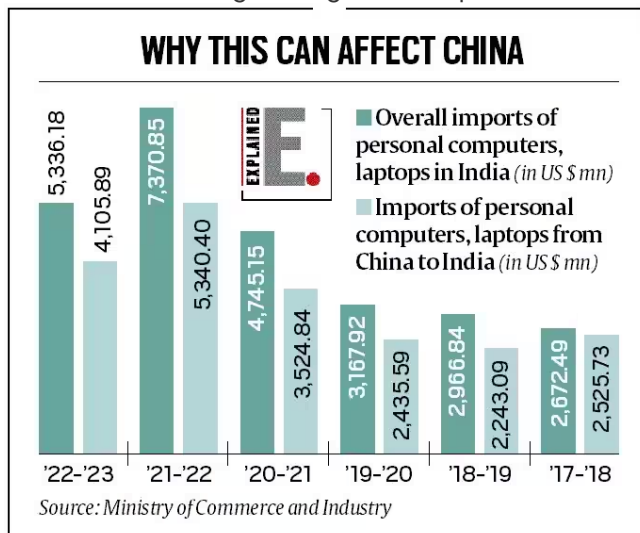
- These restrictions apply to imports falling under the seven categories of HSN Code 8471, and importation will only be permitted against a valid license for restricted imports.
- This move is aligned with the government's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for IT hardware and aims to boost domestic manufacturing.

### Key Highlights of Electronic Goods Imports

- India has witnessed a surge in imports of electronic goods, particularly laptops and computers, in recent years.'
- During the April-June 2023 period, electronic goods imports surged to \$6.96 billion from \$4.73 billion in the previous year, constituting 4-7% of overall imports.
- Notably, a significant portion of these imports, roughly 70-80%, originates from China.

### Reasons for Imposing Restrictions

- The primary objectives behind these import restrictions are to promote domestic manufacturing and enhance security measures.
- By encouraging local production through the PLI scheme, the government seeks to reduce dependence on imports, particularly from countries like China and Korea.
- Additionally, these restrictions aim to address potential security risks associated with certain hardware, safeguarding sensitive personal data.



### Impact of the Move

- The restrictions could have implications for industry giants such as Apple, Samsung, and Acer, potentially necessitating increased local

manufacturing and assembly to comply with licensing norms.

- Consequently, consumers may experience price increases due to potential supply disruptions.
- China's dominance in the affected categories underscores the significance of these restrictions. China has traditionally been a major source of these imports for India.
- However, strained bilateral relations, exacerbated by border clashes in 2020, have led India to adopt anti-China measures, including limiting investments and trade from its neighbor.

### Understanding HSN Code 8471

- The HSN (Harmonised System of Nomenclature) code is a classification system used for taxation purposes to identify specific products.
- In this case, data processing machines fall under HSN Code 8471, categorizing devices designed for data processing tasks.

### Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme

- The PLI scheme is a government initiative aimed at stimulating domestic manufacturing and exports across various sectors.
- Under these schemes, eligible manufacturers receive financial incentives based on their incremental production and sales compared to a base year.
- The schemes also aim to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and enhance the global competitiveness of Indian products.
- In summary, India's recent import restrictions on electronic devices seek to bolster domestic manufacturing, ensure security, and align with the PLI scheme, potentially impacting industry giants and reshaping trade dynamics with China.

### Shedding More Light On The Debt Dilemma

**Priority: Medium**

**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is Fiscal deficit?

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Challenges to the Sustainability of India's Debt

### Context:

- Author, M Govinda Rao, a former member of the 14th Finance Commission, has discussed India's fiscal and public debt, which have risen to a concerning level in this article.
- He recommends that fiscal consolidation can be undertaken at a quick pace along with disinvestment of sectors like telecom.

## What are the challenges to the sustainability of India's debt?

- **Public Debt:** India's debt levels were high for an emerging country even before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **India's fiscal deficit in 2020-21** increased to 13.3% and aggregate public debt increased to 89.6%.
- Although the fiscal deficit and public debt have recovered to 8.9% and 85.7% respectively, projections indicate that they may not return to pre-pandemic levels in the medium term.
- **Electoral considerations:** State Assembly elections scheduled for 2023 and the General Election in 2024 are likely to worsen the debt situation through increased electoral spending.
- The introduction of targeted interventions to reduce debt may not be possible due to political considerations.
- **Financial repression:** Overall debt declines when there is no primary deficit if the [GDP](#) growth rate is higher than the effective interest rate paid on government bonds.
- Financial repression which includes measures implemented by the government to keep interest rates low can lead to other distortions in the financial market.
- **Deficits and debts:** Interest payments account for over 5% of GDP and 25% of revenue receipts.
- This results in the crowding out of necessary investments in physical infrastructure, human development, and the green transition.
- It affects the ability of the government to respond to shocks, especially in states like Punjab, Kerala, Rajasthan, and West Bengal where the Debt to GSDP is 48.9%, 33%, 35.4%, and 37.6% respectively.
- **Cost of borrowing:** As the Indian debt market is mostly captive to banks and insurance companies, there is a scarcity of funds to lend to the manufacturing sector, thereby increasing the cost of borrowing.
- Commercial banks have to maintain 4.5% of their funds as [Cash Reserve Ratio \(CRR\)](#), 18% as [Statutory Liquidity Ratio \(SLR\)](#), while 40% of credit is reserved for priority sectors.
- **Debt to GDP ratio:** The [Finance Commission](#) recommended that the Union government reduce its deficit from 43.6% in 2015-16 to 36.3% and the states were directed to maintain their deficit at 22%.

- It also recommended a **debt-to-GDP ratio of 58.2%**. However, this is unfeasible in the medium term.

## What are some steps to be taken for sustainability?


- **Technology:** Modern technology can be used to ensure the stabilization of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime.
- Improved income tax compliance will boost tax revenues by 1.5-2% in the medium term.
- **Policy actions:** The state should withdraw from activities that are better handled by the market.
- **Focus on cash transfers** for redistribution instead of subsidies which cause distortions.
- Hard budget constraints should be imposed by the Union government to enforce [Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management](#) rules on the states and prevent excess borrowing.

### Keywords

- **Fiscal deficit:** It is the excess of the total government expenditure over receipts from both tax and nontax sources excluding borrowings
- **Primary Deficit:** It is the difference between the current year's fiscal deficit and the interest paid on the previous year's borrowings.
- **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):** It is the minimum percentage of deposits, both time and demand, that a commercial bank must keep in liquid cash, gold, or other securities. It is maintained by the bank in the form of liquid cash, gold, or other securities.
- **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):** It is the percentage of deposits that a commercial bank is required to retain as cash reserves with the RBI.
- **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP):** It is a measure in monetary terms of the sum total volume of all finished goods and services produced within the geographical boundaries of the State during a given period of time.

### Effects Of Liberalization On The Economy, External Sector

#### Will The Federal Fund Hike Impact Developing Country Debt?

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Interest Rate Hike By US Fed

Prepp Mains Booster: Consequences Of Federal Fund Rate Hike On World

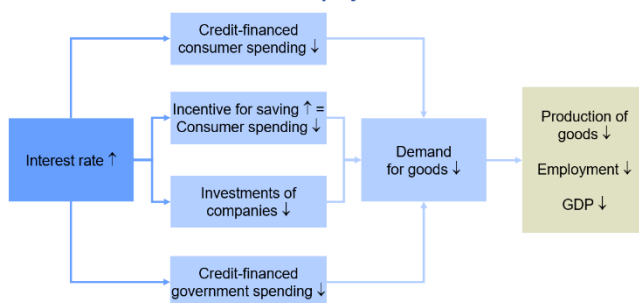
**Context:**

- Recently, the Federal Open Market Committee meeting resulted in a 25 basis points increase in the targeted federal funds rate to 5.25–5.5%, reaching a 21-year high.
- The Fed Reserve President Jerome Powell explained that the decision was aimed at reducing inflation to 2%. Since March 2022, rates have risen consistently, culminating in the recent increase to 5.25–5.5% in July.
- This rapid hike of over 450 basis points within a year raises questions about the **global economy's capacity to absorb such a sharp rise.**

**What is the federal funds rate?**

- The federal funds rate is the **interest rate at which banks lend and borrow excess reserves overnight.**
- This rate determines lending rates among banks and plays a significant role in **stabilizing the financial system.**
- The Federal Reserve intervenes in this market by buying or selling bonds to maintain the targeted rate range, which is now set between 5.25% and 5.5%.
- Federal Funds Rate since the financial crisis of 2008:** After the global financial crisis in 2008, central banks **expanded balance sheets, keeping federal funds rates near zero** from 2008 to 2015.
- With the reversal of monetary policies by advanced countries, rates climbed to 2.41% by March 2019. The pandemic led to a drastic cut to 0.05% in March 2020.

| BertelsmannStiftung

**Interest rate increase causes employment and GDP to decline**

Source: Own illustration.

**What consequences would this have on the rest of the world?**

- Emerging markets:** Post the global crisis, advanced countries' central bank balance sheets grew, leading to historic low-interest rates. This contributed to **double external debt in low/middle-income nations by 2016, exceeding 200% of GDP by 2020.** This setup allowed a "carry

trade," using dollar loans for investment in emerging markets due to higher rates.

- Corporates:** Corporations in developing economies have accumulated around \$5.14 trillion of the outstanding \$13 trillion dollar debt held by non-financial corporations outside the U.S., leveraging low global rates.
- However, the shifting tide of capital flows driven by rising interest rates and currency devaluation poses a threat to these corporations with unhedged dollar debts.
- In the international economy, there has been a substantial increase in **private non-guaranteed (PNG) debt** taken by corporations, while governments continue to be important borrowers.

**Will the rate hike mainly impact corporations, while governments remain unaffected?**

- Increased spending on Debt servicing:** When these investors offload domestic securities, prices drop, interest rates rise, and currencies weaken vis-a-vis the dollar.
- World Bank's recent International Debt Report highlights poorest countries using at least 10% of export earnings for debt servicing.
- Risk of defaults:** Governments facing challenges like climate shocks, commodity price declines, and low growth risk default. Vulture funds exploit defaults by buying bonds cheaply and suing for higher repayments, as seen in Zambia's case.
- Reduction in social expenditure:** High debt service obligations force developing countries to reduce investments in health, education, and sustainable development, reversing social progress. UNCTAD reports 3.3 billion people live where interest payments surpass health and education spending.
- Recession:** Rate hikes and a prolonged phase of elevated interest rates can hit the **US economy significantly and may push it into a recession.** An economic slowdown in the US will negatively impact Indian IT firms.
- Impact climate goals:** Climate goals and emissions reduction efforts are compromised due to financial constraints.

**What could be done?**

- Collective efforts are vital to **reform the international financial system**, addressing disparities.
- Massive scaling up of **contingency financing** for needy countries

- **Expansion of affordable long term financing** for development is required to address the growing concerns of developing country debt.

### Textile Exports Continue To Decline

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Textile Industry

Prepp Mains Booster: Import and Export Issues  
Associated with Textile Industry

#### Context:

- Recently, exports of textiles and apparel declined 1.9% and 17.4%, respectively, compared with the same period the year earlier.
- Cumulative export of textiles and apparel for the April-July 2023 period declined by 13.7% year on year.
- Experts in the field think that if local cotton prices become competitive, exports may go up in the upcoming season.



#### Import and Export issues in Textile Industry

- **Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI)** data revealed that the market for cotton yarn, textiles, and made-ups increased by 6.62% in July 2022 (\$946.48 million) to \$1,009 million last month.
- However, the shipment of synthetic fibres, textiles, made-ups, jute goods, carpets, and clothing items declined.
- For a year, exports of clothing were at a **"sustained low"**.
- According **Economic Survey 2022-23**, exports have slowed down compared to **FY22**, which has been difficult for the textile sector.
  - o The textile industry has not yet experienced FDI inflows comparable to those prior to the epidemic.
- With the slowdown of global output and demand, textiles, clothing, and leather have been growing slowly. This is because there is less of a market for these items abroad.

- Other issues are, the less demand of Indian textiles in major importing countries like **US, Germany, UK**, due to **inflation**.
- Also, recently Indian cotton prices are higher than international prices.
- Sector experts blame the **trade dispute** between the **US and China** and the free trade deal between **China and Pakistan** for the decline in demand.
- However, China has resorted to purchasing from **Bangladesh and Vietnam** during the past ten years, almost cutting off the supply from India and driving the market in this country into disarray.
- Additionally, nations like **Peru, Turkey, and Vietnam** have improved their production capacity, which makes us even more **competitive**.
- Due to the import charge that customers must pay if they buy from India, the Indian textile sector no longer receives special treatment or access. Because nations like **Bangladesh and Sri Lanka** enjoy unrestricted access to the US and UK markets.
- The fall was abrupt when measured in volume. Retailers in the US market were reducing their inventory in anticipation of a rebound in demand.
- Next season, India anticipates a big cotton production. Exports will increase if cotton prices stay competitive.

#### Challenges faced by the Textile Sector in India

- **High fragmentation:** The unorganised sector and small and medium-sized businesses dominate India's textile industry, which is characterised by high fragmentation.
- **Infrastructure issues: Inadequate infrastructure,** such as inadequate power supplies and inadequate transportation systems, raises manufacturing costs and lowers the competitiveness of the Indian textile sector.
- **Technology Obsolescence:** Many textile businesses in India continue to rely on antiquated technology, which reduces their ability to compete with businesses in other nations.
- **Impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST):** GST has reduced the competitiveness of India's textile and apparel industry by introducing distortions.
  - o **Man-made fibres (MMF)**, for instance, are taxed at 18% for fibre, 12% for yarn, and 5% for fabric. MMF fabrics are pricey as a result of this inverted tax system.

- **Environment-related problems:** The production of textiles, which mainly relies on non-biodegradable chemicals and uses a lot of water, presents serious environmental problems.

### Government initiatives to boost Textile industry

- **PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Scheme:** Seven mega textile parks are intended to be established as part of the programme, which was originally mentioned in the union budget address of **2021–2022**, in order to make the Indian textile industry competitive on a worldwide scale.
- **Mega Textile Parks** are intended to bring together all aspects of the textile value chain—from spinning and weaving to processing and printing to garment manufacturing—in one place.
- **National Handloom Development Programme:** it offers fundamental materials, looms and accessories, design and development, infrastructure development, marketing of handwoven goods, etc.
- **National Technical Textiles Mission:** The program would be established with a total investment of Rs. 1480 crore and an implementation span of four years, from FY 2020–2021 to 2023–2024.
- **SAMARTH (Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector):** It promotes skill development throughout the whole textile value chain, with the exception of organised sector spinning & weaving.
- **Scheme for Incubation in garment Manufacturing (SIAM):** It is an initiative to support emerging business owners in the garment industry.
- **Scheme for Textile Industry Workers' Accommodation (STIWA):** It aims to offer workers in the textile and apparel sectors safe, suitable, and conveniently placed housing close to locations with a large concentration of these businesses.
- **Scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP):** Refunds of GST taxes, import/customs fees, VAT on fuel used for transportation, mandi tax, and duty on electricity used for manufacturing would all fall under its purview.

#### Prelims points about Textile industry in India

- One of the nation's oldest sectors, the textile industry in India has been around for many years.

- India is the second-biggest producer of silk in the world, the sixth-largest producer of **technical textiles**, the largest producer of cotton and jute worldwide.
- India is now the third-largest exporter of textiles and apparel worldwide.
- India accounts for 95% of the world's handwoven textile production.

### Govt. Allows Indian Companies To List On Foreign Exchanges Through IFSC

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prep Prelims Booster:** International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)

**Prep Mains Booster:** Access To Foreign Capital For Indian Corporates, Significance Of Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC)

#### Context:

- Recently, the Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that **Indian companies can list their shares** on foreign exchanges operating at **GIFT City-based International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** in Gujarat.



#### Why is it needed?

- The existing legal framework in the country does not permit the direct listing of equity shares of companies incorporated in India on foreign stock exchanges.
- The only available routes for companies incorporated in India to access the equity capital markets of foreign jurisdictions are through the American Depositary Receipts (ADR) and Global Depositary Receipts (GDR) regimes.
- **Access to foreign capital:** The direct overseas listing will allow Indian companies to access foreign funds on various exchanges overseas.

- It will enable start-ups and companies of like nature to access the global market through GIFT IFSC.
- **Better valuation:** It enables Indian companies to access global capital at better valuations.

### Reforms taken by the government to promote security markets

- **Securities Market Code:** The government has taken steps to consolidate the laws dealing with the securities market in the country into a single Securities Market Code.
- It consolidated the SCRA (Securities Contracts (Regulations) Act) of 1956, the SEBI Act of 1992, and the Depositories Act of 1996 into a single Act with updated and rationalized provisions.
- It is **intended to be future-ready** and will take into account developments from a long-term perspective and promote ease of doing business.
- It will cater to the **developmental and regulatory needs** of the country's capital market.
- **Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC):** The Finance Minister recently inaugurated a **Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC) mechanism** called AMC Repo Clearing Ltd in Mumbai.

### Significance of Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC)

- It has been set up with the **purpose of clearing and settling corporate bond** repo transactions, fostering an active repo market to boost liquidity in the corporate bond market.
- **Market makers:** It will allow market makers to **access cost-effective funding** for their inventory.
- **Bondholders:** It will enable bondholders to **meet their short-term liquidity needs** without having to liquidate their assets, and
- **Entities:** Entities with **short-term surpluses to deploy their funds** in a safe and efficient manner.

### Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF)

- The Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF) with access to ₹33,000 crore will purchase and hold eligible corporate debt securities during market dislocations, selling them as markets recover.
- This initiative facilitates liquidity in the corporate debt market and enables quick response during challenging times.
- The Limited Purpose Repo Clearing Corporation with triparty repo services and the central counterparty services of ARCL will enhance

efficiency in collateral and settlement, deepening the corporate bond repo market.

- AMC Repo Clearing Ltd (ARCL) and the Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF) will help in the development of a vibrant corporate bond market in India.

### Gujarat International Finance Tech-city (GIFT)

- Gujarat International Finance Tech-city (GIFT) SEZ is India's **first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** under Special Economic Zone Act, 2005 ("SEZ Act 2005").
- GIFT IFSC is a Multi Services Special Economic Zone.
- The government of India operationalized the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT Multi Services SEZ in April 2015.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

### The Grammar Of Commerce In A New Age Of Geopolitics

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Vostro accounts, International Payment Systems, Rupee Rouble Arrangement, Krivak or Talwar-class stealth frigates, S-400 India

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Impact of Ukraine War on International Payment systems of India,

#### Context:

- This article discusses the marked trend of countries attempting to settle trade through their domestic currencies without having to rely on the currencies of the advanced economies of the West such as the dollar.

#### Use of Rupee in International Settlements

- In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and the European Union targeted the assets of Russian financial institutions.

- This seriously impacted Russian exports to India, which is one of its largest markets.

#### How was this countered?

- An alternative mechanism to settle payments between India and Russia was chosen in which the Indian rupee was used in transactions related to the bilateral trade between them.
- Special accounts called **Rupee Vostro accounts** were opened in Russian banks and managed by authorized Indian banks.
- These accounts help manage payments between the two countries by allowing Indian importers to pay in rupees from India's authorized banks to these accounts, against invoices from Russian suppliers.
- Indian exports could also be paid for in rupees through similar accounts.

#### Problem faced

- Russia continued to enjoy a **trade surplus** amounting to \$3.42 billion in 2020-21 and similar amounts in subsequent years despite the global challenges.
- Russia was **reluctant to hold an excess of Indian Rupees as the rupee is a relatively lower-ranked currency and is subject to depreciation.**
- This made it difficult for India to continue with the arrangement due to the problems faced in arranging payments.
- The sanctions had made it impossible for India to use the U.S. dollar or the Euro to settle payments to Russia.
- Russia's exclusion from the **SWIFT network** further hindered it from making and receiving international payments.
- Similarly, the **volatile exchange rate of the rouble** made purchasing it for payment settlement impractical.
- As a result, Indian refiners and importers had to resort to using the Chinese **Yuan**, which was acceptable to Russia, for settling payments.

#### Agreements in the past

- In the 1950s, India had similar bilateral trade and clearing arrangements with the Soviet Union which were like the inter-war clearing arrangements to contain trade within Europe.
- This arrangement provided a closed account in rupees to handle merchandise and credit-related transactions between India and the Soviet Union with the rupee as the medium of transaction.

- This clearing account was used to handle the loans from the Soviet Union, and net proceeds from trade in rupees.
- Even then there were similar concerns over the choice of a suitable currency to settle trade surpluses as the Soviet Union had consistent trade surpluses.
- The **floating of the dollar in 1971** and the **balkanization of the Soviet Union** resulted in a natural ending to the India-Soviet Agreement.

#### Differences between the present and the past

- Russia has approved the use of the yuan to settle Russian surpluses in the prevailing rupee account as a convenient step.
- There has been **opposition among BRICS to the use of the yuan** by other members of BRICS.
- However, a **proposal to establish a clearing arrangement among BRICS members to settle the consistently large surpluses held by China did not work out.**
- The present geoeconomic situation has encouraged countries to settle payments in local currencies like the **rupee-dirham agreement between India and the UAE** that covers transactions in trade, remittances, and capital flows.
- This will help both countries avoid exchange risks and reduce India's dependence on the dollar in paying for imports of crude oil and minerals.
- It also enables the **interlinking of payment and messaging systems (UPI and IPP, and RuPay switch and UAESWITCH)** making it easier and cheaper for the 3.5 million Indian diaspora in the UAE to send money to India.
- India is also engaged in negotiations with Indonesia to launch a similar agreement using the rupiah.
- Such arrangements have contributed to the saving of hard currencies despite a potential loss of confidence in currencies like the Russian rouble which could disrupt such arrangements.

#### A new financial architecture

- There is an evident shift in the geo-economic and political approaches of countries of the global South.
- They are prioritizing **trade and settlement of payments without using hegemonic currencies** from the advanced economies of the global North.



- This is evident in the preference for using the local currency in transactions by India, Russia, China, the UAE, and Indonesia.
- As a consequence, countries of the South will avoid seeking the help of institutions in the advanced countries such as the **IMF** and the **World Bank** as well as private capital to settle transactions.
- This could result in a **new financial architecture that is more inclusive and less exploitative.**

### Conclusion

- The shift in currency usage in international trade is a significant indicator of how countries are adapting to emerging challenges and asserting their economic autonomy.

- **S-400 deal:** Three of the five S-400 regiments contracted under a \$5.43 billion deal in 2018 have been delivered but the other two are delayed.
- **Krivak or Talwar-class stealth frigates:** The construction of Krivak-class stealth frigates for the Indian Navy in Russia has also been subject to delays. These naval vessels are now postponed to May and October 2024.

### Issues

- **Rupee-Rouble arrangement:** Russia was shut out of the **global SWIFT system for money transfers** after February 2022, India and Russia chose the Rupee-Rouble route to settle payments
- However, it has failed to solve the crisis due to the **huge trade imbalance** and Rupees accumulating on the Russian side.
- While minor payments have resumed, major transactions for significant deals remain stalled.
- **Sanctions:** Companies and traders are apprehensive about possible threat of U.S. sanctions under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), which is preventing trade from expanding.
- The Ukraine war has further compounded the problem.

### What is the S-400 system?

- The S-400 is Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defense system.
- **Capable of handling multiple objects:** It is capable of tracking multiple incoming objects, including aircraft, missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), in a radius

of a few hundred kilometers and launching appropriate missiles to neutralize them.

- It can defend its air defense bubble from rockets, missiles, cruise missiles, and even aircraft.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

### Global Headwinds

Priority: **Medium**



Primary Source: Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: External Sector,

Prepp Mains Booster: Reasons And Concerns

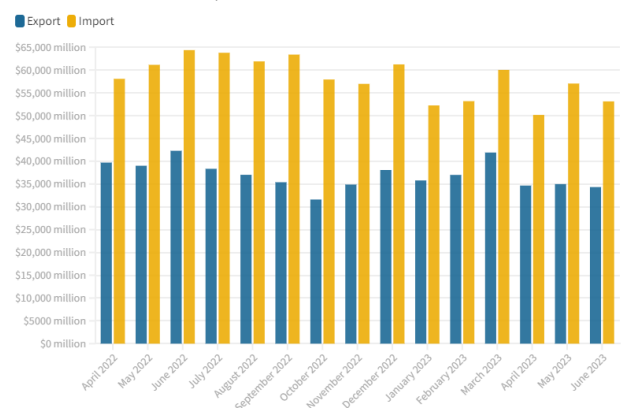
Associated with Weakening in India's Exports

### Context:

- Recently, trade data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry pointed towards a continuing weakening in India's exports. In July, merchandise exports reached their lowest level in nine months, dropping by nearly 16 percent to \$32.25 billion. Similarly, goods imports also decreased by 17 percent to \$52.9 billion.
- Over the initial four months of the fiscal year (April-July), both exports and imports have shrunk by approximately 14.5 percent and 13.8 percent, respectively.

### Revised trade figures

India's revised trade data from April 2022 to June 2023



Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industries • The Hindu Graphics

### What are the Factors Behind Decline in Exports?

- High inflation in developed regions.

- **Slowdown in China:** Falling demand in China is one of the leading causes of lower commodity prices.
- **Slowdown in the EU and US:** The US and European Union (EU) are two of the largest destinations, accounting for 18% and 15.4%, respectively, of India's merchandise exports in fiscal 2022.

### Impact Across Sectors:

- Notable declines are observed in petroleum (-43.7%), gems and jewellery (-29.7%), handicrafts (-21.2%), and ready-made textile garments (-17.4%).
- Labor-intensive sectors like gems, jewellery, leather products, and textiles experience a decline.
- Excluding petroleum and gems and jewellery, the decrease in export value for July was comparatively moderate, standing at 5.7%.
- **Electronic exports exhibit robust growth**, rising by 37.6% this financial year.

### Global Economic Context:

- In the first two months of the financial year, exports to Asia Pacific declined by 21.8 per cent, followed by the US (12.9 per cent), Africa (8.6 per cent) and Europe (6 per cent).
- The International Monetary Fund's **World Economic Outlook indicates a** growth rate of 3% for the global economy this year down from 3.5 per cent the year before.
- World trade volume growth is expected to slow from 5.2% to 2%.

### Which export products are at a greater risk?

- The European Union (EU) constitutes a significant share of **India's leather and footwear exports**, accounting for 46.2% and 42.7% respectively.
- The US plays a crucial role in various categories including '**other made-up textiles, rags', pharmaceutical products, and marine products.**
- The heavy dependence on exports to these regions, **particularly in discretionary items like textiles and leather products**, exposes domestic exporters to the economic slowdown in these areas.
- Labor-intensive sectors like leather articles, **footwear, and textiles exhibit high export dependence on these advanced economies**, this may impact employment generation.

### Why are the concerns?

- Exports are a **key driver of growth** in any economy.

- It has the potential to influence a **country's GDP, exchange rate, inflation rate, and interest rates.**
- A strong export data set is advantageous because it increases job opportunities, foreign currency reserves, manufacturing, and government revenue collection.
- It is also a good way for a country to get out of a slump.
- Furthermore, it plays an important role in **strengthening domestic manufacturing** units by increasing their quality, allowing India-made products to compete and stand out against global peers.

### Which factors are responsible for decline in Imports?

- The decline in import value of petroleum, vegetable oil, coal, coke & briquette, etc has been largely on **account of decline in commodity prices.**
- Decline in gold import has been largely on account of import duty.

### Agriculture

## India's Excess Sugar Production Is Guzzling Groundwater

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Sugarcane Farming

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Issues Related To Overcultivation Of Sugarcane And Water Intensive Crops

### Context:

- This article discussed how excess sugar production due to Government policies have impacted groundwater resources and has suggested solutions.
- India surpassed Brazil in 2021-2022, to become the largest sugar producer in the world, producing 359 lakh tonnes. It has led to higher exports, with a record 110 lakh tonnes exported in 2021-2022.

### What are the reasons for the over-cultivation of Sugarcane?

- **Profitability:** Sugarcane is one of the most profitable cash crops for farmers, which has led to chronic over-cultivation of sugarcane.
- **Domestic demand:** India is the world's largest consumer of sugar and has to produce enough to meet its huge domestic demand.
- **Policies of Government:**

- **Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) scheme:** It mandates a minimum price that sugar mills have to pay to sugarcane farmers, ensuring that farmers always get fair profits for their crops.
- **State subsidies:** State governments also offer heavy subsidies to incentivize sugarcane cultivation.

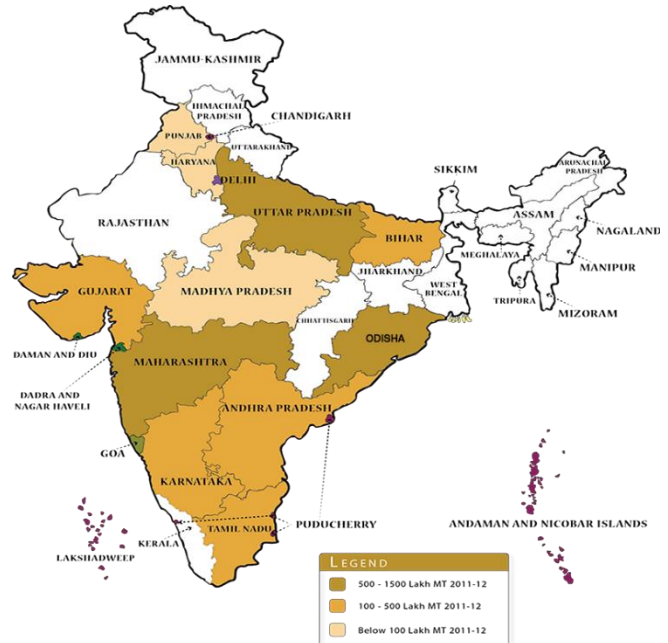
### What are the consequences of excessive sugar production?

- **Violation of International Trade Rules:** Brazil, Australia, and Guatemala filed a complaint with the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** against India, claiming that India had violated international trade rules by offering excessive subsidies to its farmers and using unfair practices to gain an advantage in the global sugar market.
- The Organisation ruled against India and India also lost its appeal.
- **Water-intensive cultivation:** Sugarcane is a highly resource-intensive cash crop and requires 3,000 mm of rain for irrigation.
- A single tonne of sugarcane, yielding 100 kg of sugar, consumes approximately **2 lakh liters of groundwater for irrigation**. The industrial processes for sugar manufacturing and refining further contribute to water consumption.
- Most of this groundwater is confined in aquifers and can't be recharged by rainfall.
- An aquifer is a body of rock and/or sediment that holds groundwater.
- **Depletion of Groundwater:** India's primary sugarcane-producing states are Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka contributes to **85-90% of the country's total sugar production** and get 1,000-1,200 mm of rain, the remaining water is met from groundwater resources.
- According to a report by the **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) in 2022**, a third of all its groundwater assessment units in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka were 'semi-critical', 'critical' or 'over-exploited'.

### What are steps taken by the government to address this issue?

- **Promoting the production of ethanol:** India diverted surplus sugar into the production of ethanol.
- Ethanol is an organic compound made by fermenting sugarcane molasses or sugar.
- Ethanol is the active ingredient in alcoholic beverages and is also used in the chemicals and cosmetics industries.

- **Reducing GST on Ethanol:** The government has **reduced the Goods and Services Tax on ethanol** from 18% to 5% in 2021.
- **Ethanol-Blended Petrol (EBP) program:** The government launched the **Ethanol-Blended Petrol (EBP) program in 2003** to reduce crude oil imports and curtail greenhouse gas emissions from petrol-based vehicles.
- In 2021-22, of the 394 lakh tonnes of **total sugar produced, about 350 lakh tonnes were diverted to produce ethanol** and India accomplished a blending rate of 10% ahead of the scheduled timeframe.
- The EBP Programme is on track to achieve the target of 20% blending by 2025-26.
- The use of ethanol-blended petrol (EBP) significantly **reduces harmful emissions, such as carbon monoxide and various hydrocarbons**, from vehicles.



### What are the solutions to this problem?

- **Fair and comprehensive subsidy schemes:** Fair subsidies for various crops encourage diversification, balanced cultivation, and equitable farmer income distribution.
- Expanding profitable and resource-efficient crop options reduces pressure on essential natural resources.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Practices:** Promotion of environmentally responsible sugarcane cultivation practices that prioritize groundwater, such as drip irrigation, to tackle the issue in the long run.

- **Drip Irrigation:** Drip irrigation reduces water consumption by up to 70% relative to the current flood irrigation method.
- Drip irrigation is now mandatory in numerous Indian regions, including the three major sugarcane states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Karnataka and the government has also offered subsidies to farmers for setting up the systems.
- **Investments in infrastructure:** India needs to develop a comprehensive water-saving and management infrastructure.
- Cleaner practices such as **rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, and canal irrigation networks**, will help minimize stress on groundwater reservoirs as other water sources become available for irrigation.
- **Investment in research:** While the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) conducts vital research and produces valuable data, gaps persist in understanding groundwater availability and distribution. Therefore, investment in groundwater research needs to be considered seriously.

### Conclusion

- Excessive sugar production has environmental implications however export have enormous financial gain. Therefore, simply cutting sugar production isn't a viable solution.
- A better and more sustainable way would be to assess and then correct incentives that skew in favor of sugarcane over other crops.

### Three Years On, Only 15% Of Rs 1 Lakh Crore Agri Infrastructure Fund Disbursed

**Priority: Medium**



**Primary Source:** Down to Earth

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Issues Associated with utilization of under utilization of Agricultural Infrastructure fund and measures

### Context:

- Recently, the Union Minister for Agriculture stated that only 15% of the ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), has been disbursed since 2020.
- The ministry is attempting to popularize the scheme among various stakeholders.
- It was part of the special COVID-19 package under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

### What is the Agricultural Investment Fund?

- The **Agricultural Investment Fund (AIF)** is a financing facility that was launched in July 2020 as a central sector scheme with a **corpus of ₹1 lakh crore**.
- **Aim:** Provide all-around financial support to farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, **Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)**, etc. to create post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets in the country.
- The scheme was initially set to run for ten years from 2020 to 2029. But, it has been extended by three years till 2032-33 in July 2021.
- **NABARD** will implement the initiative in association with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.



### Benefits:

- Credit guarantee support through the **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)** scheme for loans of up to Rs. 2 crores
- 3% interest subvention
- Convergence with other Central and State Government schemes.
- 6 months to 2-year-long moratorium for repayment
- Reduction of post-harvest losses through the development and modernization of agriculture infrastructure

### Features:

- Medium to long-term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects through interest subvention and credit guarantees.
- Reduces wastage, and improves storage facilities, thereby improving farmer incomes.

### Management:

- An **online Management Information System (MIS) platform** will monitor and oversee the fund

and enable all qualified entities to apply for loans under the Fund.

- National, State, and District level monitoring committees will be set up to ensure real-time monitoring and effective feedback.

#### Why is it needed?

- Approximately **58% of the people of the country rely on agriculture and allied activities** as their chief sources of income.
- As most of the landholders are small and fragmented landholders, their annual incomes are quite low.
- **15 – 20% of the agricultural output in the country is wasted due to poor connectivity and limited infrastructure.**
- This means that agricultural investment in the country has stagnated.
- Therefore, the AIF scheme will boost farmers' income, agricultural production, and exports.

#### How has the Fund been utilized?

- As of August 1st, 2023, **₹15,448 crores has been disbursed by the Union Government for 27,748 projects.**
- However, only 9.66% of the projects i.e. 19,650 projects worth ₹9,660 crore have been completed so far.
- Among the 27 states and Union Territories for which data was available, **Madhya Pradesh utilized the most i.e. ₹2,707 crore for 3909 projects** followed by **Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh in second and third with 2,424 completed projects worth ₹901 crores and 1,175 projects worth ₹691 crores respectively.**
- Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana, and West Bengal reported proper utilization of the funds while Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Kerala, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur were lagging.

#### What has the government proposed?

- The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has proposed a **sample study of completed projects by a third party** to assess its ground-level impact.
- **Various programmes in virtual and physical modes** to disburse the remaining amount by the financial year 2025–2026 and continue the interest subvention and credit guarantee assistance till 2032–2033.

- Organize **state conclaves** to increase awareness and popularity of the scheme among stakeholders.
- **Regular bank campaigns and workshops** with FPOs, primary agricultural credit societies, officials, and other stakeholders to identify and implement infrastructure projects to promote farmer interests.
- Banks have been advised to nominate an **AIF nodal officer** in the head office.
- The nodal officer will coordinate and communicate with others regarding all aspects of the AIF scheme.


#### Conclusion

- The Indian agriculture supply chain has transformed from one characterized by high wastage, low processing, and exports to a streamlined, and integrated role in global trade.
- Financial and regulatory support from the government, foreign players, and corporations could develop agri-infrastructure in the country.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

#### Energy & Infrastructure

##### India's Mining Policy Shift

**Priority: High** 

**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Private Sector Participation Needed For The Exploration Of Critical And Deep-Seated Minerals

#### Context:

- Recently the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 was passed by the Parliament.
- It aims to increase private sector participation in the exploration of critical minerals in order to tackle the high risks and costs associated with such projects.
- According to a World Bank study, the demand for critical metals is expected to rise by nearly 500% by 2050.

## How much of India's critical minerals are imported?

- In June 2023, the Ministry of Mines released a list of 30 minerals that are critical to the economy and security of the country.
- India is highly dependent on imports for most of these critical minerals.
- This includes a **100% dependence on China, Russia, the U.S.A., Australia, and South Africa for critical minerals such as beryllium, lithium, nickel, cobalt, niobium, and tantalum.**
- India imported nearly \$22.15 million worth of lithium in 2021-22 and 5,486.18 lakh units of lithium-ion batteries, costing \$1,791.35 million.
- India is also heavily dependent on imports for deep-seated minerals such as gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, cobalt, platinum group elements, and diamonds.
- These minerals are comparatively more difficult and expensive to explore and mine in comparison to surficial or bulk minerals.
- In 2022-23, India imported around 12 lakh tonnes of copper (and its concentrates) costing ₹27,000 crore and 32,298.21 tonnes of Nickel worth ₹ 6,549.34 crore.
- **China produces 65% of the world's REEs while India has 6% of the world's rare earth reserves but only produces 1% of global output.**
- According to the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research and the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CESP), India's tectonic and geographical settings have a geological history similar to the mining-rich regions of Western Australia and Eastern Africa.
- This means that India could be hosting potential mineral resources.



## Why is private sector participation needed for the exploration of critical and deep-seated minerals?

### Mineral exploration

- Mineral exploration is a highly specialized, time-intensive, and monetarily risky process that consists of techniques such as aerial surveys, geological mapping, and geochemical analyses.
- Mineral exploration is the first step toward discovering mineral resources and viable reserves.
- According to the **United Nations Framework for Classification of Resources**, mineral exploration is classified into four stages - **G4 (Reconnaissance), G3 (Prospecting), G2 (General Exploration), and G1 (Detailed Exploration)**.
- In another classification, the stages of exploration are
  - **reconnaissance** (preliminary survey to determine mineral resources),
  - **prospecting** (exploring, locating, or proving mineral deposits),
  - and **detailed exploration** (estimating of mineral ore and grade),

### Critical Minerals for India:

- Expert Committee under Ministry of Mines has identified a set of 30 critical minerals for India.
- These are Antimony, Beryllium, Bismuth, Cobalt, Copper, Gallium, Germanium, Graphite, Hafnium, Indium, Lithium, Molybdenum, Niobium, Nickel, PGE, Phosphorous, Potash, REE, Rhenium, Silicon, Strontium, Tantalum, Tellurium, Tin, Titanium, Tungsten, Vanadium, Zirconium, Selenium and Cadmium.
- India has set up KABIL or the Khanij Bidesh India Limited, a joint venture of three public sector companies, to ensure a consistent supply of critical and strategic minerals to the Indian domestic market.

### Private investment

- **India has explored just 10% of its Obvious Geological Potential (OGP)**, of which less than 2% has been mined.
- India spends less than 1% of the global mineral exploration budget.
- The **Geological Survey of India** and other PSUs are responsible for the majority of exploration projects in India but have struggled due to the high expenditure, long duration and risk, and pressure to increase the supply of bulk minerals.
- Less than 1% of explored projects became commercially viable mines.
- The country's mining policy had excluded Indian private concerns from the greenfield exploration of minerals as licenses could be obtained only for

resources that had already been explored by a government entity.

- The MMDR Amendment Bill, 2023 aims to develop the mineral exploration processes in India at par with that of developed countries through private sector participation.
- **Eg:** In Australia, private mining firms called junior explorers perform explorations to find potential mines and then sell them to bigger mining companies who develop and run them.
- The number and pace of exploration projects thus increase through private participation with junior explorers bearing most of the risk.

### Has India's existing mining policy been conducive to private participation?

- The primary legislation that governs mining in India, the **MMDR Act 1957**, has been amended several times including recently in 2015, 2020, and 2021.
- An amendment to the Act in 1994 allowed interested parties to apply for mineral concessions on a **First Come First Served (FCFS) basis**.
- Private companies could receive **Prospecting licenses (PL)** or **Mining Leases (ML)** as well as early-stage or greenfield exploration through **Reconnaissance Permits (RPs)**.
- This preferential right encouraged private investment in exploration projects for diamonds, zinc, copper, and base and bulk metals.
- Mineral exploration halted almost completely after 2010 as none of the states issued RPs and PLs.
- In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that the FCFS method was vulnerable to manipulation, favoritism, and misuse.
- It asked the government to adopt a transparent and reasonable method for resource distribution which promoted healthy competition and equitable treatment.
- In 2015, the MMDR Act was amended to allow private companies to get either **Mining Leases or Composite licenses (CLs)** which are prospecting licence-cum-mining leases, through government auctions.
- However, only projects whose early-stage exploration was already done by the government could be auctioned.
- Private firms could be registered as exploration agencies and get funding from the NMET, reimbursing 10% of the approved costs.

- However, just one of the 118 approved projects was implemented by a private agency.

### How does the Mines and Minerals Bill 2023 aim to encourage private players?

- **Commercial mining:** It omits at least six previously mentioned atomic minerals from a list of 12 that cannot be commercially mined.
- Lithium, beryllium, niobium, titanium, tantalum, and zirconium, were previously reserved for government entities.
- **Removal of prohibitions:** It permits previously prohibited activities such as pitting, trenching, drilling, and sub-surface excavation as part of reconnaissance.
- **Licensing:** It proposes a new type of license to be granted by the state government via competitive bidding (for five years, but extendable by two) to encourage exploration by the private sector.
- This license will be issued for 29 minerals specified in the Seventh Schedule of the amended Act.
- **Maximum area:** Activities in an area up to 1,000 sq km will be permitted under a single exploration license with the licensee allowed to retain up to 25% of the originally authorized area after the first three years after submitting a report to the state government stating reasons for retention of the area.
- **Reservation of auctions:** The Bill also reserves the conduct of auctions for composite license and mining leases for specified critical and strategic minerals for the central government while most auctions are reserved for state governments in the Act.

### What are some of the possible issues with the Bill's proposals?

- **Delays:** Private companies with exploration licenses primarily generate revenue from the premium paid by the miner, which would come only after a successfully discovered mine is auctioned and operationalized.
- However, this process could take years due to bureaucratic red tape or not happen at all.
- Eg: The Ghorabhurani-Sagasahi Iron Ore Mine, a greenfield captive mine was auctioned in 2016 but production started only in late 2021 because of the time taken to obtain necessary clearances.
- **Unpredictable revenue:** The explorer can not predict how much revenue they will receive as the auction premium would be known only when a mine is successfully auctioned.

- **Uncertainty:** While it is feasible to auction something that has a known value it is difficult to auction something for which exploration has not begun such as exploration licenses.
- **Profitability:** The Supreme Court observed that companies would spend big amounts only if they're assured of utilizing any discovered resources.
- The new policy allows the government to auction what an explorer has discovered with the latter only getting a share of the premium at an unknown stage.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

### Unviable Arunachal Hydro Projects Have Been Dumped On Central PSUs, Say Experts

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Hydroelectric Power Projects

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Governments Push For Hydropower Initiatives And Objective Of Achieving Net Zero Carbon Emissions By 2030

#### Context:

- According to experts, the 12 hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh that were handed over to three Central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) on August 12 are economically unviable.
- They have also raised concerns about the environmental dangers posed by these dams.

#### Why has the government taken over hydel projects in Arunachal Pradesh?

- Hydroelectric projects with a total installed capacity of 11,523 MW have been given up by private sector companies as they are economically unviable.
- At least ₹1,42,000 crore will be required for these projects to be executed by the CPSUs
- As a result, private sector companies have not developed them despite investing plenty of resources over the years.

- This forced them to sell the projects to the public sector at a loss.
- Public sector enterprises have no accountability which means they can implement unviable projects
- The **Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam** and the **North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO)** have been awarded five projects each, with a total installed capacity of 5,097 MW and 2,626 MW, respectively.
- The **National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC)** will handle the other two projects with a total installed capacity of 3,800 MW.
- The government decided to transfer the projects to the private sector as they remained non-starters despite having been allotted to the private sector nearly 15 years ago.
- In September 2019, the State government said in the Assembly that ₹1,495.6 crore was collected as upfront money from firms for power generation projects in the state.

#### Meeting net-zero goal

- The Arunachal Pradesh Power Commissioner signed the agreement with the three CPSUs on behalf of the state in Itanagar.
- The CPSUs would begin work on at least seven of the 12 projects by March 2024.
- The government's push for hydropower initiatives was justified by its ability to contribute to the **objective of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070.**
- It will contribute towards achieving India's nationally determined contribution target i.e. to **achieve non-fossil fuel energy capacity of 500 GW by 2030.**
- Hydropower is a **green source of energy**, whose use will also **increase the groundwater level** and **promote the growth of flora & fauna.**



#### What are the other advantages of hydro-power projects?

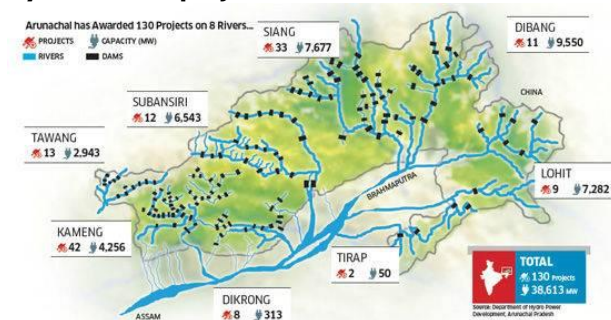


- Hydel energy projects are also good avenues for **generating employment** opportunities.
- It will **boost the local economy** and **foster skill development** and **technical expertise** in the region.
- It will result in an estimated **investment inflow** of about ₹1,26,500 Crores to the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- This is expected to **increase the per capita income** of the state to more than that of Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- Indian states that have harnessed their hydropower potential have become prosperous similar to the developed nations like the USA, Canada, Norway, etc., which have harnessed 80%-90% of their hydropower potential.

### Concerns associated with these projects

- It will result in a **massive change in the state's economic and socio-cultural life**, along with the river ecosystem.
- Deforestation** for setting up the projects lead to an increase in the debris and sediments carried by rivers, thereby changing the behavior of the rivers.
- The Eastern Himalayan are more **susceptible to landslides**, which may be aggravated by the unscientific construction of dams in the region.
- The climate change-induced chain in rainfall patterns in the region over the last decade has increased the probability of floods and droughts.

### Hydroelectric projects in Arunachal Pradesh



- Arunachal Pradesh is also known as the powerhouse of the country.
- It houses around 34% (50,328 megawatts) of the country's 148,701 MW hydropower potential, according to estimates of the Hydro Power Policy, 2008.
- These include the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project (Subansiri River), Kameng Hydroelectric Project (Kameng River), Ranganadi Hydroelectric Project (Ranganadi River), Naying hydropower project (Siyom River), Emini hydropower project (Emini River) and the Etalin

### Hydro Power Project (Dibang River).

**Science And Technology- Developments And Their Applications And Effects In Everyday Life, Achievements Of Indians In Science & technology, Intellectual Property Rights**

**No Rights For AI: Copyright Law Was Not Meant To Cover Nonhuman Actors, Rules US District Judge**

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Artificial Intelligence

Prepp Mains Booster: Copy Rights Associated With AI – Generated Artwork And Associated Concerns

### Context:

- Recently, US District Judge Beryl A. Howell ruled that **AI-generated artwork is not eligible for copyright protection**. The ruling was in response to Stephen Thaler's attempt to challenge the government's refusal to register works produced by AI.

### What did the court say?

- The court in its judgment said that no work has ever been granted a copyright without a "guiding human hand." Moreover, the purpose of **copyright law is to encourage "human individuals to engage in" creation**.
- Judge Howell noted that copyrights and patents were initially established as forms of property that the government safeguarded and were intended to benefit the public good by motivating individuals to create and innovate.
- In March 2023, the US government established that the **majority of works generated by AI lack copyright protection**. However, it clarified that certain AI-assisted creations might qualify if a human plays a "**sufficiently creative**" role in choosing or organizing the elements.
- The government indicated that an application for copyright could be supported if a human's choices or arrangements substantially contribute to an original work's creative outcome.



## What is the Significance of the Judgment?

- **Establishes legal precedent:** This ruling establishes a legal precedent that AI-generated works, created without direct human involvement in the creative process, are not eligible for copyright protection. It clarifies the boundary between human and machine-generated creativity in the eyes of the law.
- **Differentiates human creativity:** The ruling reaffirms that copyright law fundamentally values and protects human creativity. It underscores that copyright is a mechanism designed to incentivize and reward human artistic expression and innovation.
- **Guidance:** The ruling contributes to the ongoing discussion about regulating AI and its creations. It highlights the need to address legal aspects of AI-generated content, particularly in cases where humans' creative input is minimal or absent.
- **Limitations on AI's Rights:** The decision prevents AI systems from holding copyright, which could have implications for how AI-generated content is monetized or controlled. It reinforces the notion that copyright is a right attributed to human creators.
- **Impact on Industries:** This ruling impacts industries that involve AI-generated content, such as art, literature, music, and more. It may influence how businesses approach AI-generated content and licensing agreements.
- **Balancing innovation and regulation:** The ruling highlights the need to strike a balance between encouraging AI innovation and ensuring that legal frameworks adapt to the evolving landscape of technology.
- **Ethical concerns:** Beyond legal implications, the ruling sparks ethical discussions about the role of AI in creative processes and the extent to which humans should retain control over intellectual property rights.

\*To get more information click on this link [Artificial intelligence](#)

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## Trial Done In India Shows Nutrition Support Prevents TB, Related Deaths

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: National TB Elimination Programme

Prepp Mains Booster: Efforts to Tackle TB in India

### Context:

- Recently, a trial conducted in four districts of Jharkhand between 2019 and 2022 revealed that nutrition support could help reduce the spread of TB among household contacts and the mortality rate in patients with active pulmonary TB.
- It was conducted by the **National TB Elimination Programme** and the **National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis**, Chennai with the support of the ICMR.
- In India, three million new TB cases were recorded in 2021 with 4,94,000 deaths, representing 27% of the global TB incidence and 35% of deaths, according to the WHO Global Tuberculosis Report, 2022.

### What are the findings of the trial?

- The **Reducing Activation of Tuberculosis by Improvement of Nutritional Status (RATIONS)** trial of household contacts of TB patients found a **39–48% reduction in TB incidence in the intervention arm as compared to the control arm.**
  - The intervention arm which had 5,621 household contacts reported 96 TB cases, and the control group with 4,724 family members reported 122 cases.
  - A 48% reduction was observed in cases of microbiologically confirmed pulmonary TB while a 39% reduction was observed in all forms of TB.
  - Mortality was found to be around 7% in people who belonged to the under 35 kg weight category.
    - **The instantaneous risk of death was reduced by 13% for a 1% weight gain and 61% for a 5% weight gain.**
    - Early weight gain in the first two months was associated with a 60% lower risk of mortality.
    - Severe undernutrition is one of the major contributory causes of death in TB patients,
      - According to the NIRT, TB patients who weighed less than 35 kg had four times higher mortality than those who weighed over 45 kg.
      - Nutrition support provides protection against TB disease similar to that provided by a vaccine.

- A good diet and nutrition helped to prevent TB incidence in vulnerable people living with infected patients and curbed mortality in patients themselves.
- Other benefits of better nutrition included **higher treatment success rates, better weight gain, and low rates of loss.**

### What was the nutritional support provided as part of the trial?

- Each adult member was provided monthly nutritional support for six months.
- This consisted of 5kgs of rice, 1.5 kg of tur dal, and a micronutrient pill.
- Children below the age of 10 were given 50% of the nutritional support given to adults.
- Those who were in the control arm were not given any supplemental nutrition and followed a normal diet.
- Nutritional supplementation was provided to all 2,800 people with active pulmonary TB who were undergoing treatment.
- Patients with drug-susceptible TB were given monthly nutritional support of 5 kg of rice, 1.5 kg of milk powder, 3 kg of roasted chickpea flour, 500 ml of oil, and a micronutrient pill for six months while patients with **MDR (Multidrug Resistant)-TB** were given the same support for 12 months.

## Nutrition and Tuberculosis

● More than two-thirds of **trial participants were tribals**, most of whom were accessing ration from the PDS.

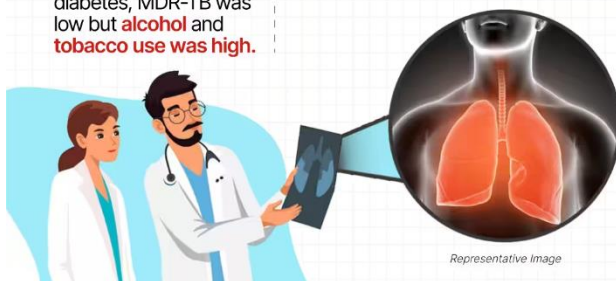
● **Undernutrition** (BMI < 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) was prevalent in four out of five patients, with severe undernutrition (BMI < 16 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) in nearly half of these.

● Prevalence of HIV, diabetes, MDR-TB was low but **alcohol and tobacco use was high.**

● Nearly one per cent of patients were **hypotensive, hypoxic**, or were unable to stand, indicating need for in-patient care.

● One of three contacts across all ages had **undernutrition** at enrolment.

● There was a **39 per cent reduction** of incidence of **all forms of TB** and a **48 per cent reduction** of incidence of **infectious TB** in the intervention group of families.



### Significance of the trial results

- Improved nutrition in family members has produced gains in TB control at the community level.

- It is the first study of its kind in the world and provided evidence that a good nutritional package with a substantive amount of calories, proteins, and micronutrients should be given to the household members of TB patients.
- **Only 3% of those who were enrolled in the trial were able to work at enrolment, but this rose to 75% at the end of the treatment.**
- According to the study, approximately 30 households would need to be provided nutritional supplementation to prevent one case of TB.
- About 47 patients would need to be given food support to prevent the incidence of one case.
- **One monthly food basket costs ₹1,100 for every patient and ₹325 for a contact at 2019 prices.**

### Efforts to tackle TB in India

- The WHO has launched the **Find. Treat. All #EndTB initiative** jointly with the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria** and the **Stop TB Partnership.**

### India

- **Nikshay Poshan Yojana:** In 2018, India launched the Nikshay Poshan Yojana to support all TB patients in the form of a Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of ₹500 per month for nutritional needs.
- \$244 million has been provided under the scheme so far.
- **National TB Elimination Programme:** India's National TB Elimination Programme now leads the effort to eliminate TB by 2025, five years ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **TB Harega Desh Jeetega:** TB Harega Desh Jeetega (TB will lose, the nation will win) campaign to raise awareness about the disease and encourage people to get tested and treated.

To know more about TB, click the [link](#).

## Environment And Conservation, Environmental Pollution And Degradation, Environmental Impact/Assessment

### What Will The Amended Forest (Conservation) Act Change?

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Forest (Conservation)

Amendment Bill 2023

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Significance and Concerns Associated with Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023

**Context:**

- The **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023, recently passed in the Lok Sabha introduces several significant changes to the existing conservation framework in India.**
- These **changes have raised concerns among experts, environmentalists, tribal groups, and activists due to their potential impacts on forest lands** and local communities.

### Highlights of Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023

- **Inclusion and Exclusion of Land:** The proposed Bill introduces amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, aiming to broaden its scope by applying it to specific categories of land.
- This expansion includes land officially recognized as forested under the Indian Forest Act of 1927 or designated as such in governmental records subsequent to the enactment of the 1980 Act.
- The amended Act will not pertain to land that was transformed for non-forest purposes prior to December 12, 1996.

#### Exempted categories of land:

- The Bill outlines exceptions whereby certain types of land will be excluded from the Act's jurisdiction.
- This encompasses land situated within a 100-kilometer radius of India's border, which is essential for national security initiatives, as well as land required for constructing minor roadside facilities and public roads leading to settlements.

#### Prior Approval of Central Government:

- The state government requires prior approval of the central government to assign any forest land to a private entity.
- This modification extends the necessity for approval to encompass all entities and empowers the central government to define the terms and conditions under which such transfers can occur.

#### Permitted activities:

- While the current Act delineates specific permissible activities within forests, such as setting up checkpoints, constructing fences, and establishing bridges, the proposed amendments introduce new provisions.
- These include allowing the establishment of zoos, safaris, and facilities catering to eco-tourism, thus enhancing the potential utilization of forested areas.

### What are the concerns?

#### Scope Restriction:

- The Bill narrows the definition of 'forest' in Indian law. It only recognizes lands previously labeled as 'forest' in government records or under relevant laws as 'forests' under the Indian Forest Act 1927.
- Currently, the Act applies to all forest lands, including those not officially classified as forests but with significant tree cover.
- By reclassifying forest areas and restricting the application of the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), the **amendment may invalidate the Supreme Court's landmark 1996 judgment** in T N Godavarman vs Union of India.

#### Diversion for commercial purpose:

- The redefinition allows non-forest land to be used for commercial activities without the Act's current checks and balances, affecting ecologically sensitive areas.
- About **40% of the Aravalli range and 95% of the Niyamgiri hill range, home to vulnerable tribal groups, might be impacted.**

#### Border Infrastructure Exemption:

- The bill exempts 'strategic linear projects of national importance' near the national border (within 100 km) from seeking forest clearance permissions. This has raised concerns due to vague definitions and potential ecological damage, especially in the Northeastern States.

### Controversies Raised Regarding the Passage of Bill

- **Bill Review Bypassed:** The bill bypassed referral to the relevant Parliamentary Standing Committee for review, which is a common practice.
- **No Changes Proposed:** Around 1,200 representations were received, including from tribal groups, conservationists, and activists, but the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) did not propose any changes to the bill.
- **Parliamentary Process Integrity:** The JPC's acceptance of inadequate justifications for the amendments and unrelated responses during consultations raised concerns about the integrity of the parliamentary process.
- **Lok Sabha Passage:** The bill passed the Lok Sabha with limited debate as Opposition MPs were focused on other issues. Its departure from the established legal definition of 'forests,' its emphasis on carbon sinks rather than conservation have raised further apprehensions.

- **Uncertainty:** The Bill's scope and coverage aren't very clear, which raises concerns about how it will actually be applied and what its impact might be.

## Climate Finance Adds Another Layer Of Inequity To Climate Change

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Climate Finance, Co2 Per Capita Emissions

Prepp Mains Booster: Why Are Developed Countries To Blame For Climate Change?

### Context:

- This article has discussed the inequality in climate financing and the burden on less developed countries.
- Sub-Saharan countries are among the countries that are most vulnerable to the dangers of climate change but are in deep debt distress which restricts them from taking proactive initiatives to limit climate change.

### Climate finance

- **Climate finance refers to local, national, or international financing from public, private, and alternative sources to support climate change mitigation and adaptation.**
- Countries and communities require extensive financing to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change due to its unpredictable and extreme nature.
- Rapid, large-scale emissions reductions are required alongside the **transition from high-carbon production to cleaner methods** across all sectors, which requires considerable upfront investments.
- **Developing and less developed countries are limited in their capabilities to respond, prevent and manage climate change.** Therefore, they require the support of more developed countries in climate financing.
- Heavy investments in green technology are required to combat climate change and keep global warming below **1.5°Celsius**.

### Why are developed countries to blame for climate change?

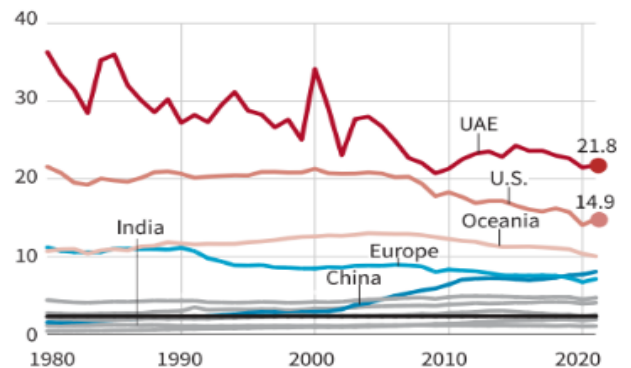
- A small number of high-income countries are to blame for climate change, its effects are disproportionately severe in low-income countries.



- Financing from developed to developing nations is critical to resolving this historical injustice.
- Economically developed countries must invest in climate adaptation and mitigation, especially in helping less developed countries such as their former colonies and dependents) deal with its effects.
- While North American and European countries are historically and presently the largest contributors to the climate crisis, it is the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America that are suffering the most in terms of extreme natural phenomena and debt distress.

### Evidence

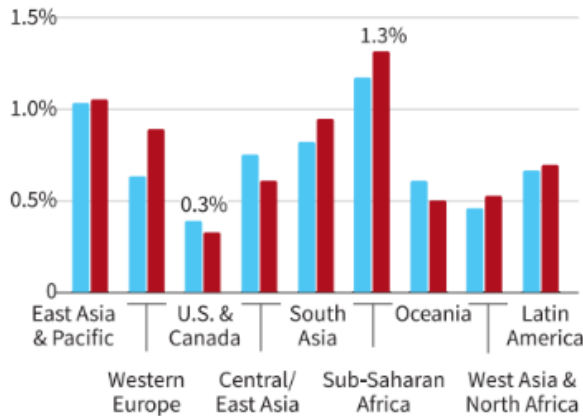
Chart 1 | CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita emitted in 1980-2021 by various geographical regions (in tonnes per capita)



- **Average per capita emissions:** Global average emissions per capita are double the baseline target (in black) set by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (2.3 tonnes per capita) which is needed to limit global warming to within 1.5°C.
  - It has been over 4.7 tonnes since 2010 while Africa and India have been consistently below the baseline.
  - China's per capita emissions rose to 8 tonnes in 2021.

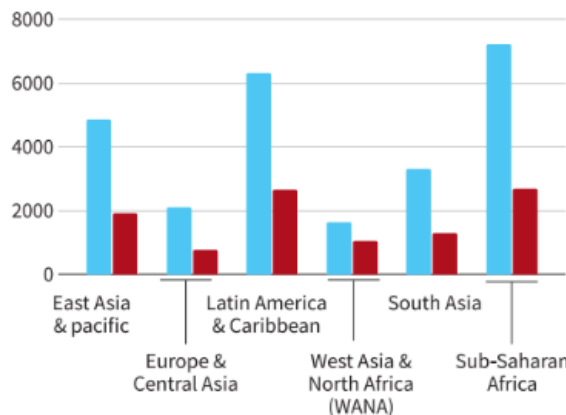
- Although the average emissions of the U.S.A. (14.9) and the U.A.E. (21.8) have declined, they are still the highest in the world.

**Chart 2** | Total climate investment by each World Bank region as a fraction of that region's total GDP in 2019 and 2020



- **Investments:** The total investment in climate-related investments (public and private investment in climate adaptation and mitigation, fossil fuel reduction, and reforestation) by World Bank regions as a fraction of their total GDP in 2019 and 2020 was unequally distributed.
- Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest fraction of investment in climate financing (1.3%) followed by East Asia and the Pacific (1%) and South Asia (0.9%).
- In comparison, traditional polluters like the U.S.A. and Canada invested only around 0.3% of their GDP in climate finance.

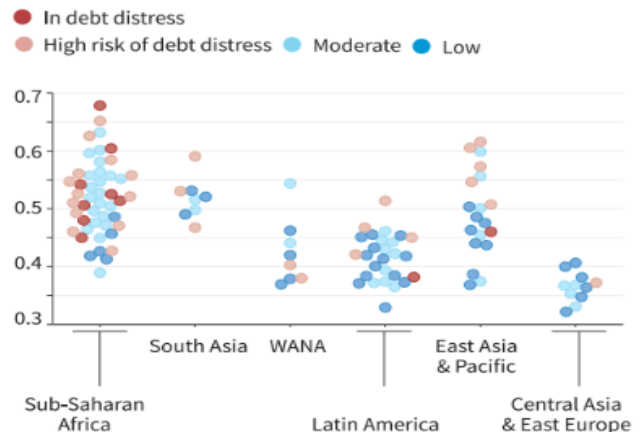
**Chart 3** | The chart shows the total approved climate funds and the actual funds disbursed towards each region. The figures are in \$ million



- **Multilateral funds:** A large fraction of the funds available to the Global South are from multilateral climate funds such as the **Green Climate Fund** and the **Clean Technology Fund**.
- These climate funds are predominantly funded by economically developed countries.

- However, the funds have not been distributed appropriately. Although, \$3.3 billion has been approved for South Asia since 2003, only \$1.3 billion has been actually disbursed.
- Similarly, **only 40% of the approved funding was reported by countries across the globe.**

**Chart 4** | Climate vulnerability index (vertical axis) for each country and the risk of debt distress by region



- **Debt and vulnerability:** The majority of countries facing debt distress are from Sub-Saharan Africa which is extremely vulnerable to climate change.
- Overall countries that are more vulnerable to climate change are at a higher risk of debt distress.
- Three out of eight South Asian countries were also found to be facing debt distress.
- Climate vulnerability is calculated using the **ND-GAIN Index** and the **IMF's Debt Sustainability Framework** which calculates debt distress.

## India Among The 12 Countries Responsible For 52% Of The World's Mismanaged Plastic Waste

**Priority: High**



**Primary Source:** Down to Earth

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Plastic waste management, Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI).

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Findings Of Plastic Overshoot Day Report, India's Plastic Pollution Report, Measures To Mitigate Plastic Pollution

**Context:**

- Recently, the **2023 Plastic Overshoot Day Report was released by Swiss-based research consultancy Earth Action (EA)**, which stated that on July 28, 2023, the world saw its first global **Plastic Overshoot Day**.
- This day marked the point at which **the global plastic waste production surpassed the world's capacity for waste management.**

## Major Findings of the Report

- **Projected Plastic Waste:** The report estimates that nearly 68,642,999 tonnes of additional plastic waste will enter the environment in 2023 due to plastic pollution.
- **Countries Responsible for Plastic Waste:** India is among the 12 countries, along with China, Brazil, Indonesia, Thailand, Russia, Mexico, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran and Kazakhstan, identified as responsible for 52% of the world's mismanaged plastic waste.
- **Impact of Short-Life Plastics:** Around 43% of the total 159 million tonnes of plastics produced globally in 2023 are expected to cause pollution. Short-life plastics, including plastic packaging and single-use items, are a significant contributor to plastic pollution.
- **Per-Person Plastic Consumption:** The report highlights disparities in per-person plastic consumption across countries.
  - For instance, **Iceland has the highest per-person consumption at 128.9 kg, while India's consumption is much lower at 5.3 kg**, compared to the global average of 20.9 kg.



## India's Plastic Overshoot Day and Mismanaged Plastic Waste

- **India's Plastic Overshoot Day occurred on January 6, 2023**, indicating that the country's plastic waste generation exceeded its waste management capacity.
- The date was determined based on the **Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI)**.
- **Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI) ranked India fourth, with 98.55% of the waste generated being mismanaged.**
- In particular, three African countries, Mozambique, Nigeria and Kenya, have the highest rates of mismanaged waste.

Table of Countries with High Mismanaged Plastic Waste

Country	Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI)
Mozambique	99.8%
Nigeria	99.44%
Kenya	98.9%
India	98.55%

## India's Plastic Pollution Report

- **Staggering Plastic Waste Projection:** In 2023, India is projected to encounter an astonishing 7,300,752 tons of plastic waste that will be mismanaged.
  - Despite having a relatively low annual per capita plastic consumption of 5.3 kg, the cumulative plastic consumption in the country amounts to a staggering 7,408,124 tons of plastic waste.
- **Plastic waste exports:** The country contributes 59,260 tons of plastic to the global waste problem through exports, representing 0.8% of its total plastic waste. It imports 98,860 tons of plastic, accounting for 1.33% of its total plastic waste.
- **Microplastics Pollution and Chemical Additives:** The negative impact of plastic pollution on India's environment is evident through its release of 3,30,764 tons of microplastics into waterways. Improper waste management leads to the release of 44,535 tons of pollution stemming from chemical additives used in plastics.
- **Primary Sources of Microplastics Pollution:** Microplastics from tire wear, textile fibers, and paint and not just improper disposal, drive plastic pollution in India.
- **Projected Impact on Plastic Overshoot:** The nation is expected to emit 16.7 days' worth of plastic overshoot into the environment in 2023.

## Criticism of the Report

- **Some experts and organizations have questioned the accuracy and methodology of the Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI) used in the report** to assess the mismanagement of plastic waste in different countries, particularly in the case of India.
- The report's findings are contradicted by data from other sources, such as India's Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).
  - **For example:** According to a report by CSE titled "The Plastic Life Cycle," India currently recycles only 12.3% of its plastic waste and destroys about 20%.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has developed a centralized Extended

Producer Responsibility (EPR) portal, revealing that India possesses the collective capability to process 14.2 million tonnes of plastic waste annually.

- This capacity encompasses both recycling and incineration methods, suggesting that the country can effectively process 71% of the total primary plastic it produces.

### Measures to mitigate Plastic Pollution

- The report emphasizes the urgent need for action to combat plastic pollution, suggesting **measures such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies and phasing out non-circular plastics.**
- Governments can implement bans or restrictions on the production and use of single-use plastics, especially those that are not easily recyclable or biodegradable.
- **Global treaties and agreements, like the proposed UN Plastic Treaty,** can help set international standards for plastic waste management and pollution reduction.
- Individuals can contribute by making conscious choices to reduce their use of single-use plastics, opting for reusable products, and properly disposing of plastic waste.

### Madras High Court Bats For Right Of Animals To Live Without Fear And Distress; Orders Relocation Of 495 Families In Thengumarahada

Priority: Medium 

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: NTCA, CAMPA

Prepp Mains Booster: Challenges And Mitigation Related To Relocation Of Communities Residing In Tiger Reserve Areas

#### Context:

- Recently, the Madras High Court ordered the relocation of 495 families from Thengumarahada village which is situated within the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve by highlighting the right of animals to live free from fear and distress.



### What has the Madras High Court ordered?

- The division bench of the Madras High Court ordered the relocation of 495 families from Thengumarahada village.
- According to the Court, it was not acceptable that the relocation of the village was hampered because the state of Tamil Nadu in which it is located contributed only a small share to CAMPA funds.
- According to the last tiger census, around 33 tigers were reported in the landscape surrounding Thengumarahada.
  - The village which lies in the valley and includes heavily fenced farmlands spread over 500 acres in the midst of pristine forest blocks the crucial migratory routes of elephants in the Mudumalai-Sathyamangalam region.
- Although the Forest Department had begun taking steps to reclaim the land and a proposal regarding this had been sent to the [NTCA](#) by the state government in October 2022.
  - However, NTCA stated that did not have any funds, and the National CAMPA which has ₹8,154.84 crore expressed reluctance to provide the necessary funds to relocate the Thengumarahada residents.
- The court criticized the authorities for their reluctance and cited Article 48A of the Constitution to rule that the government must take necessary action and allocate the necessary funds to the NTCA.
  - As per **Article 48A, the Centre should endeavor to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.**
- The court directed the release of funds as the National CAMPA possessed ₹8,154.84 crores which can be utilized for the present purposes.
  - Moreover, the Union of India has a statutory duty based on the [Directive Principles of State Policy](#) to protect wildlife of the country, which is an urgent, and critical matter.



## Compensation

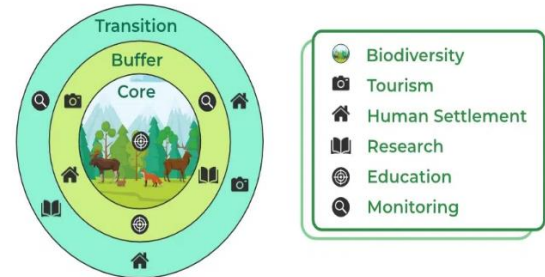
- The court ordered each person relocated from the village to be compensated with an amount of ₹15 lakhs per person.
- The total compensation of ₹74.25 crores should be released to the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** from the [Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority \(CAMPA\)](#).
- The NTCA was directed to transfer the entire amount to the **Principal Chief Conservator of Forests of Tamil Nadu (PCCF)** within two months.
- The PCCF must disburse the compensation and relocate the villagers within a month.
- The judgment also stated that a compliance report must be filed before the court by October 10, 2023.

## Thengumarahada

- **Thengumarahada** was formed by State action after a Government order issued on August 5, 1948 for the leasing out of 100 acres to the **Thengumarahada Vivasaya Corporation or the Thengumarahada Cooperative Society** for farming.
- In 1961, the extent of the area was increased to 500 acres.
- It is located around 403 kilometers away from Chennai and 171 Km from Bengaluru.
- It is one of the rare places in India which houses healthy breeding populations of animals such as tigers, elephants, leopards, sloth bear, wild dogs, hyenas, black bucks, four-horned antelopes, barking deer, mouse deer, sambar, star tortoise, etc.
- However, the human settlement in the forest area has resulted in increased man-animal conflict.
- This was because the village was located at the confluence of the rich biodiversity regions of the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats which was a corridor for most of these long-ranging wild animals.

### Structure of Tiger Reserves

## Zones of Biosphere Reserves



### • Core Zone:

- The Core zone refers to the most protected area of the reserve.
- It represents the actual forest and is the major area for the conservation of wildlife and natural resources.
- It may house endemic plants and animals.
- It is kept free from human interaction and protected strictly by the forest Department.

### • Buffer Zone:

- The Buffer Zone refers to the region around the core area.
- Here nature is conserved alongside compatible human activities such as forestry, sustainable agriculture, and tourism.
- Research and educational activities are also conducted in this region.

### • Transition zone:

- The Transition Zone refers to the outermost portion of the reserve.
- It is a region of coincidence and cooperation between human activities and wildlife conservation.
- It consists of settlements, croplands, and other areas used for economic purposes such as tourism.

## NTCA

- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority** is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change.
- It was established in 2005 under **Section 38 L (1) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** following the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force.

### Structure:

- It consists of the **Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment and Forests as its Chairperson**, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests as its Vice-Chairperson, three members of Parliament, the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and other members.

**Objectives:**

- Provide statutory authority to **Project Tiger** to ensure compliance with its directives.
- Foster Center-State accountability in Tiger Reserve management within the federal structure.
- Provide parliamentary oversight over tiger conservation activities.
- Address the livelihood interests of the local people in areas surrounding Tiger Reserves.

**Powers:**

- Approve the State Government's tiger conservation Plan
- Evaluate and assess various aspects of sustainable ecology and prohibit any ecologically unsustainable land use within tiger reserves
- Manage and address man-animal conflict and promote coexistence
- Develop future conservation plans, population estimates of tigers and their natural prey species, habitat status, disease surveillance, mortality surveys, patrolling, reports on unusual events, and any other management aspects that it deems appropriate, including future conservation plans;
- Facilitate and support the management of tiger reserves and capacity-building programmes for tiger reserve officers and staff
- Ensure scientific support, information technology, and legal assistance, for better tiger conservation plan implementation;
- Other functions in relation to tigers and their habitat conservation

**CAMPA**

- The **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)** was established in April 2004 by the central government in accordance with the Forest Conservation Act and orders of the Supreme Court.
- It is a **National Advisory Council** chaired by the Union Minister of Environment and Forests for monitoring, technical assistance, and evaluation of compensatory afforestation activities.
- The Centre enacted the CAF Act in 2016, and the associated rules were announced in 2018.
- As per the rules, 90% of the CAF money is to be given to the states while 10% is to be retained by the Centre.
- The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) oversaw the monies received for compensatory

afforestation up until the time the CAF Act was implemented.

**PCCF**

- The **Principal Chief Conservator of Forests** is the highest-ranking officer belonging to the Indian Forest Service in the state.
- He/she is responsible for managing the Forests, Environment, and Wild-Life related issues of the state.

**Duties:**

- General administration of forests.
- Laying down and guidance of the general policy of forest management and research,
- Assisting the Secretariat in dealing with forest business.
- Technical adviser to the State Government
- Sanction, formation, and redistribution of beats and ranges.
- Submission of proposals to the Government regarding redistribution of divisions and circles.
- Preparation of budgets
- Supervision of recruitment

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## No More 'Deemed Forests', Says Odisha Government

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam 1980, Deemed forests

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Issues Related To Deemed Forest Diversion And Dependence Of Adivasi Communities On The Deemed Forests

**Context:**

- According to a letter sent by the Odisha government to district officials, the category of deemed forests did not exist hereafter and industry requests to divert forest land for non-forestry purposes must conform with the amended Forest Act.

- The Forest Act, 1980, also known as the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam only accorded protection to forests that are notified in government and revenue records on or after 1980.



### What are deemed forests?

- **Deemed forest** refers to land that resembles forests but has not been recognized as such by either the Union or the States.
- They account for about 1% of the total forest land in the country.
- In 1996, the Supreme Court expanded the remit of the **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Act** to areas that weren't notified as forests but conformed to the "dictionary" definition of forests i.e. deemed forests.
- The **Godavarman verdict** stated that the states must identify and categorize such land.
- The SC directed the states to establish Expert committees to determine deemed forests in order to clarify the area that may be protected under the Forest (Conservation) Act.
- According to the Forest Act, land cannot be diverted without the consent of the Centre as well as gram panchayats in the regions.
- It serves as a deterrent to deforestation by directing the parties responsible for diverting forest land to grow trees on a plot of land equivalent to twice the razed area and imposing a significant monetary penalty.

### What does the Odisha government directive mention?

- All district collectors must ensure that the diversion of forest land for infrastructure projects, particularly state development projects, should follow provisions of the new law.
- Any survey or exploration will also not be treated as a non-forestry activity.

### Expert Committees

- Although all the states were expected to form expert committees to identify deemed forests, not all States submitted their reports.

- This has left states with enough leeway in defining or omitting large parcels of land as forests.
- According to the Union Ministry of Environment, the amendments to the 1980 Act were necessary to remove ambiguities and clarify the application of the laws.
- According to the amended act, the Forest Conservation Act would not apply to notified forest land that was legally diverted for non-forest uses between 1980 and 1996.
- As a result, forest land that was not specifically notified as such would cease to be protected under the provisions of the Act.
- The Union Environment Ministry had earlier stated that deemed forests would continue to be protected.
- The amendments made to the FCA recognized deemed forest lands, which had been identified by the Expert Committee of the State. Therefore the provisions of the Act will be applicable in such lands also.

### Future unclear

- According to the latest Forest Survey of India, Odisha has approximately 52,156 square km or 130 lakh acres of forest coverage.
- This amounts to 33.50% of the State's geographical area, which is much higher than the national level of forest cover - 21.71%.
- Since 1996, around 66 lakh acres have been identified as deemed forests in Odisha.
- However, a majority of this land has not been officially notified in the government records.
- This amounts to about 40-50% of Odisha's forest land.
- In addition, there are several community forests that are managed by tribal and forest-dependent groups while several have land title rights under the provisions of the separate Forest Rights Act.
- The decision of the Odisha government that deemed forests have ceased to exist means that these will face an uncertain future.
- One consequence of the new amendments is that there will be no check on forest diversion, making it easier to divert forest land.
- According to data from the Union Coal and Mining Ministry, of the 19,200 hectares of forest land that have been diverted nationally for mining between 2017-2022, around 8,000 hectares was from Odisha.

- The reality on the ground is that most of the forest officer bureaucracy isn't too keen on protecting forest rights

### Impact

- The Adivasi communities of Odisha depend on the deemed forests for their livelihood.
  - These include some of the community-protected forests and bio-cultural habitats of vulnerable tribal groups such as the Dongria Kondhs in Niyamgiri.
  - The removal of deemed forest areas from the Act could adversely affect the **statutory rights of these communities** which have claimed community forest rights and habitat rights on such forests
- Around 46% of Odisha's geographical area is notified as fifth schedule area under the Constitution, where the **Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act applies**.
- **Boundary disputes:** In Karnataka, people have alleged that large amounts of agriculture and non-forest land are "unscientifically" classified as deemed forest land.
  - This was found to have caused undue hardship to farmers in the region and restricted industrial development.

### Criticism

- Deemed forests already identified as forests in records 'held' by any department or administration should be considered as 'forest' even by the new amendment.
  - However, the directive of the Odisha government violates this.
- It is uncertain if the amendment is yet to be considered to be law as the date of enforcement is yet to be notified.
  - The government has temporarily withdrawn the notification until the Union Government establishes the rules and guidelines of the new act.
- The amendment narrows down the definition of forests.
  - As a result, vast tracts of forests are excluded which leaves them vulnerable to destruction.

### Forest Classification in India

- According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI) forest cover in India is classified into 4 classes.
- **Very Dense forest:** All lands with tree cover (including mangrove cover) of canopy density of 70% and above.
- **Moderately dense forest:** All lands with tree cover (including mangrove cover) of canopy

density between 40% and 70%.

- **Open forests:** All lands with tree cover (including mangrove cover) of canopy density between 10% and 40%.
- **Scrubs:** All forest lands with poor tree growth mainly of small or stunted trees having a canopy density of less than 10%.

### The State Of Climate In Asia, 2022

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: Down to Earth

Prepp Prelims Booster: State of Climate in Asia 2022

Prepp Mains Booster: Reasons For Asia's Increasing Disaster Trends in 2022 And Solutions

### Context:

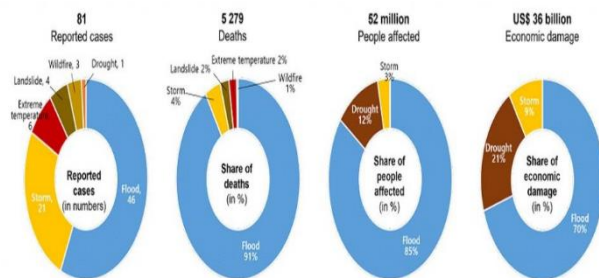
- Recently, the **State of Climate in Asia 2022 report was released by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)**.
- It was stated that **Asia is the world's most disaster-prone region**.
- The report, one of a series of WMO regional State of the Climate reports, was released during a meeting of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (ESCAP) Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction.



### Highlights of Asia's Increasing Disaster Trends in 2022

- **Impact of Weather, Climate, and Water-Related Disasters:** In 2022, there were 81 natural hazards that directly affected more than 50 million people in the continent. While this number is lower than 2021, the impacts were more severe in terms of fatalities, affected populations, and economic damage.
- **Rising Human Deaths and Affected Population:** In 2022, approximately 5,879 Asians lost their lives due to natural disasters, a significant 55% increase compared to 2021. The number of people affected by disasters also rose to 52 million, up from 48.3 million in the previous year.

- **Economic Cost of Disasters:** The economic cost of the damage caused by these events exceeded \$36 billion in 2022. Pakistan alone accounted for 42% of this figure, with economic losses of at least \$15 billion.
- **Floods and Droughts:** Flood-related economic losses in 2022 surpassed the 20-year average from 2002 to 2021. Pakistan, China, and India were particularly affected, with Pakistan experiencing losses of over \$15 billion. Drought-related economic losses in 2022 (mainly in China) were nearly 200% higher than the 20-year average.
- **Agriculture sector:** More than 25% of all loss and damage from climate-related disasters in Asia are associated with the agriculture sector.



### Challenges Faced

- **The warming trend in Asia** between 1991 and 2022 was almost double that of the period between 1961 and 1990. In 2022, the estimated mean temperature over Asia was 0.73°C, above the 1991–2020 average, which makes it either the second or third warmest year on record.
- Certain areas in Asia, such as the northwestern Arabian Sea, the Philippine Sea, and the seas east of Japan, have been warming at alarming rates of over 0.5°C per decade, about three times faster than the global average.
- **Melting Glaciers and Rising Sea Levels:** Glaciers in the High Mountain Asia region experienced mass loss, with accelerating trends. From 2013 to 2022, the global average sea level rose at a rate of 4.6 mm per year, with the rates across most of Asia higher than the global mean rate.
- **La Nina Influence:** The continuing La Nina from 2020 through 2022 had a significant impact on precipitation in parts of Asia, leading to devastating floods and disruptions.
- **Warming of sea surface:** Asia's surrounding seas are warming over three times faster than the global average, with the Barents Sea experiencing regional warming rates five–seven times higher than the global average, making it a climate change hotspot.

### World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for promoting international cooperation in the field of meteorology (weather and climate), operational hydrology, and related geophysical sciences.
- The organization was established in 1950 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

### Way Ahead

- Strengthening early warning systems and climate adaptation planning is crucial to mitigate adverse impacts.
- Implementing climate change adaptation strategies is crucial for building resilience in vulnerable communities and ecosystems.
- This includes measures like improved agricultural practices, water management, and infrastructure development.

## Temperature Rise

In 2022, the estimated mean temperature over Asia in 2022 was 0.73°C [0.63–0.78] above the 1991–2020 average, **making it either the second or third warmest year on record.**

- Governments should allocate resources and invest in disaster risk reduction programs to minimize the impact of disasters.
- Continued research and innovation in climate science and disaster management can lead to better understanding and more effective strategies for mitigation and adaptation.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## Disaster Management

### Building Resilience Against Landslides

Priority: High



Primary Source: Indian Express

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Landslides, Geological composition of Himalayas

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Causes of Landslides in the Himalayan region and Possible measures

#### Context:

- The deaths and damage caused by landslides in Himachal Pradesh this week have focused much-needed attention on the Himalayan ecology.
- According to the Geological Survey of India, the economic damage caused by landslides may equal 1% to 2% of the Gross National Product in many developing nations.



#### What are the Causes of Landslides in the Himalayan Region?

- **Fragile ecosystem:** The Himalayan environment is influenced by tectonic or neotectonic events and surface processes such as erosion, weathering, and rainfall.
- **Earthquakes:** The convergence of the Indian plate with the Eurasian plate in the Himalayan area has caused subsurface pressures that are released as earthquakes, causing cracks and loosening of the litho-structures near the mountain surface.
- **Excessive Climate-Induced Events:** Extreme climatic events caused by climate change worsen environmental vulnerability. Avalanches, landslides, debris flow, glacier lakes outburst floods, landslide lakes outburst floods, and fast floods are all possible outcomes.
- **Human activities:** Road building, tunnelling, mining, quarrying, deforestation, urbanisation, agriculture, excessive tourism, and hydropower projects are all examples of human activity that can cause or intensify landslides in the Himalayas.
- **Geological Composition:** Some Himalayan rocks are composed of limestone, which is more prone to flooding and landslides than other types of rocks due to its ability to dissolve in weakly acidic

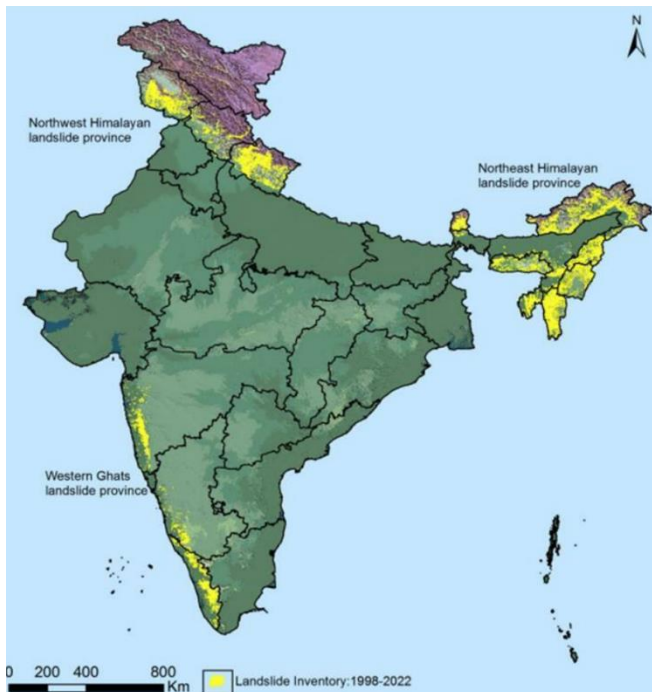
precipitation or groundwater. This process produces caves, sinkholes, and other karst characteristics that undermine the slope's stability.

- **Westerly Disturbance:** The Westerly Disturbance, a low-pressure system originating in the Mediterranean Sea and moving eastward across central Asia and northern India, and the South West Indian Summer Monsoon have combined to cause excessive and concentrated rainfall in parts of J&K, HP, and Uttarakhand, resulting in landslides and flash floods.

To know more about landslides in India [Click here](#)

#### What are the steps taken by the Government to mitigate the risk of landslides?

- **The National Landslide Risk Management Strategy (2019):** It is a comprehensive framework for reducing and managing landslide catastrophe risk. Hazard mapping, monitoring, early warning systems, awareness programmes, capacity building, legislation, policies, and stabilisation/mitigation activities are all part of it.
- **Landslide Risk Mitigation Scheme (LRMS):** It is a new programme that will give funding for state-recommended landslide mitigation measures. The system focuses on disaster prevention, mitigation, and R&D for monitoring important landslides. It aims to improve capacity building and establish early warning systems.
- **Flood Risk Mitigation Scheme (FRMS):** It is a new programme that will focus on a variety of initiatives such as pilot projects for building adaptable flood shelters, constructing river basin-specific flood early warning systems and compiling digital elevation maps.
- **The National Disaster Management Authority's (NDMA) National Guidelines on Landslides and Snow Avalanches** give comprehensive guidelines for managing landslide hazards at all levels.
- **Landslide Atlas of India:** It provides thorough information about landslide-prone areas around the country, as well as damage assessments for individual places. This map, created by the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), an ISRO centre, is a helpful resource for studying and managing landslides in India.



### Way Forward?

- **Formation of Himalayan States Council:** To assess the impact of surface and subsurface strains, a Council of Himalayan States must be formed.
- The state disaster management authorities should work together under a consolidated council. Though the Himalaya is diverse across its length, knowledge from various sets of evaluations must be distributed and shared by all Himalayan states.
- **Sustainable Socio Economic Development:** The Himalaya's glaciers, snow fields, springs, riverine systems, valuable mineral deposits, geothermal, hydrocarbon, and hydro-power energy resources, and medicinal plants, as well as the region's tourism potential, might be used for this purpose.
- **Anthropogenic activities:** Heavy constructions should be prohibited, care should be taken to have a proper drainage system, slope cutting should be done scientifically, and emphasis should be placed on having retaining walls and adhering to building codes.
- **Building Codes and Assessment:** Building codes should be based on high-resolution mapping of all municipalities and an assessment of their load-bearing capabilities.
- **Sustainable tourism:** It may prevent landslides through increasing environmental awareness, natural resource conservation and preservation, and respect for biodiversity and ecosystems.

### How causes of landslides in Western Ghats are different?

- Rainfall is concentrated
- Hill overburdening
- Quarrying and mining
- Fragmented forest with thick plants on shallow soil
- Anthropogenic activities include farming, windmill projects, and so on.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## GENERAL STUDIES 4

### Civil Service Values And Ethics In Public Administration

#### Manipur Officials Told To Quit Social Media Groups

**Priority: High**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Hate Speech, All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Legal And Professional Conduct, Justice And Ethical Law Enforcement, Administrative Impartiality, Measures To Prevent Hate Speech

#### Context:

- Recently, the State government of Manipur has asked officials to quit formal and informal groups on social media platforms that further **“separatist, anti-national, communal and divisive agendas”**. Amidst growing concerns that bureaucracy and the police in Manipur are divided along ethnic lines.
- The ethnic violence between Kuki and Meitei communities that erupted on May 3 has led to the death of more than 150 people.

#### Why Are Manipur Officials Being Told To Quit Social Media Groups?

- The Manipur government has sought compliance reports from all government departments

following a letter from T. Ranjit Singh, Commissioner (Home).

- This letter **is part of a status report filed by the Manipur government** in the Supreme Court on August 1.
- **Divisive tendencies:** The letter highlighted concerns about social media groups on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, which are **promoting separatist, anti-national, and divisive agendas.**
- **Affecting governance:** These groups are contributing to **false information, hate speech, and sharing restricted information.**
- **Against impartiality and non-partisanship:** The government emphasized that participating in such groups contradicts conduct rules for government employees and is against the rules outlined in the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968 (Rules 5 and 7), and the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 (Rules 5, 9, and 11)

### Ethical Perspective

The recent directive issued by the Manipur government, urging officials to disengage from divisive social media groups, carries profound ethical implications. This analysis examines the ethical dimensions of this directive through various subheadings.

#### Ethical Imperative for Impartiality

- The directive seeks to address growing concerns regarding ethnic divisions within the bureaucracy and police force, following violent clashes between the Kuki and Meitei communities.
- From an ethical standpoint, the primary imperative here is impartiality. Public servants, including government officials, are expected to uphold the principles of neutrality, fairness, and non-partisanship.
- Participation in social media groups promoting separatism or divisive agendas runs counter to these fundamental ethical principles.

#### Upholding Unity and National Integrity

- The divisive social media groups under scrutiny are accused of propagating separatist and anti-national sentiments.
- Ethics in governance encompasses the commitment to upholding national unity and integrity.
- Manipur's directive reflects an ethical commitment to safeguarding the nation's unity, preserving social harmony, and ensuring that

government officials do not inadvertently contribute to disintegration or conflict.

#### Preventing the Spread of Hate Speech

- The directive highlights concerns about hate speech within these social media groups.
- Promoting hate speech is fundamentally unethical. Hate speech perpetuates discrimination, hostility, and social divisions. Public officials, as representatives of the state, bear a moral duty to refrain from participating in or endorsing such speech, aligning with the broader ethical principle of promoting tolerance, respect, and inclusivity.



#### Legal and Professional Conduct

- The directive points out that participating in divisive social media groups contradicts conduct rules for government employees, including the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968, and the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964.
- Ethical standards and legal compliance are intertwined. Public officials are ethically obligated to adhere to the law and maintain professional conduct.
- Violating conduct rules not only undermines ethical governance but also erodes public trust in the integrity of government institutions.

#### Justice and Ethical Law Enforcement

- The status report highlights challenges in investigations, particularly those involving crimes against women and property damage, with limited arrests and obstacles in law enforcement.
- Ethical law enforcement demands that justice be delivered promptly and impartially, irrespective of community affiliations. When investigations face obstacles, it raises ethical concerns regarding the fair treatment of all individuals. The Supreme Court's intervention to transfer cases to the CBI reflects an ethical commitment to ensuring justice is served.

#### Conclusion



- In conclusion, Manipur's directive to officials regarding their social media engagements carries significant ethical weight.
- It underscores the ethical imperatives of impartiality, unity, prevention of hate speech, adherence to legal and professional conduct, and the delivery of justice.
- By addressing these ethical dimensions, Manipur aims to promote a more ethical, unified, and just governance framework within its state.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## PRELIMS

### Indian Polity

#### No-Confidence Motion Against Modi Government

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is No-Confidence Motion, Article 75(3)?

#### Context:

- Recently, **No-Confidence Motion was moved against the Narendra Modi government by the Congress Party** to exert pressure over the Manipur issue.
- This will be the **28th no-confidence motion in the history of independent India.**

#### What is a No-Confidence motion?

- A no-confidence motion is a **formal process in which a legislature expresses its lack of confidence in the government.**
- **Article 75(3) of the Constitution** embodies the rule by specifying that the Council of Ministers are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.
- In India, the no-confidence motion can be **moved only in the Lok Sabha**, which is the lower house of the Parliament.

#### Procedure for moving a No-Confidence Motion

- The procedure for moving a no-confidence motion is **mentioned in Rule 198 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Lok Sabha.**

- To **move a no-confidence motion, a member of the Lok Sabha must give a written notice** of the motion which must be **signed by at least 50 members of the House.**
- Once the notice is received, the **Speaker of the Lok Sabha will decide whether to admit the motion for discussion.**
- If the motion is admitted, it will be debated in the House and a vote will be taken. If the government loses the vote, it will be forced to resign.
- Opposition parties also use it as a tool to put pressure on the government to hold a debate on issues of critical national importance.
- A "No Confidence Motion" becomes a vehicle in and of itself, establishing unity in the opposition.

#### Highlights of Previous No-Confidence Motions

- In August 1963, Parliament witnessed the first "No Confidence Motion" against then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's government.
- Indira Gandhi's government has faced the highest ever No Confidence Motion i.e., 15 times.
- Morarji Desai's government was the first to succumb to the No-Confidence Motion in 1979. In the Lok Sabha, the No-Confidence Motion was moved twice against his government.
- The Atal Bihari Vajpayee government barely lost the no-confidence motion by a margin of one vote (269-270) in April 1999.
- In July 2008, the nuclear agreement with the United States led to a motion of no confidence against the Congress government. Despite the challenge, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh narrowly retained his majority in the Lok Sabha and survived the No-Confidence Motion.
- The most recent no-confidence motion was moved against the Narendra Modi government in 2018. The motion was defeated by a vote of 325 to 126.

#### What Is A Zero FIR And Why It Is Registered

Priority: High 

Primary Source: Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Concept of Zero FIR

#### Context:

- According to the Indian Express Report, 1,700 zero FIRs have been registered at the Churachandpur police station, more than 800 zero FIRs have been registered at the Kangpokpi police station, and around 202 such FIRs have been registered at the Saikul police station due to ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki in Manipur.

#### What is Zero FIR?

- When a police station receives a complaint regarding an alleged offence that has been committed in the **jurisdiction of another police station**, it registers an FIR and then transfers it to the relevant police station for further investigation.
- This is called a Zero FIR. **No regular FIR number is given.**
- After receiving the Zero FIR, the relevant police station registers a fresh FIR and starts the investigation.
- The provision of Zero FIR came up after the recommendation in the report of the Justice Verma Committee, which was set up after the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case.
- A Zero FIR can be filed in any Police Station by the victim, irrespective of their residence or the place of occurrence of the crime.

### Objective of Zero FIR

- The objective of a Zero FIR is to **ensure the victim doesn't have to run from pillar to post to get a police complaint registered.**
- The provision is meant to provide speedy redressal to the victim so that timely action can be taken after the filing of the FIR.



### What is an FIR?

- The term **First Information Report (FIR)** is not defined in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973, or in any other law, but in police regulations or rules, **information recorded under Section 154 of CrPC** is known as First Information Report (FIR).
- There are three important elements of an FIR:
  - the information must relate to the commission of a cognizable offence.
  - it should be given in writing or orally to the head of the police station and
  - it must be written down and signed by the informant, and its key points should be recorded in a daily diary.

## In Independence Day speech, PM announces Vishwakarma Yojana, Lakhpati Didi and A Scheme To Help The Urban Poor Build Houses In Cities

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Important Schemes:

Vishwakarma Yojana, Lakhpati Didi Scheme, Jan Aushadhi Kendra

### Context:

- Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15 announced two new initiatives – **Vishwakarma Yojana**, a new scheme with an outlay of Rs 13,000 crore to Rs 15,000 crore, and **Lakhpati Didi**, under which **skill training** will be provided to two crore women so that they can earn at least Rs 1 lakh annually.
- The PM also announced that the government would launch a new scheme to help the **urban poor build houses in cities**. Under this program, they would receive relief in interest rates and loans taken from banks to construct their houses.

### Key announcements



#### 1. Vishwakarma Yojana

A mega scheme – with an outlay of ₹13,000 to ₹15,000 crore – will be launched on Vishwakarma Jayanti (Sept 17) to boost livelihood opportunities for skilled workers like goldsmiths, masons, barbers, etc. It aims at improving the quality, scale and reach of products and services of artisans, and to integrate them with domestic and global value chain.

#### 2. Affordable medicine for all

The govt is planning to increase the number of "Jan Aushadhi Kendras" from 10,000 to 25,000. The centres, set up to make affordable generic medicines available for all, have led to savings of approx ₹20,000 crore, says the govt.

#### 3. Skill training for 20mn women

PM Narendra Modi announced the "Lakhpati Didi" scheme that aims to impart skill development training to 20 million women in villages across the country. Under the scheme, women would be trained in skills like plumbing, LED bulb-making and operating and repairing drones, among others.

#### 4. Fulfilling home ownership dreams

The government will launch a scheme to help those dreaming of having their own home in cities. The scheme will provide relief in bank loans to the middle-class families who live in the cities, but do not own a house.



### What are the key announcements?

- **Vishwakarma Yojana:** The government will launch Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman Yojana with an allocation of ₹13,000 to 15,000 crore in the next month for those with traditional skills.
- The scheme was announced in the Budget 2023 and will be launched in September, on the Vishwakarma Jayanti.
- The PM Vishwakarma Scheme aims to improve the quality, scale and reach of products and services of artisans and craftspeople and **to integrate them with the domestic and global value chain.**

- This would result in the **economic empowerment of such workers**, especially those belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Communities, women, transgender and other weaker sections of the society.
- **Lakshpati Didi Scheme:** The government is planning skill development training for two crore women under the 'Lakshpati Didi' scheme that aims to encourage them to start micro-enterprises.
- The women would be trained in skills like plumbing, LED bulb making and operating and repairing drones among others. 'Lakshpati Didi' scheme has been in place in some states.
- **Scheme for urban poor to build houses:** The government would launch a new scheme to help those living in rented houses in cities to build their own homes.
- Under the scheme, the government **would provide relief in the interest on home loans** to such families which live in cities but stay in rented homes, slums and **unauthorized colonies and want to build a home of their own.**
- The government already has a scheme to address the housing shortage for the urban poor called the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U)** launched in 2015.
- The PMAY-U is a flagship mission of the government which is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- The mission aims to address the urban housing shortage among the **economically backward sections, including the slum dwellers by ensuring a 'pucca' house to all eligible** urban households by 2022.
- The scheme period has been extended up to December 2024 in order to complete all the houses sanctioned without changing the funding pattern and implementation methodology.
- A total of 75.51 lakh houses have been completed out of which 71.39 lakh have been occupied till now under the PMAY-U.
- **To increase the number of 'Jan Aushadhi Kendra:** The government is working to increase the number of 'Jan Aushadhi Kendra' (subsidised medicine shops) from 10,000 to 25,000.
- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses.

- PMBJP stores have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.

## Kerala Assembly Passes Resolution Urging Centre To Change State Name To Keralam

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is the Procedure Of Renaming Of A State, Article 3

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Historical background associated with Formation of State of Kerala

### Context:

- Recently, **Kerala Assembly passed a resolution urging the Central Government to officially change the name of the State from Kerala to Keralam.**

### What does the resolution say?

- It states that the **State's name in Malayalam is "Keralam," and its formation on November 1, 1956, was rooted in linguistic principles.**
- The **significance of uniting Malayalam-speaking communities for Kerala's development** was apparent during the national freedom movement.
- Despite this, the State's name is currently registered as "Kerala" in the Constitution's First Schedule.
- The assembly has requested the Union government to take **steps to amend it to Keralam under Article 3 of the Constitution.**

### Origin of the Names

- **Kerala:** The earliest known reference to Kerala can be found in Emperor Asoka's Rock Edict II from 257 BC. In this ancient inscription, a local ruler is referred to as "Keralaputra," which translates in Sanskrit to "son of Kerala." The ruler is also linked to the Chera dynasty, signifying the historical connection of the name with this prominent dynasty of the region.
- **Keralam:** Regarding 'Keralam', scholars believe it could have originated from 'Cheram'. Cheram is regarded as the region between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari. The origin of the term relates to the root 'cher', which means to join.

### Procedure of Renaming the State

#### Constitutional and legal provisions:

- **Article 3:** It gives the Indian Parliament the power to reorganize the territories of the states and to

alter their boundaries, by passing a bill for this purpose.

- **State Reorganization Act of 1956:** It provides a framework for the reorganization of states in India, including the changing of names of states.
- The procedure of renaming of the state **can be initiated by either the Parliament or the State Legislator.**
- The renaming of a state requires **Parliamentary approval under Article 3 and 4 of the Constitution.**
- A bill for **renaming a state may be introduced in the Parliament on the recommendation of the President.**
- Before the introduction of the bill, the President shall send the bill to the respective state assembly for expressing their views within a stipulated time.
- When the period expires, the bill will be sent to the Parliament for deliberation.
- The bill in order to take the force of a law must be passed by a simple majority.
- The bill is then sent for approval to the President. After the approval, the bill becomes a law and the name of the state stands modified.

#### Formation of the State of Kerala

- **After India gained independence in 1947, there was a push to reorganize the states based on linguistic and cultural lines** to ensure better governance and representation.
- The States Reorganization Act of 1956 played a pivotal role in this process.
- **Kerala came into being on November 1, 1956.** It was formed through the **merger of the princely states of Travancore and Cochin** with the Malabar district of Madras Presidency.
- The formation was a result of linguistic and cultural considerations, as Malayalam was the primary language spoken in the region.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## Economy

### China's Deflation A Sign Of Economic Slowdown?

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Concept of Deflation and its Impact

#### Context:

- This article discusses the deflation in China and why it is a concern for the country as the rest of the world faces the problem of inflation.

#### What is deflation?

- **Deflation** is a term in economics that refers to the general fall in prices of goods and services within an economy.
- **Deflation is associated with a rise in the value of money.**
- It is also usually accompanied by economic slowdowns, decreased productivity, and loss of employment.

#### Causes of Deflation

- **Competition:** Increased competition can lead to a fall in prices as businesses aim to attract customers and gain market share.
- **Increased savings:** People save more in the hope of spending later when prices may fall. This causes prices to fall even more due to low demand.
- **Technology:** Technology advancements make the production process easier and simpler.
  - As a result, prices fall as the production becomes cheaper.
- **Less Money:** Goods become cheaper and demand falls when there is less money in circulation.



#### Effects of Deflation

- **Impaired Growth:** Deflation leads to limited work and reduced production which adversely impacts the economy.

- **Losses:** Deflation causes businesses to drop their prices.
- As a result, the earnings from businesses drop significantly.
- The value of debt also increases in deflation.
- **Employment:** Businesses usually reduce jobs and remuneration during a deflation, which means people have less money in hand to spend.
- This means fewer products are sold, further affecting businesses and the cycle repeats.

### Why is it a worry?

#### Demand, Losses, and Debt

- **Demand:** Deflation is considered an indicator of falling demand for goods and services.
- **Demand for goods and services is the fundamental driver of economic growth.**
- Therefore, a drop in prices could result in consumers postponing their purchases in the hope of getting better prices in the future, leading to a fall in demand.
- **Losses:** Deflation can cause losses for businesses and lower growth.
- **Resource use and debt:** Deflation can adversely impact borrowers as they will have to pay back lenders more in real terms.
- Deflation does not allow for the full utilization of the resources in an economy.

#### Deflation as a Growth Indicator

- In the past, the U.S.A. and China have experienced deflation during periods of rapid economic growth.
- Japan also witnessed a rise in per capita real income levels during the era of deflation.
- In such cases, the supply of goods and services increases beyond the rate of money supply growth, leading to deflation.
- Countries that experience high price inflation have been observed to suffer from low or negative economic growth.

#### Deflation during economic turmoil

- Deflation can also be an indicator of economic turmoil.
- Deflation in the official price indicators can be a sign of an underlying process of **resource reallocation**.
- This means that consumers might temporarily change their spending patterns during economic crises.
- Spending on goods whose prices are captured by official indicators will fall while those on other goods could rise.

### Consumer Behavior and Price Impact

- Some economists believe that deflation does not necessarily cause consumers to postpone purchases.
- Essentially, consumer demand is not determined by the price of goods and services rather consumer demand determines prices.

#### Businesses' Resilience to Deflation

- Some economists claim that deflation does not necessarily cause sustained losses for businesses since they can adjust their payments for their inputs based on what their customers are willing to pay.

#### Case Study: Deflation in China

- In July, the **consumer price index** in China declined by 0.3% and producer prices dropped for the tenth consecutive month to 4.4%.
- This is the first time in over two years that consumer prices are declining in China.

#### Underlying Causes of Chinese Deflation

- The likely reason for the Chinese deflation could be something more fundamental than just the lack of liquidity.
- However, a proper study of the Chinese money supply and monetary transmission is necessary to identify the causes of deflation.
- The Chinese economy has been in turmoil even before the pandemic, especially in the property sector which contributes a significant share of the Chinese GDP.

#### People's Bank of China's Policy Response

- The People's Bank of China has continued to keep **interest rates low** to boost demand.
- In contrast, other central banks have been maintaining high-interest rates to counter inflation.
- Chinese policymakers have been trying to achieve a soft landing of their economy as credit booms like the one in China can lead to a serious misallocation of resources in the economy while the subsequent bust can lead to a fall in broader prices.

#### What are some measures to control deflation?

- During a deflation, governments must adopt a **Cheap or Dovish Monetary Policy** as this will make loans cheaper.
- Benefits such as **tax deductions and subsidies** should be provided to encourage enhanced purchases and expenditures by individuals in the economy.

- The **expenditure on public infrastructure projects** such as highways, dams, etc should be increased to boost demand in the steel and cement industry.
- This will also lead to employment generation which in turn will improve their purchasing power and demand in the economy.

### Conclusion

- Deflation has numerous implications for growth and consumer behavior. China's experience highlights the need for a better understanding of the potential causes and outcomes and the need for a balanced approach to ensure sustainable growth.

To know more about Deflation, click the [link](#).

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

### Full-Reserve Banking: Where Banks Act Solely As Custodians Of Customers' Money

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Concept of Full Reserve Banking

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Significance and Criticism of Full-Reserve Banking

#### Context:

- This article has discussed about the **Full-Reserve Banking which is also known as 100% Reserve Banking**.
- It is a banking system where **banks are required to hold all the money they receive from customers as demand deposits in their vaults** at all times.
- Only time deposits can be used for lending purposes.

#### What is the aim of Full Reserve Banking?

- It states that banks must keep all the money they receive from customers and cannot use that money to lend to others.
- It acts as **keepers or guardians of the customers' money** and may charge a fee for this service.

- In the **Fractional-Reserve Banking System (current banking system)**, banks can use a **portion of customers' money to make loans and pay interest** to customers for using their money.
- The **main idea behind full-reserve banking is to ensure that the bank always has enough money on hand to give back to customers** if they want to withdraw their money.
- This way, even if all customers come to take out their money at the same time, the bank will have enough cash to pay everyone and **prevent a situation where the bank runs out of money**.

#### How can money be lent in Full Reserve Banking?

- In Full-Reserve Banking, **banks can only lend money received as time deposits**, which customers can withdraw after an agreed-upon period.
- This provides banks with time to lend these deposits to borrowers at interest rates, collect repayments, and return depositors' money with interest.

#### Significance and Criticism of Full-Reserve Banking

##### Significance

- It is the most natural and safe way to operate banks, which can prevent the crises that occur in the current fractional-reserve banking system.
- In full-reserve banking, banks would only be allowed to lend money that customers have deposited for a specific period (time deposits), and they must keep all the money that customers can withdraw at any time (demand deposits) in their vaults. This reduces the risk of bank runs significantly.
- With limited ability to influence the money supply, it is believed that the economy will be more stable, **avoiding artificial booms and busts** caused by changes in money availability.


##### Criticism

- In a full-reserve banking system, banks are not allowed to give out loans unless they have enough actual cash in their possession to cover those loans.
- If banks are required to keep all the money in reserves, it can limit their ability to lend money.
- If banks will not be able to create money in a full-reserve banking system, their influence on the economy's money supply will become severely restricted.

#### About Fractional Reserve Banking

- In the fractional-reserve banking system, banks primarily lend electronic money rather than physical cash.
- They create loans electronically, often exceeding the actual cash they hold.
- If all borrowers demand cash withdrawals simultaneously, the bank may not have enough physical cash to meet the demand, leading to a potential depositor run.
- Such banking frees the economy from having to rely on real savings from depositors to finance the huge investments required to fuel growth.

### Windfall Tax On Crude Oil, Diesel Hiked

Priority: Medium 

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Concept of Windfall Tax

Prepp Mains Booster: Global Status On Levying Windfall Taxes And Its Impact, Issues associated with Crude oil exports

#### Context:

- Recently, the government has increased the windfall profit tax on domestically produced crude oil and diesel exports. The tax, collected through a special additional excise duty, has been raised from ₹4,250 to ₹7,100 per tonne on domestically produced crude oil.
- Additionally, the levy on overseas shipments of ATF (Aviation Turbine Fuel) has been reintroduced.

#### What is the windfall tax?

- A windfall tax is a higher tax rate levied by governments against certain industries when economic conditions allow those industries to experience above-average profit.
- The United States Congressional Research Service (CRS) defines a windfall as an “**unearned, unanticipated gain in income through no additional effort or expense**”.
- A windfall tax is **levied on domestic crude oil** if rates of the global benchmark **rise above \$75 per barrel**.
- The tax rates are **reviewed every fortnight** based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks.
- When the difference between the cost of crude oil and the value of refined products like diesel, ATF, and petrol exceeds \$20 per barrel, a levy is applied to their exports.

#### Global status on levying windfall taxes

- A total of **24 EU countries** have announced, proposed or implemented a windfall tax on energy companies, which European Commission officials put forward after energy prices soared at the start of 2022.
- The UK has also imposed a levy on profits made from the extraction of oil and gas from the North Sea.

#### Impact of windfall taxes

##### Positive Impact

- **Supplementary stream of revenue:** The government aims to tap into the additional revenue generated by the oil industry during times of elevated prices.
- **Redistribution of unexpected gains** when high prices benefit producers at the expense of consumers.
- **To maintain domestic supply:** The government aims to control the flow of crude oil within the country as some refiners were favoring exports over domestic sales
- These additional revenues help in funding social welfare schemes and also in keeping **lower trade deficit**

##### Negative Impact

- **Uncertainty:** Windfall taxes are imposed retrospectively and are often influenced by unexpected events, this uncertainty of taxes can impact investments in this field.
- For instance, a similar tax was introduced by the U.S in the 1980s on domestic oil companies, **the revenue it generated for the government was significantly lower than** what it had projected, while the tax also reduced domestic oil production and increased imports.
- **Populist measure:** It is believed that such taxes are populist and politically expedient in the short term.
- **Punitive in nature:** Companies argue that profit is a reward for the industry's risk-taking in providing the end user with petroleum products.
- **Determination:** Another issue is whether to tax only the large corporations that account for the majority of high-priced sales or also smaller corporations. This raises the question of whether producers with revenues or profits below a certain threshold should be exempt.

#### Status of India's crude oil exports

- Russia has become India's primary crude oil supplier, surpassing West Asian countries, with a 27% share of India's crude imports in February.

This increase is attributed to discounted **Russian oil** after the Ukraine war.

- India has expanded its refined petroleum product exports, notably to Argentina, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, and European countries due to a ban on Russian diesel imports by the European Union.
- Despite this, India's overall oil exports fell by 18% in April 2023 due to lower international crude oil prices, leading to a narrower oil trade deficit of 16%.



### GI Tags For Goan Mangoes And Bebinca, Crafts From Rajasthan and U.P

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: GI tags

Prepp Mains Booster: Benefits of Registrations of GI

#### Context:

- Recently, seven products from different regions in India were given the **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag by the Geographical Indications Registry in Chennai.
- The products are 'Jalesar Dhatu Shilp' (a metal craft), 'Goa Mankurad Mango', 'Goan Bebinca', 'Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft', 'Bikaner Kashidakari Craft', 'Jodhpur Bandhej Craft', and 'Bikaner Usta Kala Craft'.
- Geographical indications (GIs) are intellectual property (IP) rights that serve to identify a product that originates from a specific geographical area and that has a quality, reputation, or other characteristics that are essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

#### GI tag products

##### Goa

- **Mankurad mango:** The mango variety is known by several names, including malcorada, cardozo mankurad, corado, and Goa mankur. The Portuguese originally named it malcorada,

meaning 'poor colored'. Over time, it evolved into mankurad aamo (mango) in Konkani, the local language.

- **Goan bebinca:** Bebinca is also known as the 'queen of Goan desserts', is a traditional Indo-Portuguese pudding.

##### Uttar Pradesh

- **Jalesar Dhatu Shilp:** In Jalesar, Uttar Pradesh's Etah district, the Thatheras community in the locality of Hathuras make 'Jalesar Dhatu Shilp,' which includes anklets, bells, and other decorative metal craft and brassware.



##### Rajasthan

- **Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft:** Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft involves exquisitely ornamenting weapons through a complex process. It includes etching designs, heating, and cooling, along with embedding gold and silver wire into the metal, pressing and flattening it to achieve a smooth surface with moonstone, and ultimately polishing it to perfection.
- **Bikaner Kashidakari Craft:** It is traditionally made on cotton, silk or velvet with a variety of fine stitches and mirror-work, mainly for objects associated with marriage, especially gift items. The mirrors used in this craft are believed to protect against the 'evil eye' due to their reflective surfaces.
- The Meghwal community in Bikaner and nearby districts traditionally weaved fabrics by hand for this craft.
- **Jodhpur Bandhej Craft:** It is a Rajasthani art of tying and dyeing.
- Bandhej is a renowned textile art form in Rajasthan, using fabrics like muslin, silk, and voile. Cotton thread is used for tying the fabric.
- **Bikaner Usta Kala Craft:** The 'Bikaner Usta Kala Craft,' also known as gold nakashi or gold manauti work, is famous for its long-lasting golden color. The craft involves processing and molding untreated raw camel hide by the skilled



leather craftspeople of the Dapgar community to meet the requirements of the Usta

### What are the benefits of registration of geographical indications?

- **Legal protection:** It confers legal protection to Geographical Indications in India and prevents unauthorized use of a Registered Geographical Indication by others.
- It encourages the preservation of biodiversity, local know-how and natural resources.
- **Economic prosperity:** Geographical Indications boost export and promotes economic prosperity of producers of goods produced in a geographical territory.
- It will automatically resolve the three fraught India issues of poor pay for talent, low female participation in the labour force, and urban migration.
- **Create Passion economy:** It will convert talent into entrepreneurship with gig workers, and create a "passion" economy, that is, a new way for individuals to monetise their skills and scale their businesses exponentially.
- It removes the hurdles associated with freelance work to earn a regular income from a source other than an employer.
- **Boost employment to population ratio:** The labour-intensive nature of GI offers the best solution to boosting the employment-to-population ratio in India, an abysmal 43 per cent compared with the 55 per cent global average.
- **Increase female labor participation:** Monetising artisanal work done at home will increase India's low female labour force participation rate, which at 21 per cent in 2019 was half the 47 per cent global average.
- **Reverse urban migration:** The hyper-localised nature of GI offers solutions to reverse urban migration and conserve India's ancient crafts, culture and food. Another revenue-earner, GI tourism, is typically a by-product of a strong GI ecosystem.

### National Handloom Day

**Priority:** Medium



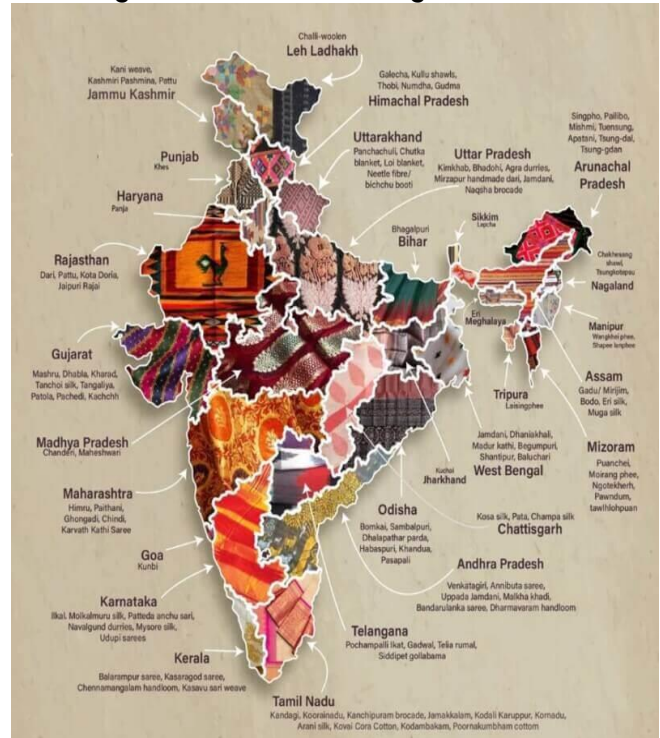
**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** History of National Handloom Day

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Handloom Sector in India and its Significance

**Context:**

- **India observes National Handloom Day on August 7, every year.**
- This day serves to showcase the vital role of the handloom industry in driving socio-economic progress and to enhance understanding and recognition of this sector's significance.



### History of National Handloom Day

- The **Swadeshi Movement** was founded on **August 7, which is why this day is recognised as National Handloom Day.**
- The Swadeshi Movement serves as a **key aspect of India's struggle for independence and is also significant for the handloom industry.**
- The swadeshi movement's objective was also to revive domestic products and production processes.
- **With the partition of Bengal, the Swadeshi Movement gained strength** and it was on August 7, 1905 that a formal proclamation was made at the Calcutta Town Hall to boycott foreign goods and rely on Indian-made products.
- Rooted in the desire to boost domestic production and reduce dependence on imports, this movement led to widespread engagement in producing khadi, a hand-spun and handwoven fabric.
- **A pivotal moment in the movement was marked when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the Indian flag made from khadi** at Princess Park near India Gate.

- The **inaugural National Handloom Day was launched by the Indian Government on August 7, 2015, in Chennai.** Hence, this year, the 9th National Handloom Day is being celebrated.

### Handloom Sector in India

- The **handloom sector of India is one of the biggest unorganized economic activities.**
- It **has a long tradition of outstanding artisanship that represents and preserves vibrant Indian culture.**
- India's handloom artists are globally known for their unique hand spinning, weaving and printing style.
- This sector holds immense significance in both India's economy and society.
- The **Handloom Census of 2019–20 revealed a substantial presence, with approximately 35,22,512 handloom workers** spread throughout the nation.
- This sector acts as a source of livelihood for more than 43.31 lakh weavers, primarily hailing from rural and semi-urban regions.

### Significance of Handloom Sector

- **Cultural heritage and livelihood:** The handloom sector in India stands as a vibrant representation of the nation's illustrious cultural heritage. Beyond its cultural significance, it holds immense economic importance, serving as a crucial source of livelihood for countless individuals across the country.
- **Employment Contributor:** Ranked as the second-largest employment generator after agriculture, the textiles and handloom sector plays a pivotal role in providing jobs to a substantial portion of the population.
- **Empowering Women:** The handloom sector also serves as a key driver of women's empowerment, with more than 70% of handloom weavers and allied workers being women.

### Government Initiatives towards Handloom Sector

- National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)
- The Yarn Supply Scheme (YSS)
- Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme
- Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS)
- Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)
- Market Access Initiative (MAI)

- Urban Haat
- Skill India

## General Science

### Centre To Look Into 'Havana Syndrome': What It Means And The Term's History

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Havana Syndrome

#### Context:

- Recently, a petitioner sought a **writ of mandamus** for an inquiry into **Havana Syndrome** and the prevention of **high-frequency microwave transmission** in India.
- The Karnataka High Court disposed off the petition after the centre assured the Court that it will address the issue of '**Havana Syndrome**' in **India.**

#### What is Havana Syndrome?

- Havana Syndrome refers to a **set of mental health symptoms** that are said to be experienced by **United States intelligence and embassy officials** in various countries.
- The Havana Syndrome typically involves symptoms such as hearing certain sounds without any outside noise, nausea, vertigo and headaches, memory loss and balance issues.
- The word 'syndrome' simply means a set of symptoms. It does not mean a unique medical condition, but rather a set of symptoms that are usually experienced together whose origins may be difficult to confirm.

#### Origin of Havana Syndrome

- The term "Havana Syndrome" originates from incidents in Cuba in 2016, where some of the US embassy staff experienced brain pressure, headaches, disorientation, and insomnia.
- Following the initial Cuban incident, American intelligence and foreign affairs officials stationed in different countries have reported experiencing symptoms associated with the Havana Syndrome.

#### Similar cases have since been reported worldwide:

- **Uzbekistan (2017):** A USAID employee reported an incident at the US Embassy in Tashkent.
- **China (2018):** US diplomats in Guangzhou consulate experienced similar symptoms.
- **United States (2019–2020):** Incidents occurred in Washington DC and near the White House.

- **Global Spread:** Over 130 cases reported in countries including Russia, Poland, Georgia, Taiwan, Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Austria.
- **2021:** In 2021, US Vice-President Kamala Harris visit to Hanoi, Vietnam was delayed due to a similar incident reported by a US official in Vietnam.

### WHAT IS HAVANA SYNDROME?

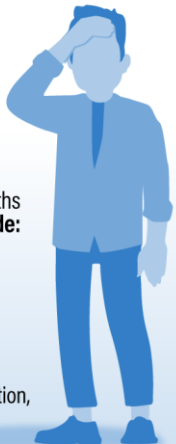
No definitive cause has been found, but scientific studies have noted many of the acute symptoms are consistent with exposure to directed radio frequency energy

**Acute symptoms** (often occurring suddenly) **may include:**

- Pain in one or both ears
- Tinnitus, hearing loss
- Intense pressure or vibration inside the head
- Difficulty with memory or concentration
- Nausea
- Visual disturbances
- Unsteady gait, loss of balance, vertigo/dizziness

**Chronic symptoms** (can last weeks, months or longer) **may include:**

- Headache
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Impaired balance
- Impaired concentration, memory loss



Source: National Academy of Sciences

### Case in India

- The first reported case of Havana Syndrome occurred in 2021. A US intelligence officer traveling to New Delhi with CIA director William Burns experienced **symptoms associated with the syndrome**.
- As of July 2023, the 2021 incident stands as India's **sole reported case** of the syndrome.
- Indian officials **expressed skepticism about possessing such a weapon** and questioned the motive of targeting the US, considering their strong ties.

### What are the causes of Havana Syndrome?

- Initially, it was thought to be a **"sonic attack"** during the Cuban incidents. However, further studies suggested that high-powered **microwaves damage the nervous system**, causing brain pressure and auditory sensations.
- It was said to have built pressure inside the brain that generated the feeling of a sound being heard.
- Greater exposure to high-powered microwaves is said not only to interfere with the body's sense of balance but also to impact memory and cause permanent brain damage.
- **Low levels of microwaves are also emitted from mobile phones but they are not targeted.**
- Microwaves are a type of electromagnetic radiation, as are radio waves, ultraviolet radiation, X-rays and gamma-rays. Microwaves have a

range of applications, including communications, radar and cooking.

- There were suspicions that high-powered microwaves were transmitted using a device known as a "microwave weapon."
- Weaponizing Microwaves as a counter-intelligence tool has been explored by both Russia and the US since the Cold War.
- Earlier reports suggest that US embassy officials in Moscow during the 1970s faced mental health problems linked to suspected microwave use.

### Present status on the origin of disease

- **Lack of evidence on causes:** Despite years of research, experiments, and medical assessments, the US has not found conclusive proof of the existence of the "microwave weapon."
- The mechanics and targeting of this supposed weapon remain unclear.
- Some US medical experts dismiss the theory, attributing the syndrome to **psychological factors and heightened fear**.
- Some experts have highlighted the absence of similar reports from officials of other countries, except for the Canadian embassy in Havana.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

### Single-Pill Strategy To Beat Cardiovascular Diseases Gets WHO Recognition

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Polypill, WHO

#### Context:

- Recently, the **World Health Organization updated its Model Lists of Essential Medicines (EML) 2023** to include three **fixed-dose combinations of cardiovascular medicines or polypills** for use in primary and secondary prevention of atherosclerotic cardiovascular diseases.
- The WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines are updated every two years by the Expert

Committee on Selection and Use of Essential Medicines.

- It is intended to **serve as a guide for countries or regional authorities** to adopt or adapt in accordance with local priorities and treatment guidelines for the development and updating of national essential medicines lists.

### How can Polypills reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases?

- The use of the polypill is associated with **reduced risks of cardiovascular events**, including fatal and non-fatal myocardial infarction and stroke, and the need for revascularization in primary and secondary prevention settings.
- The term "polypill" describes a pill that contains a combination of several medications commonly used to treat heart disease and high blood pressure.
- According to research polypill reduced the risk of future heart attacks and strokes by 40% to 50%.
- **Low-cost:** The polypill is a simple and **low-cost public health intervention** that prevents millions of cardiovascular events and deaths each year.
- It requires little monitoring, administered to many people with physician support.
- The polypill is **not a new drug but a drug delivery mechanism**, promoting medication adherence and saving costs by preventing hospitalizations.
- **Polycap**, manufactured by Cadila in India is **one of the polypills** that has been included in the WHO's Model Lists of Essential Medicines (EML).
- Polycap is a combination of four drugs simvastatin + ramipril + atenolol + hydrochlorothiazide, along with acetylsalicylic acid or aspirin.
- The inclusion of polypills into the EML **can encourage governments and insurance companies to recommend them.**
- Private practitioners may also start prescribing it gradually, leading to increased availability in the market.



### The Quest For A Room Temperature Superconductor

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

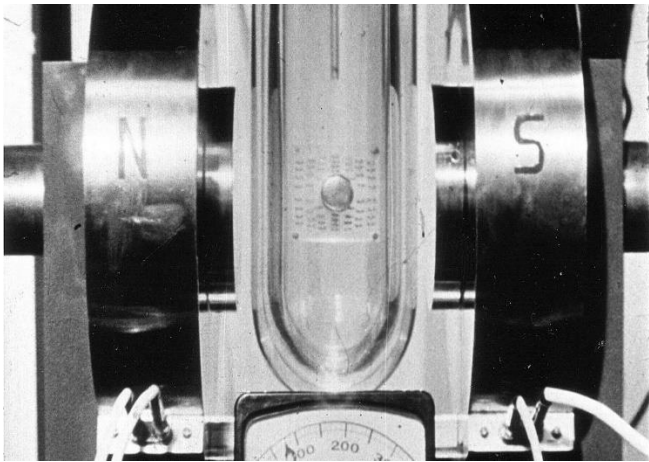
Prepp Prelims Booster: Concepts of Superconductors

#### Context:

- Recently, scientists from South Korea have discovered a material that acted as a superconductor at room temperature and ambient pressure.
- Earlier superconductors were believed to exist only at more than  $-240^{\circ}$  Celsius, which is well below the liquefaction temperature of nitrogen,  $-195^{\circ}$  Celsius.
- The discovery could be beneficial for the medical and industrial sectors as superconductors can transport heavy currents without any loss.

#### What have the researchers discovered?

- They have discovered that a **copper-doped lead apatite**, a type of phosphate mineral, displays superconducting properties at room temperature and pressure.
- **Apatites** are minerals with a phosphate scaffold with a tetrahedral, or pyramidal, motif i.e. one phosphorus atom surrounded by four oxygen atoms.
- Different apatites have different properties based on which atoms sit in between these pyramids.
- **Eg:** Hydroxyapatite contributes to the strength of tooth enamel and the bones of living organisms.
- The material displayed zero resistance to the flow of an electric current and a sudden resistance when the amount of current was increased beyond a threshold value (critical current) – as expected in a superconductor.



### How can a superconductor be identified?

- When a material becomes a superconductor, four changes are induced in it by the superconducting state.
- **Electronic effect:** it will transport electric currents with zero resistance
  - It requires sophisticated equipment and is usually difficult when the quantity of material is very less.
- **Magnetic effect:**
  - A type 1 superconductor will display the **Meissner effect**, in which a magnetic field will be expelled from its body as long as the field strength is below a critical value.
  - If a magnet is placed near the material, it will be pushed away as the material transitions into a superconductor.
  - A type 2 superconductor will display the **flux pinning phenomenon** in which magnetic fields are prevented from moving throughout the material
  - If a flux-pinned superconductor is removed from the magnetic field and then returned, it will revert to its original relative position.
- **Thermodynamic effect:** The transition to the superconducting state is accompanied by a drop in its electronic-specific heat.
  - If the material is warmed to the critical temperature, the electronic-specific heat returns to the pre-super conducting state value.
- **Spectroscopic effect:** Electrons in the material are forbidden from attaining certain energy levels even if they were attainable when the material was not a superconductor.
  - This gap is observable when scientists create a map of all the possible energy levels in the superconductor.

### Uses

- **Medicine:** It could be used in medical diagnostics like MRI, and mass spectrometers.

- **Particle science:** It can be used in nuclear plant design and the construction of particle colliders.
- **Energy Transmission:** Superconducting cables can transmit electricity without losses, making them ideal for long-distance power transmission.
  - Superconducting materials can also enhance the efficiency of electric motors and generators.
- **Transportation:** The use of superconducting magnets allows magnetic levitation (maglev) trains to float above tracks, thereby reducing friction and enabling high-speed travel.
- **Quantum Computing:** The ability of some superconducting materials to exhibit quantum states makes them important for quantum computing.

### Conclusion

- Although superconductor research is nearly a century old, it is still difficult to understand if a material is a superconductor or not due to the small margins of error involved.
- The discovery of a superconductor at room temperature could help technological development in a wide range of sectors through improved energy efficiency and reduced power losses.

### Types of superconductors

- **Type I:** It is a material that can become a superconductor throughout its bulk in the right conditions.
  - Aluminum, lead, mercury
- **Type II:** It transitions through a mix of superconducting and non-superconducting states in order to become fully superconducting.
  - Eg: niobium, vanadium, technetium, Boron-doped diamond, and silicon,
- The abilities of the two types of conventional superconductors can be explained by the **Bardeen-Cooper-Schrieffer theory of superconductivity**.
  - According to the BCS theory, superconductivity is a microscopic effect caused by the condensation of Cooper pairs.
  - Cooper pairs are pairs of electrons in a superconductor that have equal and opposite momentum and spin and are attractively bound.
  - The electrons pair up to create bosons called Cooper pairs that can move without any resistance to their flow, below a threshold temperature.

## What Is The Akira Ransomware, And Why Has The Government Issued A Warning Against It

**Priority: High**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is Akira Ransomware?

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Science And Technology- Developments And Their Applications And Effects In Everyday Life, Awareness In The Fields Of IT, Computers

### Context:

- Recently, CERT-In issued a warning for the ransomware "Akira" which can steal and encrypt data on both Windows and Linux devices.
- It has already targeted multiple victims, mainly from the U.S.A., and has an active website with information about its most recent data leaks.



### What is Akira?

Akira is a type of ransomware that is specifically designed to encrypt data, generate a ransom note, and eliminate Windows Shadow Volume copies on infected devices. The name "Akira" is derived from the extension it appends to encrypted files, which becomes ".akira."

### Infection and Encryption Process

- Upon infecting a device, Akira initiates its attack by deleting Windows Shadow Volumes, preventing organizations from effectively backing up their critical data.
- It also removes VSS files, crucial for uninterrupted communication between various components.
- After these deletions, Akira proceeds to encrypt files, marking them with the ".akira" extension.
- To ensure uninterrupted encryption, Akira terminates active Windows processes using the Windows Services Manager.

### Distribution and Threats

- Akira primarily spreads through deceptive tactics such as luring users to download malicious files,

often exploiting the absence of two-factor authentication, and concealing itself behind VPN services.

- Once deployed, the threat actors behind Akira demand significant ransom payments, threatening to expose private data on the dark web if their demands are not met.

### Targets and Spread

- Akira has been known to target corporate networks across various sectors, including education, manufacturing, real estate, finance, and consulting.
- It is adept at lateral movement within breached corporate networks, often leveraging compromised Windows admin credentials.
- The stolen sensitive corporate data becomes leverage for demanding substantial ransoms to prevent data leaks.

### Ransomware Infection Methods

Ransomware like Akira typically infiltrates devices through several methods, including spear-phishing emails with malicious attachments, drive-by downloads, unintentional downloads triggered by cyberattacks, special web links delivering malicious code, and exploiting insecure remote desktop connections.

### Protecting Against Akira Ransomware

To safeguard against Akira and other ransomware threats, users and organizations must implement fundamental cybersecurity practices:

- Regular Backups:** Maintain secure and up-to-date backups of critical data to mitigate data loss.
- Software Updates:** Keep all networks and operating systems updated, applying virtual patches for legacy systems.
- Email Security:** Implement email authentication protocols like DKIM, DMARC, and SPF to detect and prevent email spoofing and spam.
- Authentication:** Enforce secure passwords and multifactor authentication to enhance account security.
- Device Policies:** Establish strict policies for external device usage and data encryption, both at rest and in transit.
- Attachment Control:** Block potentially harmful attachment file types like .exe, .pif, and .url.
- Security Audits:** Conduct periodic security audits of critical systems and networks to identify vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

By adhering to these protective measures, users and organizations can bolster their defenses against Akira and other ransomware threats, reducing the risk of falling victim to these malicious attacks.

## Environment

### 39 MNCs Come Together For Circular Economy Coalition

Priority: High 

Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Concept of Circular Economy, Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition and Extended producer responsibility

#### Context:

- Recently the Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition was launched at the **4th G-20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG)** and Environment and Climate Ministers' meeting in Chennai.
- The Coalition is a reflection of India's message to adopt a circular economy that will help address environmental challenges through sustainability and regeneration.

#### What is the Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition?

- The **Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition** is a grouping of 39 MNCs from sectors such as steel, electronics, and FMCG including Maruti Suzuki, Coca-Cola, Unilever, Nestle, Aditya Birla Group, Tata Power, and Mahindra & Mahindra.
- They pledged to adopt the principles of **resource efficiency** and **circular economy** to address environmental challenges related to waste from plastics, microplastics, e-waste, chemical waste, etc.
- The RECEIC was conceptualized by **India's G20 Presidency** and is **industry-driven and self-sustaining** with the government only playing a supporting role.
- Businesses are ideal for the on-ground implementation of resource efficiency and circular economy principles.
- The three pillars of the Coalition are
  - Partnerships for impact
  - Cooperation in technology
  - Finance for scale
- The RECEIC will work towards achieving global commitments such as the **Sustainable Development Goals**, and **Paris Climate Targets**

and other goals established by global organizations such as the **G-20**.

#### Objective:

- Facilitate and encourage company-company interactions
- Develop advanced capabilities across sectors and value chains
- Learn from the practices and diverse experiences of coalition members
- Enable private sector initiatives to enhance resource efficiency and quicken the transition to circular economies.

#### Impact of the RECEIC

- Promote alliances among members
- Encourage technological cooperation and knowledge sharing
- Foster innovation
- Enhance access to finance for environmental initiatives through the sharing of insights.

#### Circular Economy

- It is a restorative or regenerative model of production and consumption involving sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing.
- It is a closed-loop system that minimizes resource use, waste generation, pollution, and emissions.

#### Benefits:

- Improved health of consumers through the use of sustainable materials.
- Increase in disposable income.
- Availability of new and efficient products and services
- Reduces cost of production
- Economy is boosted by developing new revenue streams
- Employment and innovation generation
- Reduced emissions and material consumption
- Increase in value and quality of land

#### Challenges

- Industrial reluctance:** Most industries and businesses have not shown much interest in adopting these principles.
- Poor implementation:** Policies to develop and upgrade recycling and waste management infrastructure have not been efficiently implemented.
- Lack of awareness:** Consumers need to be sensitized about responsible consumption, product reuse, and recycling through effective communication and behavioral change

campaigns.

- o **Investment:** It requires significant investments in the form of private and public capital.


#### EPR

- **Extended producer responsibility** is an environmental approach in which the producer is responsible for the product even in its post-consumer stage.
- It minimizes waste generation by shifting responsibilities away from the local bodies by financially incentivizing producers to take environmental considerations into account.
- The three foundational principles of the EPR approach are
  - o **Pollution prevention**
  - o **Life cycle**
  - o **Polluter pay principle**
- Reuse, buyback, and recycling policies are used to implement the EPR model.
- The [Plastic Waste Management \(Amendment\) Rules, 2022](#) have notified guidelines for extended producer responsibility.
  - o It enables the sale and purchase of surplus extended producer responsibility certificates through a market mechanism for plastic waste management.
  - o In 2021-22, nearly 41 lakh tonnes of plastic waste was generated in India.
  - o Out of this, nearly 30 lakh tonnes were allocated to registered recyclers and plastic waste processing units.

#### Conclusion

- These are important steps for reducing pollution caused due to littered plastic waste in the country.
- Accumulation of plastic waste is detrimental to the environment and when this waste finds its way into the sea, there can be major harm to aquatic ecosystems, too.

### Asian Elephant Expert Raman Sukumar Now A Vice-Chair Of The IPCC

Priority: Low 

Primary Source: Down to Earth

Prepp Prelims Booster: what is IPCC?, Background of Raman Sukumar

#### Context:

- Recently, the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** completed its elections in Nairobi, Kenya.

- The elections mark the end of the IPCC's sixth assessment cycle and the beginning of the seventh assessment.
- **Raman Sukumar, who is an Indian authority on the Asian elephant, has been elected a vice-chair of IPCC.** He is elected as a member of the Working Group II Vice-Chairs.
- **The IPCC also elected James Ferguson 'Jim' Skea of the United Kingdom as its new Chairman.**

#### About Raman Sukumar

- **Raman Sukumar is an Indian ecologist and is best known for his work on the behaviour of Asian elephants** and how their presence has affected both human and natural environments.

#### What is IPCC?

- The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a United Nations scientific government agency** established at the request of member governments to provide the world with an impartial, scientific assessment of climate change and its political and economic implications on nations.
- The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) founded it in 1988, and the United Nations General Assembly later approved it.
- **Membership:** It has 195 Member countries.
- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.

#### What are the IPCC working groups?

- **Working Group I:** looks at the physics of climate change;
- **Working Group II:** climate change impacts, adaptation and vulnerability;
- **Working Group III:** focuses on climate change mitigation;
- The three working groups release separate reports, which are then compiled into a synthesis report.

### 5% Of Birds In India Are Endemic, Reveals Zoological Survey Of India Publication

Priority: Medium 

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: 75 Endemic Birds of India report, Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)

#### Context:

- Recently, the publication, titled "**75 Endemic Birds of India**," was released by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).



- According to a recent release, **approximately 5% of bird species discovered in India are endemic and do not exist in any other regions** globally.

### Key Findings of Endemic Bird Species

- **Endemic Bird Diversity in India:** India is home to 1,353 bird species, which represents approximately 12.40% of global bird diversity. Out of these 1,353 bird species, 78 (5%) are endemic to the country.
- **Species with no record:** It was highlighted that **three species have not been recorded** in the last few decades. They are the:
  - **Manipur Bush Quail** (*Perdicula manipurensis*), listed as 'Endangered' by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species with its last recorded sighting in 1907;
  - **the Himalayan Quail** (*Ophrysia superciliosa*), listed as 'Critically Endangered' with its last recorded sighting in 1876; and
  - **the Jerdon's Courser** (*Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*), listed as 'Critically Endangered' with its last confirmed sighting in 2009.
- **Geographical Distribution:** The Western Ghats have the highest number of endemic species (28), followed by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (25). The Eastern Himalayas, Southern Deccan plateau, and central Indian forest each have a few endemic species.

### Bird species only found in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- Nicobar Megapode (*Megapodius nicobariensis*);
- Nicobar Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis klossi*);
- Andaman Crane (*Rallina canningi*);
- Andaman Barn Owl (*Tyto deroepstorffi*)

#### About Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)

- It was founded on 1 July 1916 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of the Government of India as a premier Indian organisation in zoological research.
- Its objective is to promote the survey, exploration and research of the fauna in the country.

### Significance of India's Endemic Bird Species

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Endemic bird species are a unique and irreplaceable part of a country's biodiversity. They represent the result of millions of years of evolution in a specific geographic area.
- **Indigenous Cultural Significance:** Many of India's endemic bird species are often featured in folklore, myths, and traditional practices. These

species contribute to the identity and heritage of different regions within India.

- **Ecological Balance:** Endemic species often play specific ecological roles in their native ecosystems. They might have evolved to fill niches that are not occupied by other species, contributing to the overall balance of the ecosystem.
- **Tourism and Recreation:** Birdwatching and ecotourism have become popular activities in India and around the world. Many bird enthusiasts travel to specific regions to observe and photograph endemic species.
- **Education and Awareness:** Endemic species can serve as ambassadors for broader conservation efforts. Their uniqueness can capture people's attention and raise awareness about the importance of protecting natural habitats and biodiversity.

### Himalayan Vulture Bred In Captivity For The First Time In India

Priority: High

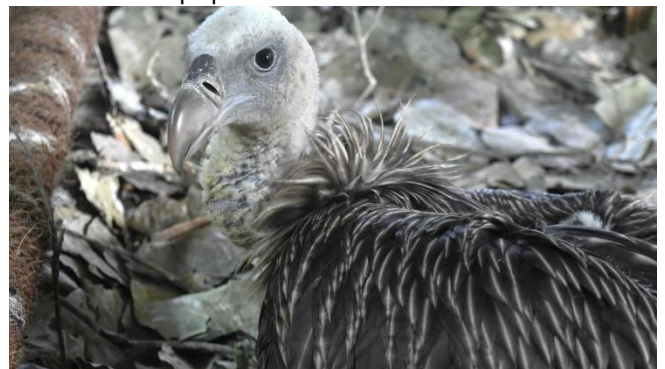


Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Himalayan vulture, Vulture Action Plan

#### Context:

- Recently, researchers recorded the first captive breeding of a Himalayan vulture in India at the Assam State Zoo, Guwahati.
- All three vulture species found in India under the gyps vulture category are classified as critically endangered.
- Some Vulture species have displayed nearly 90% decline in population in India since the 1990s.



#### Himalayan Vulture

- The Himalayan vulture is the largest bird species native to India.
- **Scientific name:** *Gyps himalayensis*

#### Features:

- It is sandy brown in color and has a pale, featherless head.
- It is seen in large groups and as single birds.
- Broad wings and short dark feathers.
- White neck ruff and yellow bill

#### Habitat:

- Himalayan countries - India, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, China
- Central Asian mountains - Kazakhstan, Afghanistan
- **Migration:** It is a common migrant to the Indian plains during the winters.

#### Conservation Status:

- **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
- **CITES:** Appendix II
- **WPA, 1972:** Schedule IV

#### Threats:

- **Poisoning:** Kidney failure induced by diclofenac and other toxic non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs is a major cause of the death of vulture species
- **Electrocution:** Vulture deaths have been reported due to contact with high-tension power distribution lines.
- **Persecution:** They have been persecuted by many communities as they are natural scavengers. This has led to their deaths due to deliberate poisoning or hunting.
- **Forest Fires:** Forest fires have destroyed the traditional nesting sites of these vultures leading to reduction in vulture populations.

#### Captive breeding of the Himalayan vulture

- The Himalayan vultures that were successfully bred were rescued in 2011–2012 from accidents and poisonings.
- The hatchling which was born in captivity was observed on March 14, 2022, and shifted to the artificial brooding facility on 15 March.
- During the first month, it was kept in a plastic box-based brooder with a mat for the grip.
- The temperature was maintained around 30–35°C and provided with a lamp, a water bowl, and a thermo-hygrometer for continuous monitoring.
- Although the vulture usually breeds in snow environments, it had acclimatized to the tropical environment of the zoo over its long stay there, which allowed it to breed successfully.
- **India became the second country to successfully complete the captive breeding of the Himalayan vulture after France.**
- The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has previously bred three other vulture species—the

white-rumped vulture, the Indian vulture, and the slender-billed vulture—in captivity for conservation and reintroduction purposes.

#### Other vulture species in India

- India is home to 8 other species of vulture - Oriental white-backed, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous, and the Eurasian Griffon.
- **The Bearded, Long-billed, Slender-billed, and Oriental white-backed are protected under Schedule-1 of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 while the remaining are protected under 'Schedule IV'.**

#### Recent Central decision

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare banned the manufacture, sale, and distribution of **ketoprofen** and **aceclofenac** and their formulations for animal use under section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 (23 of 40) in July 2023.
- Aceclofenac immediately converts into diclofenac in animals and remains in the body for longer periods.
- Ketoprofen, which is an **anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID)** used to treat pain, inflammation, swelling, stiffness, and joint pain, was found to be poisonous to the Himalayan vulture.

#### Vulture Action Plan

- The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched the Vulture Action Plan 2020–25 for the conservation of vultures in India.
- The MoEFCC launched the **Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2006** with the **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)** and banned the veterinary use of diclofenac in the same year.
- It incorporated the **Vulture Recovery Plan (2004)** which recommended banning the veterinary use of diclofenac, finding its substitute, and setting up conservation breeding centers for vultures.

#### Objectives

##### Drug control:

- Ensure minimum use of Diclofenac and prevent the poisoning of cattle carcasses, which are the major food of vultures, with veterinary NSAIDs, by ensuring regulated and prescription-based sale of veterinary NSAIDs.
- Carry out safety testing of available NSAIDs on vultures and develop new ones which do not affect vultures.

- Ensure that DGCI must institute a system that automatically removes a drug from veterinary use if it is found to be toxic to vultures.

### Upscaling conservation

- Establish Additional Conservation Breeding Centres and Vulture Conservation Centres
- Implement the **Vulture Safe Zone** programme
- Launch conservation and breeding plans for the Red-headed and Egyptian vultures.
- Declare a Vulture Safe Zone only when no toxic drugs are found in undercover pharmacy and cattle carcass surveys, for two consecutive years, and the vulture populations are stable and not declining.
- Build Four rescue centers spread across the country.

### Other Efforts

- The **Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme** has been established by the CZA and BNHS.
- A **Vulture Care Centre (VCC)** was set up at Pinjore, Haryana in 2001 to study the cause of deaths of vultures in India.
- **SAVE or Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction** is a consortium of like-minded, regional, and international organizations that oversees and coordinates conservation, campaigning, and fundraising activities related to South Asian vultures.

### Conclusion

- The successful captive breeding and the ban on aceclofenac and ketoprofen are game-changing initiatives for vulture conservation.
- However, the ban should be implemented efficiently and other NSAIDs like **Nimesulide** which are major threats to vultures must also be banned.
- Alongside introducing safer alternative drugs for vultures, similar steps should be taken to protect other raptor species in India.

To know more about vulture conservation, click the [link](#).

## Amazon Nations To Jointly Fight Deforestation

**Priority: High**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, Belem Declaration

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Belem Declaration And Its Criticism, Concerns Related To Deforestation Amazon Basin

### Context:

- Recently, the members of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization adopted a new shared agenda to save the rainforest, which acted as a buffer against climate change.
- The Belem Declaration aims to promote sustainable development and end deforestation and the organized crime that fuels the destruction of the region's ecosystem.
- According to the Living Amazon Report 2022 by the World Wildlife Fund, around 35% of the rainforest is either totally lost or highly degraded while 18% has been converted for other uses.

### What is the Belem Declaration?

- The **Belem Declaration** is the official statement of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization that met in Belem, Brazil.
- **Aim:** It sought to develop a common approach to tackling climate change as a united stance would give them more heft in global talks.
- The summit was also attended by representatives from Norway and Germany, the largest contributors to **Brazil's Amazon Fund for sustainable development**, Indonesia, the Republic of Congo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### Major provisions

- **Condemns the proliferation of protectionist trade barriers.**
  - These barriers adversely impact sustainable development, harms poor farmers in developing nations, and the promotion of indigenous products from the Amazon region.
- **Urges industrialized nations to fulfill their obligations** to financially support developing nations in combating climate change.
  - Brazil has sought international financial support for forest protection to enhance efforts against deforestation which has dropped by 42% in the country since January 2023.
- **Recommends improved cooperation in law enforcement** through exchanging best practices and intelligence about illicit activities like deforestation, human rights violations, wildlife trafficking, and the sale and smuggling of mercury (which is used in illegal gold mining but clogs waterways).
- The countries vowed to **fight deforestation** and prevent the Amazon rainforest, also known as the lungs of the world, from reaching the point of no return.

## Other proposals

- **Affluent nations should swap foreign debt owed by Amazon countries for climate action**, which would create enough investment to power the Amazon region's economy.
- Formation of a **military alliance similar to NATO** which will be mandated to protect the Amazon and tackle organized crime.
- Policing of border areas and international cooperation in the region has been poor but drug seizures have increased over the past decade according to the UNODC.

## Criticism

- It did not accept the demand of indigenous activists and environmentalists for all members to adopt **Brazil and Colombia's pledge to end deforestation by 2030**.
- Forest protection commitments among the countries of the region have been uneven, even in the past.
- There is a lack of alignment among members on key matters as meetings are not held regularly.
- All the Amazon countries have ratified the **Paris climate accord** which requires signatories to set targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- However cross-border cooperation has been impaired by low trust, ideological differences, and the lack of government presence.
- Colombia has pledged to stop new oil exploration in order to achieve "**decarbonized prosperity**" but other countries like Brazil, who are major oil producers are more ambivalent.
- Brazil's state-run oil major, Petrobras has sought permission to explore for oil near the mouth of the Amazon.
- Environmentalist organizations such as the Climate Observatory, Greenpeace, and the Nature Conservancy criticized the lack of detailed pledges, practical solutions, or timelines for implementation in the Declaration.
- The agreement signed by the invited countries also lacked concrete goals while mostly criticizing developed nations for failing to provide promised vast climate financing.

## How have other organizations responded?

- The **Confederation of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon Basin (COICA)**, which is the umbrella organization of indigenous groups in the Amazon praised the Declaration for fulfilling two of their primary requests.

- It acknowledged the rights of the indigenous peoples to traditional territories
- It established a mechanism within the ACTO for the formal participation of Indigenous peoples.
- The **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** supported the Declaration for recognizing the dangers faced by the Amazon but claimed that a common and united approach is necessary to end deforestation.
- The Rainforest Foundation, Norway, stated that the declaration is an opportunity for the Amazonian nations to protect their rainforests and reaffirmed their demand for financial support from the developed world.



## What is the ACTO?

- The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) is an international organization that aims to **promote the sustainable development of the Amazon Basin**.
- It was established in 1995 with its headquarters in Brasilia, Brazil to strengthen the provisions of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT), which was signed on 3 July 1978, and amended in 1998.
- **Members:** Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela.
- However, a major criticism of the ACTO is that it has only met 4 times in the last 45 years.

## Why is deforestation in the Amazon a major concern?

- According to scientists, the destruction of 20 - 25% of the rainforest will lead to
  - Decline in rainfall
  - Transformation of more than half of the rainforest into tropical savannah
  - Immense biodiversity loss.
- This means that the Amazon is losing its ability to bounce back from the damage caused by droughts, fires, and deforestation.

- As a result the rainforest, which stores around one-third of the carbon stored by forests worldwide, could transform into a major carbon source.
- This is accompanied by a loss of biodiversity, indigenous tribes, and knowledge, and an increase in zoonotic diseases.
- The Amazon has been the victim of capitalism in which agriculture spread indiscriminately along with the exploitation of natural resources.
- Industrialized nations were responsible for the majority of historic greenhouse gas emissions.
- Therefore, the responsibility of protecting the Amazon should be shared among them as well instead of the burden being placed upon the poor and developing economies of the region.

### Conclusion

- Despite disagreements and ambiguities in the positions of the member countries, the revival of the ACTO indicates increased regional cooperation and growing global recognition of the Amazon's importance in arresting climate change.
- It must be provided with more adequate funding so that it can act as the collective voice of the region ahead of the COP climate conference.

### Amazon Rainforest

- The Amazon rainforest refers to the large tropical rainforests which occupy the drainage basin of the **Amazon River** and its tributaries in northern South America.
- **Area:** It covers an estimated area of 6,000,000 km<sup>2</sup>, i.e. area nearly twice the size of India.
- **Climate:**
  - Very wet, receiving in excess of 200 cm rainfall per annum
  - Uniform and high temperatures between 20°C and 35°C.
- **Borders:** Guiana Highlands to the north, the Andes Mountains to the west, the Brazilian central plateau to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.
- **Amazon basin countries:** Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, and French Guiana (overseas French territory).
- **Flora and Fauna:** It is home to 30% of the world's species, including 40,000 plant species, 16,000 tree species, 2.5 million insect species, and some 2,000 birds and mammals.

## Drilling In The North Sea – History And Environmental Concerns

**Priority: Medium**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Location Of North Sea, Offshore Drilling

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Concerns Associated With Offshore Drilling, Is The U.K. Honoring Its Climate Commitments?

### Context:

- Recently, the government of the UK announced that it would grant more than 100 new licenses for oil and gas exploration in the North Sea in order to make the country more energy independent.
- However, environmental advocacy groups have criticized the move as it aggravates the threat of climate change and threatens workers, waters, and wildlife.

### A short history of drilling in the U.K. North Sea

- The **Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf, 1958** was the first international legislation to establish the rights of countries over the continental shelves adjacent to their respective coasts.
  - It opened the way forward for exploration activities in the North Sea.
- The **North Sea Transition Authority (NTSA)** is responsible for regulating oil, gas, and carbon storage industries.
- British Petroleum was awarded the first license for exploration in the region in 1964 following which the company discovered natural gas off the **east Anglican coast** in 1965.
- By the 1980s, over a hundred installations looking for oil and gas had been established in the North Sea.
- The **Foinaven** and **Schiehallion fields** were discovered in the 1990s, as a result of which exploration and exploitation were initiated in the **West of Shetland region**.
- Production of oil and gas from the North Sea has reduced from its peak of 1,37,099 thousand tonnes total of crude oil and natural gas in 1999 to 38,037 thousand tonnes by 2022.

### U.K.'s new oil drilling projects

- The Government of the U.K. is likely to approve the development of Rosebank, which is considered the U.K.'s largest undeveloped oil and gas field, and other sites in the North Sea.

- The government plans to slow the decline in the production of oil and gas in order to secure domestic supplies.
- Even if the U.K. reaches net zero in 2050, nearly 25% of the country's energy needs will come from oil and gas.
- It also announced support for new carbon capture and storage initiatives.

### Why is offshore drilling problematic?

- According to the Natural Resources Defence Council, a U.S.-based environmental advocacy group, offshore drilling poses serious risks to employees working on offshore oil rigs, and the natural environment and wildlife in the region.
- **Labor:** It is a high-risk job that also affects the availability of labor in other industries in the region.
- **Climate change:** Drilling for oil in seas and oceans results in a rise in sea level and warming of seawater.
- This increases the potential threats posed by climate change.
- **Biodiversity:** The marine biodiversity of the North Sea is directly affected by offshore drilling in the region.
- Additionally, the coral reefs, shellfish, and marine ecosystems face indirect threats due to the increased acidity of the waters as a result of carbon pollution.
- **Emissions:** According to the U.K.-based NGO, Carbon Tracker, the average emissions of major oil companies have to be reduced by 40% by 2040 compared to 2019 levels.
- This means that new offshore oil rig projects pose a risk to the success of the commitments under the Paris Agreement.
- **Health:** Moreover, offshore oil exploration is expensive and extremely polluting.
- There are serious health issues associated with offshore drilling such as asthma, and other respiratory problems.

### Pros of offshore drilling

- **Increased Oil Production:** It directly increases the quantity of oil produced for fuel and energy.
- **Employment:** It directly leads to employment generation and thus stimulates the economy.
- **Self-reliance:** Offshore drilling helps attain self-sufficiency in terms of fuel and protection from external influences.
- **Oil Prices:** It lowers the price of oil as a result of local production and lower transportation costs.

### Is the U.K. honoring its climate commitments?

- According to a Progress Report prepared by the Climate Change Committee that advises the Government of the U.K., the U.K. is not adequately prepared for climate change.
- The National Adaptation Programme is a statutory programme to be followed by the government to prepare for climate change, as required under the Climate Change Act.
- Activities for adaptation to climate change have not been at the scale required to accommodate the potential threat of climate change.
- The U.K.'s climate action is inconsistent with the **Paris Agreement** despite an overall rating of "almost sufficient".
- The U.K.'s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term targets are not an equitable share of global efforts to address climate change.
- The U.K. has committed to achieving 'net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

### North Sea

- The North Sea is a sea situated in northern Europe and is part of the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Borders:** It is bordered by the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Norway, and the Faroe Islands.
- It is linked to the Atlantic Ocean via the English Channel.
- It is linked to the Baltic Sea via the Kattegat and Skagerrak straits.
- **Area:** It covers an area of approximately 570,000 square kilometers.
- It is a relatively shallow sea with the **Norwegian trench** (725 meters) being the deepest portion and the **Dogger Bank** (12 meters deep) being the shallowest..
- **Climate:**
  - An oceanic temperate maritime climate with slightly high temperatures.
  - Cool and long winters are long, and short and mild summers
- **Rivers:** Major rivers that drain into the North Sea are the Forth, Elbe, the Weser, the Ems, the Rhine and the Meuse, the Scheldt, the Thames, and the Humber.

### How One Health Can Help India Respond Better To Health Crises

**Priority:** Medium



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Concept of "One Health"

### Context:

- This article discussed the importance of **'One Health'** which is currently gaining popularity worldwide.
- The 'One Health' concept acknowledges the interdependence of human, animal, plant health, and the environment.
- Its roots trace back to Hippocrates' writings in 460–367 BC, recognizing the link between public health and a clean environment.
- Rudolf Virchow (1821–1863), 19th-century German physician and pathologist saw no separation between animal and human medicines. Modern veterinarians Steele and Schwabe, stressed ecology's role in both animal and human health.

### Why is One Health special?

- Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and population growth have harmed biodiversity and led to **zoonotic diseases like bird flu and Ebola**.
- Researchers have estimated that 60% of emerging diseases that can infect humans are zoonotic in nature.
- Moreover, humanity faces significant challenges such as antimicrobial resistance, food safety, security, and vector-borne diseases. These issues emphasize the need for both intersectoral management and the efficiency inherent in the One Health strategy.
- **Minimise resources:** It minimizes resource requirements across sectors by encouraging coordination across governmental units, including the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Environment, and Science and Technology.
- For example, One Health approach allows researchers to **share their laboratories and findings**, and ultimately make decisions that lead to resilient, sustainable, and predictable policies.
- **Economic benefits:** One Health proves cost-effective compared to managing pandemics in isolation. The G20 assessment predicts a yearly cost of approximately \$30 billion for a non-One-Health approach, while the World Bank estimates that adopting One Health would amount to \$10.3 billion to \$11.5 billion annually.

### What are some recent One Health initiatives?

- The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2023 highlighted the importance of adopting a One Health approach. Since COVID-19, many interventions

based on the One Health model have been launched worldwide.

- **Standing Committee on Zoonoses:** It was established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). The purpose of this committee was to provide the Union and the State governments guidance and recommendations on challenges related to zoonoses.
- **Consortium on One Health:** In October 2021, the Department of Biotechnology introduced **India's inaugural One Health consortium**, uniting 27 organizations from various ministries.
- This consortium aims to evaluate the impact of five transboundary animal diseases and 10 chosen zoonotic diseases.
- The consortium focuses on improving cross-cutting collaborations between the animal, human, and wildlife sectors.
- **One Health pilot project in Karnataka and Uttarakhand:** In June 2022, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairy (DAHD) partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Confederation of Indian Industry to launch a One Health pilot project in Karnataka and Uttarakhand. This project focuses on enhancing collaborations across sectors to improve livestock, human, wildlife, and environmental health.
- India is currently preparing for a wider **'National One Health Mission'** led by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor. This mission aims to coordinate, support, and integrate all ongoing One Health initiatives across the country.

### How can we switch to a One Health approach?

- Implementing a holistic One Health approach requires navigating four key stages, each demanding consistent political commitment and sustainable funding structures:

#### Stage 1: Communication

- Establishing basic communication mechanisms among ministries and sectors is the first step. Stakeholders need to stay informed and engaged throughout the transformation, meeting regularly to review progress. For instance, the National Standing Committee on Zoonoses under MoHFW exemplifies this stage.

#### Stage 2: Collaboration:

- The sector members need to exchange their knowledge and expertise in order to translate ideas into short-term interventions. Clarifying roles in zoonoses management is crucial.

Collaboration encompasses risk assessment, surveillance, capacity-building, research, and public outreach. The DAHD's Karnataka and Uttarakhand One Health pilot project strengthens such ties.

### Stage 3: Coordination:

- This stage involves routine, long-term activities led by a national or subnational agency dedicated to achieving One Health outcomes. Situations requiring long-term coordination include environmental and disease surveillance, cross-border animal trade monitoring, and awareness campaigns. India's forthcoming 'National One Health Mission' illustrates this stage.

### Stage 4: Integration:

- One Health is inherently intersectoral while existing systems often function vertically. Integration across sectors is essential. A policy framework facilitating resource-sharing and streamlining programmes is vital. India's current programmes, like MoHFW's Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme and DAHD's Livestock Health and Disease Control scheme, lack integration, resulting in uncoordinated initiatives.



### Way forward

- India should move beyond short-term collaborations and create an integrated, science-based environment to reap all the advantages of a One Health approach. This is a prerequisite for platforms to not just share office space but to also provide access to laboratories and biological samples to the relevant researchers.
- In an integrated system researchers from various disciplines should be able to use laboratories as necessary and generate the requisite inputs will go a long way to meeting major challenges with the One Health approach.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program

offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## Current Events of National and International Importance

### Coups In Niger; Causes And Concerns

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is ECOWAS?

Prepp Mains Booster: What is Niger Coup? India – Niger Relations

#### Context:

- Recently, an army-led coup in Niger removed **President Mohamed Bazoum Bazoum**, who was elected two years ago in Niger's first democratic transfer of power since independence in 1960.
- The **head of Niger's presidential guard, Abdourahmane Tchiani** proclaimed himself as the **head of the transitional government** and has cited the worsening security situation and bad governance as the main reasons behind the coup.

#### Why did Niger's military stage a coup to oust President Bazoum?

- **Insurgent attacks:** The country's leadership was unable to stop insurgent attacks despite the increase in foreign forces, especially from the US and France.
- The terrorist groups linked to **al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and Boko Haram** operate in the south-west near Malian and southeast near the Nigerian borders
- According to the **Global Terrorism Index 2023**, Niger experienced the sixth-highest civilian death toll in insurgent attacks in 2022, with 198 people losing their lives.
- **Insecurity:** The large number of foreign military troops and bases in the country has not been well received by the military.
- Anti-French sentiments in Niger have been rising since mid-2022, following the approval of France's Barkhane force redeployment after its initial withdrawal.
- **Socio-economic issues:** Declining economic prospects like rise inflation and corruption, and food insecurity



- **Ethnicity and legitimacy of President:** President Mohamed Bazoum Bazoum is from Niger's **ethnic Arab minority** and has always been labeled as having foreign origins.

### Recent African coups d'état

World leaders condemned an attempted coup in Niger, calling for President Mohamed Bazoum – a key Western ally – to be released. Seven coups since 2020 threaten sub-Saharan stability



### What are the concerns?

- **Terrorism:** Foreign troops are stationed in Niger to fight Islamist insurgencies in West Africa's semi-arid Sahel region.
- The Sahel is the vast semi-arid region of Africa separating the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south.
- The recent coup will embolden the terrorist groups in the region.
- **Nuclear reserves:** According to the World Nuclear Association (WNA), Niger is the world's seventh-biggest producer of uranium and has Africa's highest-grade uranium ores.
- Niger is the provider of 15 percent of France's uranium needs and accounts for a fifth of the EU's uranium stock.
- According to Euratom, **Niger supplies 25.4 percent of Uranium to the EU countries.** The coup has raised a new uncertainty over Niger's Uranium export.
- **Growing Russian influence:** After the coup, protests in Niamey saw some waving Russian flags and chanting pro-Russian slogans.
- Niger may be leaning towards Russia as an alternative partner similar to Mali and Burkina Faso, as West African military governments prefer

Russia's security partnership without conditions over the West's emphasis on democratic norms. This raises concerns about Russia's influence in the region.

### Why is the regional response?

- **African Union Peace and Security Council:** The African Union Peace and Security Council expressed concern about the "alarming resurgence of coups" and called on the military to restore constitutional authority within 15 days and return soldiers to their barracks.
- The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the standing decision-making organ of the African Union for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts. It is a collective security and early warning arrangement intended to facilitate timely and efficient responses to conflict and crisis situations in Africa.
- **ECOWAS:** ECOWAS leaders have declared "zero tolerance" for coups and imposed **financial sanctions** on the junta while implementing a no-fly zone for all commercial flights over Niger.
- **Neighbors:** Mali and Burkina Faso have shown solidarity with the coup makers, while Guinea's President Mamady Doumbouya has expressed discontent with the imposed sanctions and the threat of force from ECOWAS.

### Why are there several coups in the Sahel Region?

- The Sahel region includes **six Francophone countries:** Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal, with a population of over a hundred million.
- These nations have faced **challenges like political instability, economic struggles, ethnic tensions, and climate change** impacts since gaining independence from France.
- **Weak governance,**
- **corruption, and**
- **slow progress**
- **Ethnic conflicts and rebellions**
- These reasons have led to military takeovers of elected governments in the name of restoring stability, which has unfortunately resulted in violence and human rights abuses.
- **Niger:** Niger has witnessed four successful coups and multiple attempted ones since gaining independence in 1960.
- The most recent attempt occurred in 2021, just before President Bazoum's inauguration.

- **Others:** Similarly, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea have experienced a combined total of five military coups since 2020.

### What is ECOWAS?

- The **Economic Community of West African States or ECOWAS** was **established in 1975 through the Lagos Treaty**, with a mandate of promoting economic integration among its members.
- **ECOWAS has 15 members:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.
- It includes two sub-regional blocs:
  - **The West African Economic and Monetary Union** is an organisation of eight, mainly French-speaking states.
  - **The West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ)**, established in 2000, comprises six mainly English-speaking countries.



### Objective of ECOWAS

- Its objective is to achieve "collective self-sufficiency" for its member states by creating a single large trade bloc by building a full economic and trading union.
- It serves as a peacekeeping force in the region, with member states occasionally sending joint military forces to intervene in the bloc's member countries at times of political instability and unrest.
- Its larger aims are to have a single common currency and create a single, large trading bloc in areas of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, financial issues, and social and cultural matters.

### Role played by ECOWAS in the region till now

- **Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution:** ECOWAS, besides economic cooperation, aimed to address conflicts. Its peacekeeping force ECOMOG, led by

Nigeria, intervened in Liberia (1990) and Sierra Leone (1997) during crises.

- **Gambia Intervention:** In 2017, it intervened in the Gambia after President Yahya Jammeh refused to step down post-election. This paved the way for a peaceful transition to Adama Barrow's presidency.
- The current Niger coup's leader, Gen. Tchiani, has previously served as battalion commander for ECOWAS peacekeepers in Ivory Coast after a ceasefire between government and rebel forces in 2003.

### Conclusion

- The attempted military coup in Niger threatens to undermine the relative progress the country has made under its civilian democratic leaders and amplifies Niger's risks for insecurity, economic crises, and political instability.

### India-Niger relations

- India opened its Embassy in Niamey in May 2009, and Niger established its Embassy in New Delhi in November 2011.
- **Trade:** The main items exported from India to Niger include Rice, Cotton, Pharmaceutical products, Engineering goods, electrical appliances, cotton fabrics, garments, processed cereals/food items, Sugar, Sugar confectionary, Construction material, artificial jewelry etc.
- The main items being exported from Niger to India are Gum Arabic, Resins and other Vegetable saps and extracts, semi-precious stones, Oil seeds (Sesame), misc. grains, goat skins. Etc. The bilateral trade in 2021-22 stood at 101 Million dollars.
- **Indian investments in Niger:** Airtel Cellular Services, Euroworld International, Jai Mata di Trading, Satguru Travels, Qualis Beverages.
- **Indian community:** There are around 200 Indian nationals residing in Niamey. They are largely engaged in trading, hospitality, and service sectors.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-

9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## Japan To Release Water From Fukushima Nuclear Plant

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Fukushima Nuclear Plant

Prepp Mains Booster: Concerns Of Releasing The Water Into Pacific Ocean

### Context:

- Recently, Japan is expected to begin releasing massive amounts of treated radioactive water from the tsunami-damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean, a highly contentious decision that has sparked outrage in neighbouring countries.
- The impending discharge of water comes more than a decade after Japan was devastated by the world's second-worst nuclear disaster.



### Why does Japan plan to release Fukushima water into the ocean?

- The release of the water is a critical phase in the plant's decommissioning and the rehabilitation of **Fukushima prefecture** following the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami tragedy.
- Water disposal will take decades to complete, with a continual filtration and diluting process taking place alongside the plant's planned retirement.
- For the time being, the government has done all possible to safeguard the plan's safety, maintain **Japan's fishing industry**, and fully explain the **scientific foundation** for the action.
- The government has promised to continue its efforts until the completion of the release and decommissioning process, which will take decades.
- In a final assessment issued in July, the **International Atomic Energy Agency** stated that

the release, if carried out as planned, will have no effect on the environment or human health.

- Even after accounting for possible **bioconcentration** of low-dose **radionuclides** in the water, the environmental and health impact remains insignificant.
- Officials in South Korea and China are concerned about the impact on their respective islands.

### Why release instead of treating the water?

- The Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which runs the Fukushima facility, first intended to clean the wastewater, but ultimately chose to release the water since there wasn't enough space for the water-tanks.
- Additionally, due to the short half-life (12–13 years) of tritium, Japan is unable to keep water for longer than necessary.



### Concerns Of Releasing The Water Into Pacific Ocean

- Any release of radioactive materials will raise the risk of cancer and other known adverse health effects for people who are exposed because there is no known radiation safety threshold beyond which exposure may be deemed safe.
- Anyone who lives close to the discharge site may be at danger since the water released may be harmful to fish.
- Due to the difficulty of doing so, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) has not eliminated tritium from the water.
- Also the water contains ruthenium and plutonium isotopes, which may last longer in the bodies of marine organisms and on the ocean floor.
- Fukushima's fishing unions have been pleading with the government not to release the water for years, saying that doing so would undermine efforts to repair the harm done to their fisheries' reputations.

Read more about Radioactive waste [click here](#)

## Uproar in neighbouring countries

- Nuclear power plants all throughout the globe routinely emit waste water with tritium levels higher than the treated water from Fukushima.
- However, the idea has sparked outrage among nearby countries, with China being the most outspoken opponent. Japan was accused of treating the ocean as its "private sewer."
- Hong Kong announced it will "immediately activate" import restrictions on some Japanese foods.
- South Korea and China have already prohibited imports of seafood from the Fukushima area.

### Fukushima Nuclear power plant



- The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power facility is a decommissioned nuclear power facility on a 3.5-square-kilometer site between the Fukushima Prefecture cities of Kuma and Futaba.
- The plant was severely damaged by the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011.
- The series of events resulted in radioactive leakage and irreparably damaged numerous reactors, rendering them un-restartable. The remaining reactors were not reactivated due to a political decision.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

## The Katchatheevu Controversy

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Location of Kachchatheevu

Prepp Mains Booster: 1974 Agreement pact about Kachchatheevu Island and Associated Issues

### Context:

- Recently, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K.Stalin, revived the debate over Katchatheevu, an uninhabited and barren 285-acre islet about 14 nautical miles off Rameswaram.
- Stalin emphasized that the islet's return could bring a lasting resolution to the challenges faced by the state's fishermen.



### When did Katchatheevu become a part of Sri Lanka?

- In **1974, Indira Gandhi ceded** the island of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in an attempt to settle the maritime border issue through the '**Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Agreement**'.
- Indian fishermen retained limited access, but fishing rights were unclear.
- Sri Lanka interpreted Indian fishermen's right to access Katchatheevu to be limited to "rest, drying nets and for visit to the Catholic shrine without visa".

### How important has Kachatheevu been to the fisherfolk?

- Fisherfolk of the two countries have **been traditionally using the islet for fishing**.
- The supplemental pact in **March 1976** made it clear that fishing vessels and fishermen of the **two countries "shall not engage" in fishing in the historic waters**, territorial sea, and exclusive zone or exclusive economic zone of either of the countries **"without the express permission of Sri Lanka or India."**
- This further added uncertainty and has led to ongoing tensions and disputes, affecting Indian fishermen relying on the area for livelihood.

## What triggered the negotiations between India and Sri Lanka?

- **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka claimed sovereignty over Katchatheevu by **citing Portuguese occupation from 1505–1658 CE.**
- **India:** India argued that it was part of the **Ramnad zamin**, with historical ties.
- The former Raja Ramanatha Sethupathi's 1968 interview supported India's claim, stating Katchatheevu was under zamin jurisdiction "from time immemorial." Taxes were collected until 1947 when the state took over via Zamindari Abolition Act.

## How was the 1974 agreement received?

- The current demand for the retrieval of Katchatheevu originates **from the opposition to the 1974 pact.**
- During debates in Parliament that July, opposition parties like DMK, AIADMK, Jan Sangh, Swatantra, and Socialist Party walked out.
- Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Jan Sangh's leader, argued the transfer was done without transparency.
- However, in 1974, External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh defended India's decision in Lok Sabha, citing exhaustive research on historical records.
- M. Karunanidhi, then Chief Minister, had earlier urged Indira Gandhi in 1973 to retain Katchatheevu, stating it was India's, not just Tamil Nadu's.
- In the last 15 years, both Jayalalithaa and Karunanidhi had approached the Supreme Court on the matter.

## What has been the stand of the Union government on the issue?

- In August 2013, the Indian government stated to the Supreme Court that there was no basis for the **retrieval of Kachchatheevu from Sri Lanka**, as no Indian territory had been ceded.
- It explained that the islet had been a historical dispute between British India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and that the 1974 and 1976 agreements settled the matter by defining boundaries.
- In December 2022, the government reiterated that Katchatheevu is situated on the Sri Lankan side of the **India–Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Line**, referring to the two agreements.
- It added that the matter was sub-judice in the Supreme Court.

## Where is the island of Katchatheevu?

- Katchatheevu is a **285-acre uninhabited speck in the Palk Strait**, between India and Sri Lanka. It is

no more than 1.6 km in length and slightly over 300 m wide at its broadest point.

- It lies **northeast of Rameswaram**, about 33 km from the Indian coast. It is about 62 km southwest of Jaffna, at the northern tip of Sri Lanka, and 24 km away from the inhabited Delft Island, belonging to Sri Lanka.
- The **only structure on the island is an early 20th century Catholic shrine – St Anthony's church.**
- Every year, during an annual festival, Christian priests from both India and Sri Lanka jointly conduct a service on Katchatheevu, attended by devotees from both countries
- **Katchatheevu** is not suited for permanent settlement as there is no source of drinking water on the island.

## Dispute Over Kuril Islands

**Priority: Medium**



**Primary Source:** The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Location of Kuril Islands & its Significance

### Context:

- Recently, the **Kuril Islands dispute between Russia and Japan has gained attention amid the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.**
- **In Japan, there is hope that the Russian and Ukraine war could give Japan a chance** to take control of the disputed Kuril Islands.

### About Kuril Islands

- The **Kuril Islands are a volcanic archipelago administered as part of the Sakhalin Oblast** in the Russian Far East.
- The islands stretch approximately 1,300 km northeast from **Hokkaido in Japan to Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia**, separating the Sea of Okhotsk from the North Pacific Ocean.
- These are **part of the Pacific Ring of Fire** belt and have over 100 volcanoes.

### Kuril Island Dispute

- It is a **territorial dispute between Japan and Russia** over the ownership of the four southernmost Kuril Islands.
- It is also known as the Northern Territories dispute in Japan.
- The South Kuril Islands comprise Etorofu island, Kunashiri island, Shikotan island and Habomai island.
- These **islands are claimed by Japan but occupied by Russia.**

- The Soviet Union had seized the islands at the end of World War II and by 1949 had expelled its Japanese residents.
- Tokyo claims that the disputed islands have been part of Japan since the early 19th century.



### What are the Claims Asserted Over the Disputed Islands?

- **Japan's sovereignty over the islands** is confirmed by several treaties:
  - Shimoda Treaty of 1855
  - 1875 Treaty for the exchange of Sakhalin for the Kuril Islands (Treaty of St. Petersburg).
  - Portsmouth Treaty of 1905 signed after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05 which Japan had won.

### Russia's Claims:

- Russia claims the Yalta Agreement (1945) and the Potsdam Declaration (1945) as proof of its sovereignty
- The San Francisco Treaty of 1951 is legal evidence that Japan had acknowledged Russian sovereignty over the islands. Under Article 2 of the treaty, Japan had renounced all right, title and claim to the Kuril Islands.

### Significance of Kuril Island

- The Kuril Islands hold significant natural resources, including abundant fishing grounds and potential offshore oil and gas reserves which makes them economically valuable.
- Russia has strategically deployed missile systems in the region, enhancing its military presence. The islands' strategic location is also crucial for Russia's plans to develop submarines and to prevent American military use in the area.
- The islands hold cultural significance, particularly for the Japanese people and conservative groups in Hokkaido.

### Four Australian F-35 Jets Join Malabar Naval Exercise

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

**Prepp Prelims Booster:** Malabar Naval Exercise, QUAD

**Prepp Mains Booster:** Significance of Malabar Exercise

### Context:

- The 31st Malabar exercise involved India, Australia, Japan, and the U.S. It was hosted by Australia for the first time. It was held in Sydney from August 11–21.

### About Malabar Exercise

- The Malabar naval exercise began in 1992 as a bilateral activity between India and the United States.
- It was temporarily suspended after 1996 due to India's nuclear tests, but resumed in 2002 and has since taken place annually.
- Japan and Australia joined in 2007, and from 2014 onwards, India, the US, and Japan participated consistently.
- Japan joined the naval exercise in 2015 as a permanent member, and Malabar became a trilateral exercise.
- Australia was included as a permanent member of Ex. Malabar in 2020 amid the stand-off with China in Eastern Ladakh.

### How is QUAD linked to the Malabar Exercise?

- Australia, India, Japan, and the United States participate in the Quadrilateral Security conversation (QSD), sometimes known as the Quad, which is a strategic security conversation that is supported by discussions among member countries.
- The conversation was launched in 2007 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with the support of Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and US Vice President Dick Cheney.
- Parallel to these talks, the historic combined military exercise known as Malabar Exercise was being conducted.
- The diplomatic and military accord was widely perceived as a response to the rising economic and military power of China

### Significance

- **Interoperability:** The exercise aims to deepen the interoperability between the key partners who are also members of the Quad or the Quadrilateral security dialogue.
- **Indo-pacific partnership:** The exercise is also designed to deepen the partnership for the Indo-Pacific, for shared aspiration, for a free, open and resilient Indo-Pacific.

- Strengthening strategic partnership:** Malabar exercise enhances naval collaboration among four nations, strengthening strategic partnerships through complex maritime security operations.

## Places in News

### Places in News - India

#### Guwahati

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, researchers recorded the first captive breeding of a Himalayan vulture in India at the Assam State Zoo, Guwahati. Guwahati is the largest city in Assam and is located on the banks of the Brahmaputra and the foothills of the Shillong plateau. It is also known as the gateway to Northeast India.

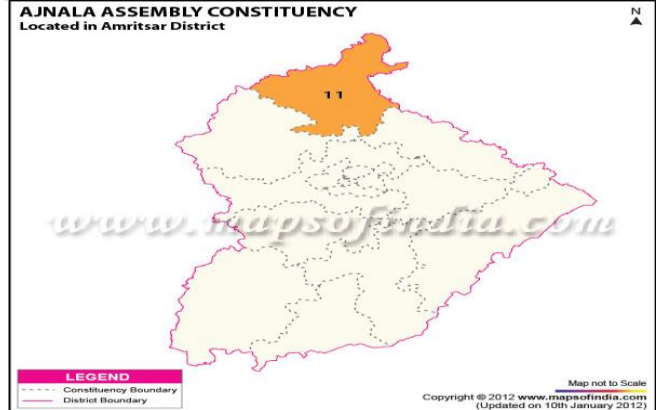


#### Kuno National Park

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, another cheetah brought to India under Project Cheetah was found dead at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh. Kuno National Park lies in the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh near the Vindhyan Hills. It was initially a wildlife sanctuary and was converted into a National Park in 2018. It is named after the Kuno River, a tributary of the Chambal. It was selected as the site for the introduction of the Cheetah in India.



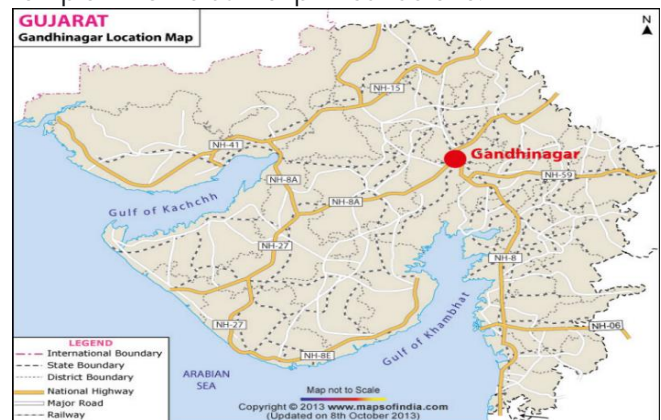
#### Ajnala



**Reason to be in news:** Recently, the excavation of a well in Ajnala, Punjab helped geneticists confirm the existence of the Ajnala massacre in which 282 soldiers of the 26th Native Bengal Infantry Regiment were drowned in a well by the British East India Company during the 1857 uprising. Ajnala is a town near Amritsar in western Punjab. Shaheedan da Khu or Kalianwala Khu is another well near Ajnala where martyrs of 1857 were drowned.

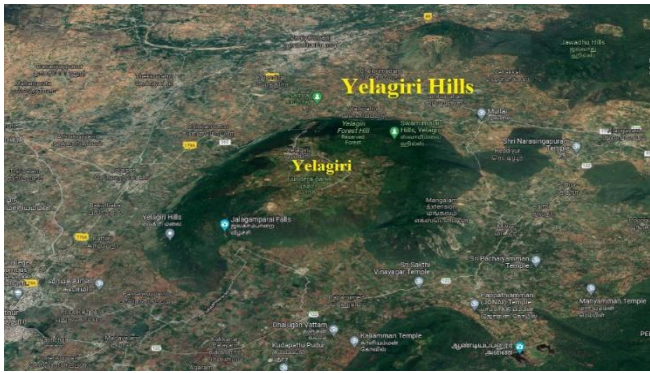
#### Gandhinagar

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, the G20 Health Minister's meeting was held in Gandhinagar Gujarat between August 17th and 19th. Gandhinagar is the state capital of Gujarat and lies on the west bank of the Sabarmati River. It is famous for the Akshardham temple which is built of pink sandstone.



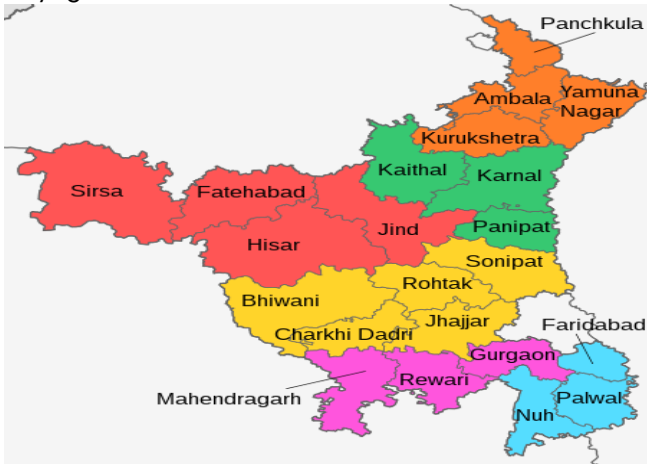
#### Yelagiri

**Reason to be in news:** Only one traditional hut remains in the ancient settlement of the Malaiyali tribespeople on the Yelagiri hill in North Tamil Nadu. The Yelagiri hills are a branch of the Annamalai Hills which are located in the Tiruputtur district of Tamil Nadu.



### Nuh

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, communal clashes took place in Nuh, Haryana and spread to other areas including Gurugram. Nuh, earlier known as Mewat is a district in southern Haryana. In 2018, it was listed as the most underdeveloped district in India by the Niti Aayog



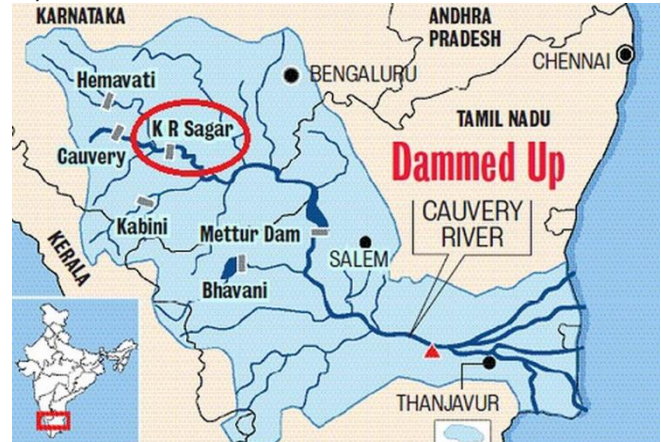
### Umiam Lake

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, the High Court of Meghalaya observed that the natural resources of the state should not be destroyed in the name of development while hearing a case on the cleanliness of Umiam Lake. Umiam Lake or Bara Pani is one of the largest artificial lakes in Meghalaya. It is situated on the Umiam River, about 15 kilometers north of Shillong.



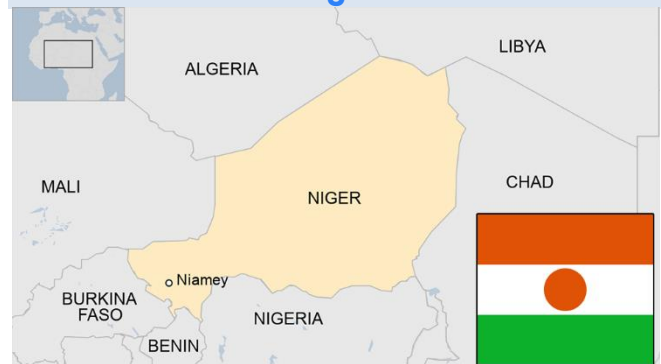
### Kabini reservoir

**Reason to be in news:** Recently the government of Tamil Nadu told the Supreme Court that Karnataka had not directed the stipulated Cauvery river water from the Kabini dam. The Kabini dam is built on the Kabini River, a major tributary of the Cauvery, in the Mysore district of Karnataka, India.



### Places in News - World

### Niger



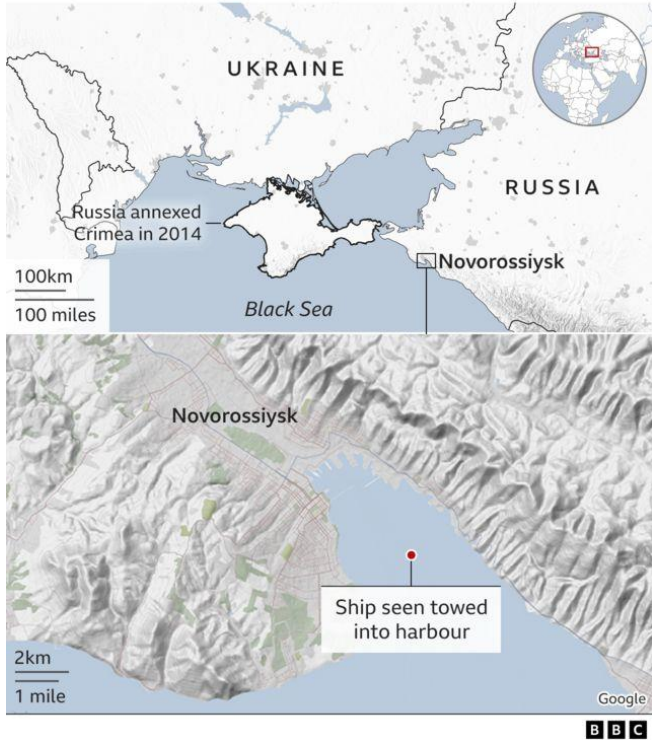
**Reason to be in news:** Recently, an army-led coup in Niger removed President Mohamed Bazoum Bazoum, who was elected two years ago in Niger's first democratic transfer of power since independence in 1960. Niger or the Republic of the Niger, is a landlocked country in West Africa. It is bordered by Libya to the northeast, Chad to the east, Nigeria to the south, Benin and Burkina Faso to the southwest, Mali to the west, and Algeria to the northwest.

### Novorossiysk Port

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, a Russian naval ship was damaged in a Ukrainian naval drone attack on the Novorossiysk Port. The Novorossiysk commercial seaport is one of Russia's largest by volume and among the biggest in Europe. It is critical in the export of Russian grain, oil, and other products to countries around the world through the Black Sea.



## Naval drone hits Russian ship



BBC

## Lampedusa

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, forty-one migrants, including three children, have died in a shipwreck off the Italian island of Lampedusa. Lampedusa Island is part of the autonomous region of Sicily, Italy. It is located in the Mediterranean Sea between Malta and Tunisia.



## Belem

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, the summit of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Agreement was held in Belem, Brazil. The summit adopted a new shared agenda to save the rainforest by promoting sustainable development and ending deforestation and organized crime. Belém, also known as Belém of Pará, is the capital of the state of Pará in northern Brazil. It is situated on Guajará Bay which is part of the Amazon River delta.



## Red Sea

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, a United Nations-led mission has begun to remove a million barrels of oil from a supertanker that has been abandoned in the Red Sea since 2015. The Red Sea is the world's northernmost tropical sea. It is an inlet of the Indian Ocean that is located between Africa and Asia. It is one of the most saline bodies of water in the world and is bordered by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti.



## South China Sea

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Australian Defense Force (ADF) conducted a joint exercise, Exercise Alon, in the South China Sea. The South China Sea is an arm of the western Pacific Ocean. It is bordered by Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

It is connected to the East China Sea by the Taiwan Strait and to the Philippine Sea by the Luzon Strait. The

major archipelagoes of the South China Sea are the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, and Pratas Islands.



China and Taiwan Malaysia Vietnam Brunei Philippines

### Maui

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, extensive wildfires were reported across the island of Maui. Maui is a volcanic island in Hawaii, U.S.A. It is separated from Big Island i.e Hawaii by the Alenuihaha Channel, and from Lanai and Kahoolawe by the Auau and Alalakeiki channels, respectively. It was created by two volcanoes, Puu Kukui and Haleakala, which constitute the east and west peninsulas connected by a 7-mile wide valley-like isthmus.

Prepp IAS proudly presents its Yearlong One-to-One Mentorship Program for UPSC 2024. With an impressive track record of 14 out of 50 students successfully selected last year, this program offers you the opportunity to be guided by some of the finest mentors in India. Take a step closer to your UPSC goals. Your journey to success begins here. [Contact us today at +91-9289130503 via call or WhatsApp]

### Balochistan

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, Anwaarul Haq Kakar, who hails from the Balochistan province in Pakistan was appointed the caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan. Balochistan is the largest and least populated of the four provinces of Pakistan. Its population consists primarily of ethnic Baloch people who are entirely in conflict with the government of Pakistan over their economic and political exclusion. Balochistan is rich in natural gas, oil, copper, and gold.



### Tripoli

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, violent clashes took place in Tripoli during fighting between rival militias as part of the civil war that began in 2011. Tripoli is the capital of Libya, a northern African country. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea in the north. The countries that border Libya are Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria, and Tunisia.



### Ecuador

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, citizens of Ecuador voted in a referendum to halt oil exploration in the Amazon, including Yasuni National Park. Ecuador is a country on the western coast of South America. It has been named after the Equator which passes through the country. It is bordered by Colombia, Peru, and the Pacific Ocean. One of the most famous provinces in Ecuador is the Galapagos Islands which are a volcanic archipelago in the Pacific Ocean.



**Israel**

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, the government of Israel passed a law limiting the powers of oversight of the Supreme Court over the Parliament which has led to widespread protests in the country. Israel is a Middle Eastern country located in West Asia. It is bordered by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, the Palestinian territories, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. Israel has had a conflicted relationship with the remaining countries of the Arab region due to the Palestine crisis.



**South Africa**

**Reason to be in news:** Recently, the XVth edition of the BRICS summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. The members adopted the Johannesburg Declaration and invited Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Ethiopia, and Egypt to join the group. South Africa or the Republic of South Africa, also known as the Rainbow Nation, is the southernmost nation in Africa. It is bordered by the Atlantic and Indian Ocean, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Eswatini and Lesotho.

**Murmansk Port**

**Reason to be in news:** In 2023, almost 35% of the cargo handled by the Murmansk Port, which lies on the Northern Sea Route, was for India. Murmansk Port is one of the largest ice-free ports in Russia and is situated in Murmansk, the largest Russian city north of the Arctic Circle. It is located on the Kola Peninsula on the coast of the Barents Sea and is capable of year-round navigation due to its ice-free waters and there are no restrictions on vessels that can call at the port.

