

## Prelims GS Roundup-3

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# Vulnerability of the Himalayan Ecosystem

## Need for a Region-specific EIA Regime

*Developmental paths of the states in the Indian Himalayan Region should be consistent with concerns of sustainability of the ecosystem. The region is also characterized by its geological phenomena and natural disasters like landslides and earthquakes. These episodic events pose a challenge to the planners and to the development objectives of the states in the region.*

■ Ranjeet Shah

The recent Teesta dam breach in Sikkim, and floods and landslides in Himachal Pradesh are a stark reminder of the havoc India's development model is wreaking on environment and ecology, especially in the mountains. In the past few years there has been a marked increase in frequency of environmental hazards in India's Himalayan states. This puts a question mark on the current development model adopted in the region and points to the need for a region specific environmental impact assessment regime. Therefore, it is imperative to assess the worthiness of any significant human endeavour in terms of its impact on the environment.

### Causes of Increasing Vulnerability of the Himalayan Ecosystem

The Himalayan ecosystem is a highly sensitive and vulnerable region due to a variety of natural and human-induced factors. Several factors contribute to the increasing vulnerability of the Himalayan ecosystem.

- **Climate Change:** Climate change is one of the most significant drivers of vulnerability in the Himalayas. Rising temperatures lead to the melting of glaciers, changing precipitation patterns, and an increase in extreme weather events, all of which can disrupt the delicate ecological balance in the region.
- **Glacier Retreat:** The Himalayan glaciers are retreating at an alarming rate, primarily due to rising temperatures. This has far-reaching consequences for water availability in the region, affecting river flow, agriculture, and the livelihoods of millions of people.
- **Deforestation and Land Use Changes:** Deforestation and land use changes, often driven by agriculture, urbanization, and infrastructure development, result in habitat loss and soil erosion, making the ecosystem more vulnerable to degradation and landslides.
- **Infrastructure Development:** The construction of roads, dams, and other infrastructure projects can disrupt natural drainage patterns, leading to landslides and habitat fragmentation. These developments can also increase the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).

- **Rapid Urbanization:** Rapid population growth and urbanization in the Himalayan region put immense pressure on natural resources and ecosystems. This can lead to increased demand for land, water, and energy, further straining the environment.
- **Forest Fires:** Forest fires are becoming more frequent and severe in the Himalayas, partly due to changes in climate patterns. These fires can destroy large areas of forest, disrupting ecosystems and releasing carbon into the atmosphere.
- **Invasive Species:** The introduction of non-native species, both intentionally and accidentally, can threaten the native flora and fauna. These invasive species can outcompete native species, disrupt food chains, and alter the ecosystem dynamics.
- **Air Pollution:** The Himalayan region is affected by air pollution from nearby urban centres and agricultural activities. This pollution can lead to acid rain, which damages vegetation and affects water bodies, further impacting the ecosystem.
- **Water Pollution:** Pollution of rivers and streams in the Himalayas, often caused by sewage discharge and industrial effluents, can harm aquatic life and disrupt the availability of clean water for human and ecosystem use.

### EIA in India

Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA can be defined as the study to predict the effect of a proposed activity/project on the environment. A decision making tool, EIA compares various alternatives for a project and seeks to identify the one which represents the best combination of economic and environmental costs and benefits.

- The Indian experience with Environmental Impact Assessment began over 20 years back. It started in 1976-77 when the Planning Commission asked the Department of Science and Technology to examine the river-valley projects from an environmental angle. This was subsequently extended to cover those projects, which required the approval of the Public Investment Board. Till 1994, environmental clearance from the Central Government was an administrative decision and lacked legislative support.

# Challenges in India-Maldives Relations

## Addressing Strategic, Geopolitical and Economic Concerns

*India-Maldives relations are based on a strong foundation. The cooperation between the two countries is marked by India's historical support to Maldives during various crises and people-to-people ties. Maldives' proximity to India's west coast and its position at the centre of important sea routes passing through the Indian Ocean add to its strategic importance for India. India should strive to continuously strengthen its relations with Maldives while remaining sensitive to the Maldivian perspective and concerns.*

■ Dr. Amarjeet Bhargava

Recently, in the presidential elections in Maldives, opposition candidate Dr. Mohamed Muizzu was elected as the new President by defeating Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. The Maldives presidential election was being seen as a clash between the 'India First' versus 'India Out' campaigns. Political analysts are seeing the victory of Mohamed Muizzu as the victory of 'India Out Campaign'. The 'India Out' campaign in Maldives has emerged as a major challenge in the restoration of India-Maldives relations. This campaign is directed against the presence of Indian Army on Maldivian soil. The campaign gained momentum in February 2021 with the signing of the Uthuru Thila Falhu (UTF) Port Development Agreement with India and India's announcement of opening a Consulate in South Addu Atoll Island. This campaign was made a major issue by the opposition parties in the current presidential election. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, former President of Maldives (2018-2023), was a supporter of the 'India First' policy.

Maldives is known for its unique strategic location in the Indian Ocean. To analyze the concerns raised in the wake of recent events, it is necessary to take a comprehensive look at India-Maldives relations.

### Current Challenges in India-Maldives Relations

India-Maldives relations face several challenges at present. Some important challenges have been outlined here.

- ♦ **Political Challenges:** President-elect Dr. Mohamed Muizzu and former President Abdulla Yameen have been vocal supporters of the 'India Out' campaign. Both the leaders are against India's military presence in Maldives. Since they will take over power in Maldives, it can become a big challenge for India.
- ♦ **Radical Activities:** There is evidence of a large number of Maldivians joining violent extremist organizations such as the Islamic State (IS).
  - The radicalisation of the Maldives has also been influenced by events in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and West Asia. This raises the risk that terrorist organisations

with a base in Pakistan could use distant Maldivian islands as a jumping-off point for strikes against India and Indian interests.

- Political and socio-economic instability are the main drivers fuelling the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Maldives.
- ♦ **Maldives' Domestic Challenges:** Democratic institutions have weakened in Maldives. If governance is not conducted effectively, the fragile Maldivian democracy can be influenced by fundamentalist ideologies. This can have significant implications for India as well.
- ♦ **The China Factor:** The increase in China's influence resulting from the implementation of ongoing China-led investment projects in Maldives is raising concerns for India.
  - Maldives is an important part of China's 'String of Pearls' policy in South Asia.
  - There are speculations that China may be attempting to establish strategic outposts in the archipelago due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean.
- ♦ **Low Economic Engagement:** Bilateral trade between India and Maldives is very low; both countries have not yet entered into a 'Free Trade Agreement'.
- ♦ **Anti-India Sentiments:** India's military assistance, military equipment and presence of Indian troops in the Maldives have played a major role in promoting the 'India Out' campaign.
  - The people of Maldives believe that India is increasing its military presence in Maldives through military assistance.

### Significance of Maldives for India

- ♦ **Geo-economic Significance:** Maldives is strategically located at the crossroads of several important trade routes passing through the Indian Ocean. 50% of India's foreign trade and 80% of India's energy imports are routed through the 'Sea Lines of Communication' (SLOC) around Maldives.

# Digital Inclusion

## Moving Towards an Empowered Society

*The concept of Digital Inclusion has gained prevalence in the 21st Century, with technology creating millions of jobs and being used in all spheres, all the way from banking to farming to defence. With the Indian government's proactive measures, the country is experiencing a digital revolution that is triggering transformative developments in areas like e-payments, digital literacy, financial inclusion, geographic mapping, rural development, and many more.*

■ **Sharmila Senthil Kumar**

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released a Consultation Paper (CP) on “Digital Inclusion in the Era of Emerging Technologies”. The consultation paper aims to explore and address the challenges and opportunities presented by the rapid advancement of emerging technologies, with a focus on ensuring inclusivity for all segments of society and industries, particularly Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). TRAI recognizes that digital inclusion is crucial in empowering citizens of the country, failing which the gaps in access to digital services may widen further and thereby deprive large segments of the society from inclusive growth.

It is observed that disparities in internet broadband penetration and its effective usage across different sections of society and geographies still persist. The digital divide typically exists between those in urban areas and those in rural areas; between the educated and the uneducated; between socio-economic groups; and, globally, between the more and less industrially developed countries.

Factors such as low literacy and income levels, geographical restrictions, lack of motivation to use technology, lack of physical access to technology, and digital illiteracy contribute to the digital divide.

Digital Inclusion can create an ecosystem that benefits every individual, fostering a more equitable and accessible digital economy.

### Understanding Digital Divide and Inclusion

#### Digital Divide

- ♦ Digital divide is a term that refers to the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology (ICT), and those that don't or have restricted access.
- ♦ This digital divide threatens to impede India's economic growth and development, making digital inclusion in rural India crucial for the country's progress.
- ♦ In rural India, where the majority of the population resides, lack of digital inclusion has a significant impact on economic opportunities, education, healthcare, and

financial inclusion. Digital divide is thus not only a social issue but also an economic one.

#### Digital Inclusion

- ♦ The United Nations defines digital inclusion as equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design of digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere.
- ♦ There are four interdependent digital inclusion elements: Access, Skill, Motivation and Trust. Digital inclusion takes into account the various barriers individuals face when accessing and experiencing digital technologies.
- ♦ Through digital inclusion human rights are to be promoted, protected, respected, and enjoyed online as they are offline, and the specific needs of individuals need to be taken into consideration in the digital world so as not to leave anyone behind.

#### Digital Inclusion in India

India has made remarkable progress in digital transformation, emerging as the world's second-largest telecom market in terms of subscribers. The country has experienced significant growth in mobile broadband subscriptions and internet usage, along with a substantial reduction in data costs.

- ♦ The government's initiatives such as Digital India, National Digital Communications Policy 2018, National Broadband Mission 2019, BharatNet, Common Service Centres (CSCs), and Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) have played a pivotal role in expanding connectivity and promoting digital inclusion across the nation.
- ♦ The success story of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for an inclusive financial society has been well acknowledged across the world.
- ♦ The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity has played a pivotal role in transparent direct benefit transfers of welfare subsidies to bank accounts of the underserved. UPI has empowered users to conveniently transfer money from one bank account to another in real-time.



- [Supreme Court's Ruling on Same-Sex Marriages](#)
- [Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry](#)
- [World Energy Outlook 2023](#)
- [India's National Framework for Climate Services](#)
- [India's Groundwater Depletion: UNU-EHS Report](#)

## Supreme Court's Ruling on Same-Sex Marriages

On 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, the Supreme Court (SC), in a 3-2 majority decision, announced that it does not endorse legal recognition for same-sex marriages

### Major Highlights of SC Judgment

- **Same Sex Marriage:** The judgment noted that the gender of a person is not the same as their sexuality.
- Since marriage rights are denied, they have no legal status in terms of family matters, like succession, inheritance or even hospital visitation rights.
- **Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954:** The SC could not interpret the SMA to include same-sex couples since the objective of the legislation is not to include same-sex couples within the realm of marriage.
- **State Regulation:** In the absence of any central law, the judgment holds that State legislatures can enact laws recognising and regulating same-sex marriages.

### Advocacy for LGBTQIA+ Community

- The petitioners argued that the right to marry for non-heterosexual couples is implicit in Article 14 (Equality), Article 15 (Non-Discrimination), Article 16 (Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment), Article 19 (Freedom of Speech) & Article 21 (Right to Life).
- They referred the Section 4 of SMA, which refers to a marriage in gender-neutral terms, between 'any two persons'.
- Asserting that queer persons' right to marry has already been recognised by the Transgender Persons Protection Act, 2019, flowing from the 2014 NALSA judgment, the petitioners argued that all queer identities are part of this term.
- They argued that the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) guidelines, which do not allow unmarried couples to jointly adopt children, are discriminatory against queer couples who cannot legally marry.
- Individually, queer persons can adopt as single people (However, a single male is not eligible to adopt a girl child).

### Directions Issued by the Supreme Court

#### For the Union, the State Governments, and Governments in Union Territories

- Ensure that the queer community has access to goods and services without any discrimination.
- Governments must take the initiative to sensitise the public that queer identity is natural and not a mental disorder.
- Establish hotline numbers, and "safe houses" to assist queer persons who face violence and discrimination.
- Ban conversion therapy treatments for changing the gender identity or sexual orientation of a queer person.
- Prohibit inter-sex children from undergoing forced operations, especially at an age where they are unable to consent to the operation.

#### Directions for the Police Machinery

- Prohibit harassment of queer couples by the police.
- Ensure that a queer person is not forced to return to their "natal families if they do not wish to return to them."
- Uphold the queer person's freedom of movement.
- Extend protection to queer persons facing violence from their families.

#### Formation of High-Powered Committee

SC recommended that the committee should consider the following aspects:

- Queer partners should be considered as a part of the partners' family for the purpose of ration cards.
- Queer partners should be permitted to open a joint bank account with the option to add the name of the partner as a nominee.
- Queers partners should be considered "family" when a medical practitioner is consulting the "family" of a terminally ill patient under the Euthanasia guidelines.
- Permit succession rights, maintenance, financial benefits, family pension, and insurance for the queer partners.

### Government's Stance

- The Central government opposed the pleas, asserting that India's legislative policy intentionally validates unions exclusively between biological men and women.



## Polity & Governance

- 43<sup>rd</sup> PRAGATI Interaction
- Offences Relating to Religion: Section 295A of IPC
- Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee

## Polity & Governance

### 43<sup>rd</sup> PRAGATI Interaction

- On 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, Prime Minister chaired the meeting of the 43rd edition of Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) platform involving Central and State governments.

#### Key Agenda of the Meeting

- A total of eight projects were reviewed. Among these, four projects were concerned with water supply and irrigation, two projects for expanding National highways and connectivity, and two projects for rail and metro rail connectivity.
- Prime Minister emphasised that PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan Portal in conjunction with technologies such as satellite imagery can help address various issues of implementation and planning relating to location and land requirements for projects.
- For irrigation projects, Prime Minister advised that visits of stakeholders be organised where successful rehabilitation and reconstruction work has been done.

#### About PRAGATI Platform

- It was launched on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, as a part of Digital India Programme.
- It is a multi-purpose and multi-modal platform that is aimed at addressing common man's grievances and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.

#### Key Features

- The system builds upon and enhances the databases of the Centralized Public Grievance Redress And Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) for grievances, the Project Monitoring Group (PMG), and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

## Judiciary

- Writ Jurisdiction
- Curative Petition

## Plans/Policies

- MoU Signed between MEPSC & Magic Bus India Foundation
- Draft CCI (Lesser Penalty) Regulations, 2023
- SC Directions for Effective Implementation of POSH Act, 2013

## Reports

- Phenomenal Impact of PM SVANidhi Scheme on Street Vendors

- This platform is combined with the three latest technologies, that are-
  1. Video-conferencing;
  2. Digital data management; and
  3. Geo-spatial technology.
- It is also a robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.

#### Modus Operandi

- Issues to be flagged before the PM are picked up from the available database regarding public grievances, on-going programmes and pending projects.
- The issues flagged are uploaded 7 days prior to the PRAGATI day (i.e. on third Wednesday of every month).
- Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries have to put their comments and updates about the flagged issues within three days.

#### Significance

- This programme has proved effective in addressing and resolving issues by bringing down the inter-departmental communication gap and thus minimizing the time taken for implementation of projects and schemes.
- It has helped in promoting cooperative federalism by bringing together both the Secretaries of the Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States on a single platform.

## Offences Relating to Religion: Section 295A of IPC

On 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, the Supreme Court directed the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government to immediately decide on granting sanction to prosecute a school teacher accused of instructing her students to slap a Muslim classmate for failing to complete his homework.

- In response, the UP government informed that the section 295A of Indian Penal Code along with second proviso of section 75 (cruelty to children by Child Care Institu-



## Social Justice

- Habitat Rights of PVTGs
- Supreme Court Directions on Eradication of Manual Scavenging
- Enhancing Corporate Inclusivity for Persons with Disabilities

## Social Issues

- Protocol for Management of Malnutrition in Children

## Indian Society

- Right of the Unborn Child

## Plans /Policies

- Mera Yuva Bharat

## Reports

- ILO Study on Transformative Childcare Policy
- International Migration Outlook 2023

## Social Justice

### Habitat Rights of PVTGs

On 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, the Chhattisgarh Government granted habitat rights to its Baiga Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) right after the Kamar PVTG received habitat rights in August 2023.

- Out of 75 PVTG in India, only three have habitat rights. The Bharia PVTG in Madhya Pradesh was the first, followed by the Kamar tribe and now the Baiga tribe in Chhattisgarh.

### About Habitat Rights (HRs)

- Habitat rights recognition grants specific rights to the concerned community over their customary habitation territory.
- Legal Framework was provided under Section 3(1) (e) of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, also known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA).
- Section 2(h) of FRA defines “habitat” to encompass customary habitats, reserved forests, protected forests of primitive tribal groups, pre-agricultural communities, and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes.

### Process for Granting HRs

- The procedure is based on a detailed guideline given for this purpose in 2014 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Four state-level departments (Forest, Revenue, Tribal, and Panchayati Raj) collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to define what constitutes a habitat after consulting traditional tribal leaders about culture, traditions, and occupation of tribes.
- As per habitat rights, the District Collector should take cognisance of rights of the PVTGs in their district and initiate the process of habitat rights on priority basis.

### HABITAT RIGHTS UNDER FRA, 2006

- Right to perform all customary religious or cultural ceremonies in the landscape related their clans.
- Right to protect and conserve the natural entities and sacred sites recognised under habitat rights.
- Right to protect and conserve places important for religious and spiritual purposes such as sacred groves; the right of passage to abodes of deities in forests, hill tops, origin of rivers and other remote parts of forests.
- Right to practice traditional cultivation systems and other livelihood generating activities including seasonal resource use.
- Habitat rights exclude any traditional right of hunting or trapping or extracting a part of the body of any species of wild animal.

### Benefits

- It safeguards traditional livelihood and ecological knowledge passed through generations.
- This would facilitate coordination of government schemes and initiatives from different departments to empower PVTG communities in developing their habitats.
- It would stop or regulate activities like mining or developmental activities harming the habitat and livelihoods of PVTGs.
- It would promote sustainable development and conservation, which is crucial for the environment and the overall well-being of society.

### Important Facts

#### Criteria for Identification of PVTGs

- There are 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 18 states and 1 Union Territory (A&N Islands).
- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.





# Heritage Art & Culture

## Art & Culture

- Revival of Kashmiri Dogra Architecture
- Someshwara Inscription of Alupa Dynasty

## Art & Culture

### Revival of Kashmiri Dogra Architecture

On 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2023, Srinagar Smart City Limited and the Kashmir chapter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) have joined hands to conserve vernacular elements of Kashmiri architecture, particularly those introduced by Dogra Hindu kings between 1846 and 1947.

#### About Dogra Architecture

- Dogra architecture is a term used to describe the architectural style associated with the buildings and structures constructed during the rule of the Dogra Hindu kings who governed Jammu and Kashmir from 1846 to 1947.
- This unique architectural style is a testament to the historical and cultural blend that characterized the region during this period.

#### Distinctive Features

- **Nanakshahi Bricks:** These bricks are thin, rectangular, and reddish in color. They are named after Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, and were also used by Sikh rulers in Punjab.
- **Wooden Beams (Latain):** Wooden beams, often referred to as “latain,” are used to support the roofs and floors of Dogra buildings.
- **Ballay and Ceilings (Barghay):** Wooden planks known as “ballay” are used to create ceilings, known as “barghay.” These planks may be covered with gypsum plaster or “kallai,” enhancing the visual aspect of the ceilings.
- **Arches (Mehraab):** Dogra architecture incorporates pointed or cusped arches, reflecting the influence of Islamic architecture. These arches are used in doorways, windows, and niches, adding an element of elegance to the buildings.

- Edakkal Caves
- Vajra Mushti Kalaga
- Banni Festival
- Ratna Bhandar of Puri Jagannath Temple
- Talagirishwara Temple

## Personality

- 500<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Veerangana Rani Durgavati
- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

- **Domes (Gumbad):** Buildings in this style are often crowned with domes. These domes are typically hemispherical or onion-shaped and may feature a spire or “shikhara” on top, showcasing the influence of Hindu architecture.
- **Jharokha (Projecting Balconies):** Dogra architecture borrows the feature of “jharokha” from Rajasthani architecture. Jharokhas are projecting balconies that adorn the facades of buildings. They serve multiple purposes, including providing shade, enhancing privacy, and offering scenic views.

#### Examples

- **Mubark Mandi:** A hub of Dogra culture until 1947, with a jharokha style of balcony.
- **Maharaj Gunj:** A market area with a variety of colonial and vernacular architecture.
- **Rani Charak Mahal:** A mahal with phenomenal architecture and interiors.

### Someshwara Inscription of Alupa Dynasty

On 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, archaeologists discovered a rare inscription connected to the Alupa dynasty during a recent archaeological exploration at Someshwara near Mangaluru, Karnataka.

#### About the Someshwara Inscription

- The inscription was the first record of the Alupas dynasty that announced the death of King Kulashekara Alupendra I also mentions terms related to the Siri cult, such as Siri, Dalya and Chattara (Chatra).
- The human figures shown in the inscription represent Kulashekara Alupendra himself.
- A Kesava is responsible for the erection of the edifice in honour of Kulashekara Alupendra.
- It has two panels on the top, and in between the two panels the first line is engraved.

# ECONOMY WATCH

## Banking & Finance

- RBI Issues Norms to Regulate Cross-Border Payment Aggregators
- Withholding Tax
- RBI Issue Norms for Closure of DCCBs
- Government Allows Direct Overseas Listing of Indian Companies

## Banking & Finance

### RBI Issues Norms to Regulate Cross-Border Payment Aggregators

On 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a circular that lays out new rules for entities that facilitate cross-border payments for import and export of goods and services.

#### Regulations Issued by RBI

- All entities processing cross-border transactions will come under RBI's ambit and will be clubbed under 'Payment Aggregator-Cross Border' (PA-CB) class.
- Authorisation can be sought under any of the three categories – only payment aggregator-cross border, import only PA-CB, export and import PA-CB.
- Authorised Dealer (AD) Category-I banks do not require separate approval for PA-CB activity.
- Further, the central bank has prescribed networth criteria for non-banks providing PA-CB services. Non-banks providing PA-CB services as on the circular date (October 31) must apply to the RBI for authorisation by April 30, 2024; they will be allowed to continue such services until the RBI decides on their application.
- Non-banks providing PA-CB services as on the date of circular should have a minimum networth of Rs. 15 crore at the time of application for authorisation and a minimum networth of Rs. 25 crore by March 31, 2026.
- If the per unit goods/ services imported exceeds Rs. 2.5 lakh, then the PA-CB concerned must undertake due diligence of the buyer also.

#### About Payment Aggregator-Cross Border (PA-CB)

- PAs-CB facilitates cross-border online payments for the import and export of permissible goods and services.

- Section 54EC Bonds
- Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement

## Plans/Policies

- Energy Efficiency Programmes Launched by Ministry of Power
- RBI includes PM Vishwakarma under PIDF Scheme
- Amendment to Aircraft Rules, 1937
- Toll Operate Transfer (TOT) Model

## Infrastructure

- Jamrani Dam Multipurpose Project
- Standards & Labelling Programme for Solar PV Modules
- Indian Oil launches Reference Fuels

- The RBI has set a minimum net worth requirement of Rs. 15 crore for these entities, which will be categorised as PA-CB.
- They will be accountable for ensuring that they do not facilitate payment transactions for the import of any restricted or prohibited goods and services.
- If the amount involved exceeds Rs. 2.5 lakh, the PA-CB must carry out due diligence on the buyer as well.

## Important Facts

### Payment Aggregator (PA)

- Also known as a merchant aggregator, it is a third-party service provider that allows merchants to accept payments from customers by integrating it into their websites or apps.
- It facilitates different types of payment transactions, including cash and cheques, online payments through multiple payment sources, or offline touchpoints.
- It allows merchants to accept bank transfers without setting up a bank-based merchant account. It means a merchant need not have a merchant account directly with the bank.
- A PA in India is incorporated under the Companies Act 2013.
- A PA can be a bank or a non-bank entity.
- Since a PA handles funds, it requires a license from the RBI.
- Examples: Amazon (Pay) India, Razorpay, etc.

## Withholding Tax

Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) held that without an express notification, the companies cannot, automatically, claim lower withholding tax of 5%, even if provided for in the Direct Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA).



# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## Space Science

- NASA Launches Psyche Mission
- ISRO Successfully Launches Test Vehicle for Crew Safety in Gaganyaan Mission
- Moon Found to be 40 Million Years Older than Previously Believed

## Space Science

### NASA Launches Psyche Mission

On 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launched its Psyche Mission, embarking on a six-year, 3.6 billion-kilometre voyage to an asteroid of the same name, a metal-rich world that could tell us more about the formation of rocky planets.

#### Key Points

- **Psyche's Peculiar Beginnings:** Psyche, named after the Greek goddess of the soul, is a celestial object that has intrigued astronomers since its discovery in 1852.
- It is the 16th asteroid ever found, residing in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, known for its diverse range of space rocks.
- **Psyche's Unique Composition:** Psyche stands out due to its vast size, with an average diameter of approximately 226km.
- This potato-shaped planetoid is predominantly composed of iron and nickel, akin to Earth's core.
- **NASA's Ambitious Journey:** This extraordinary expedition will span six years, covering a colossal distance of 3.6 billion kilometers.
- The mission is designed to collect vital clues for understanding Earth's inaccessible core.
- **Mission Objectives:** The mission aims to confirm whether Psyche represents the core of a former planet, which initially was molten but cooled and solidified over time.
- Alternatively, it may be composed of materials that never underwent melting.

#### Unlocking Earth's Enigmatic Core

- The mission's primary significance lies in its potential to indirectly explore Earth's core through the study of Psyche, an asteroid with attributes resembling our planet's core.

- JWST Discovers High-Speed Jet Stream on Jupiter
- Discovery of Bright Gamma-Ray Burst Resulting from Neutron Star Merger

## Defence Technology

- Yard 12706 (IMPHAL): India's First Warship with Dedicated Accommodation for Women

## New Technology & Innovations

- Niobobaotite Ore Discovered in Inner Mongolia
- BIS Approves Indigenous AC/DC Charging Standard for Light Electric Vehicles
- China Constructing Underwater Telescope to Detect Ghost Particles

## Biotechnology

- Study Reveals How Cell Microenvironment Stiffness Affects Tissue Form

- It provides an opportunity to investigate core-like materials without the need to penetrate Earth's rocky exterior.

### M-type Asteroids as Natural Laboratories

- M-type asteroids like Psyche are considered remnants of early planetary formations, making them ideal "natural laboratories" for studying planetary cores.
- These investigations have the potential to alter our understanding of how terrestrial planets form and evolve.

### Challenges in Studying Earth's Core

- The Psyche mission addresses the limitations of traditional methods for studying Earth's core, including limited access to core materials and seismic data.
- The parallels between Psyche and Earth's core offer a unique perspective on a complex subject.

### ISRO Successfully Launches Test Vehicle for Crew Safety in Gaganyaan Mission

On 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2023, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientists overcame a two-hour delay and initial engine ignition issues to successfully launch a test vehicle related to crew safety for the Gaganyaan Mission.

- ISRO launched the rocket carrying payloads crucial for ensuring crew safety in India's Gaganyaan mission from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- An onboard computer identified an anomaly, leading to the **automatic launch sequence** being held.
- ISRO ensured that the launch vehicle was safe and promised to analyze and understand the anomaly.
- The payloads splashed into the sea as planned, marking a successful mission.
- ISRO Chairman explained that the mission aimed to demonstrate the Crew Escape System and performed flawlessly, taking the crew module to safety.
- Prime Minister praised the launch, stating it brings India a step closer to realizing the Gaganyaan Mission and its first human space flight program.





# ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

## Sustainable Development

- Failure to Reach Agreement on Climate “Loss and Damages”
- WMO Urges Improved Water Resource Monitoring
- NCCR Attributes Algal Bloom in Puducherry to Human Factors

## Sustainable Development

### Failure to Reach Agreement on Climate “Loss and Damages”

On 21<sup>st</sup> Oct, a significant pre-COP28 meeting focused on climate “loss and damages” concluded in failure as countries from both the global north and south could not come to an agreement.

- The dedicated fund for addressing climate “loss and damage” was a major achievement at last year’s **COP27 in Egypt**, but the specifics of its structure, beneficiaries, and contributors were deferred to later discussions.
- Several talks held this year aimed to establish a consensus on fundamental aspects, with one of the primary issues being the **contribution of funds by richer nations**, particularly regarding China’s involvement.
- A transition committee convened in Aswan, Egypt, over the establishment of the fund but failed to reach an agreement, postponing the decision to a subsequent meeting scheduled for November 3 to 5 in the United Arab Emirates.
- The discussions encountered difficulties concerning the management of the funds, with a divide between proponents of the World Bank, **accused of Western influence**, and a new independent structure, favoured by many developing nations but seen as challenging to replenish with new funds.
- The breakdown reflects the **significant divide between rich and poor nations**, underscoring the challenge of reaching consensus on this critical climate issue.
- The failure to reach an agreement on climate “loss and damages” highlights the complexities and contentious issues surrounding **climate financing and accountability** in international climate talks.

## Climate Change

- New Climate Report Raises Alarm
- Massive Ozone Hole Detected Over Antarctica

## Biodiversity

- Rubber Production in Southeast Asia Drives High Forest Loss
- Chennai Tops Trafficking Network for Tortoises and Turtles
- New Dragonfly Species Discovered in Wayanad
- Decline in Bird Species Recorded in Tamil Nadu: SOIB 2023

## Government Policies/ Initiatives

- Punjab to Ban Cultivation of PUSA-44 Paddy Variety
- Gujarat Government Bans Planting of Ornamental Conocarpus Trees

- Despite the setback, discussions on climate “loss and damages” are expected to continue at COP28, with the hope of finding common ground on this crucial issue.

Climate change impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable communities and countries, emphasizing the urgency of addressing loss and damages associated with climate change.

## WMO Urges Improved Water Resource Monitoring

On 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warned that climate change has disrupted the hydrological cycle, caused imbalances, and called for enhanced monitoring efforts.

- The WMO released its “**State of Global Water Resources**” report for 2022, highlighting the impact of climate change on the hydrological cycle.
- WMO Secretary-General noted that climate change has led to more intense **precipitation episodes**, causing flooding, while also contributing to increased evaporation, dry soils, and severe droughts.
- The report revealed that over 50% of global catchment areas experienced deviations from normal river discharge conditions, with most of them being drier than usual. It cited China’s Yangtze River as an example.
- In contrast, the report mentioned floods in Pakistan that resulted in the tragic loss of over 1,700 lives last year.
- The WMO emphasized that there is **insufficient knowledge about the actual state of the world’s freshwater resources**, highlighting the need for improved measurement and monitoring.
- The water report represents the WMO’s second comprehensive analysis in this domain, incorporating data from major river basins, covering aspects like river discharge, groundwater levels, evaporation rates, soil moisture, and reservoir inflow.





# WORLD WATCH

## International Relations

- Indian Navy Veterans Sentenced to Death in Qatar
- UAE-India Joint Task Force Meeting Discusses Investment and Cooperation
- IORA Council of Ministers Meeting in Sri Lanka

- Canada Recalls 41 Diplomats from India over Immunity Concerns
- Passenger Ferry Service between India and Sri Lanka Inaugurated
- India and Tanzania Sign Multiple MoUs to Enhance Bilateral Cooperation

## World Issues

- Maria Corina Machado's Victory and US-Venezuela Relations
- Israeli Ground Incursion into Gaza
- China and Bhutan Sign "Cooperation Agreement" After Border Talks
- Armenia's President Signs Rome Statute amid Russian Concerns

## International Relations

### Indian Navy Veterans Sentenced to Death in Qatar

On 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, eight former Indian Navy personnel were sentenced to death by a court in Qatar. They were arrested on August 30, 2022. The development has raised concerns and diplomatic challenges.

#### Key Points

- **India's Response:** The Ministry of External Affairs expressed deep shock at the verdict and stated it was exploring all legal options in response to the death penalty. The reasons for the arrests and the death penalty have not been publicly disclosed.
- The eight former Navy personnel were working at Al Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services, a defence services provider company in Qatar.
- **Company's Role:** Al Dahra Global Technologies provided training, logistics, and maintenance services to the Qatari Emiri Naval Force (QENF).
- **Arrest and Custody:** The men were arrested by the Qatari State Security Bureau and were initially held in solitary confinement.
- The charges against them were never made public, leading to speculation of a security-related offense.

#### Analysis

- **Diplomatic Challenge:** The sentencing of former Indian Navy veterans to death in Qatar poses a significant diplomatic challenge for India, as it seeks to navigate the reasons behind the arrests and the death penalty.
- **India-Qatar Relations:** India and Qatar have enjoyed friendly relations for years, with regular high-level visits and extensive bilateral trade.
- Defence cooperation has been a significant aspect of their ties, with mutual visits, training, and joint naval exercises.

- However, recent challenges, including the derogatory remarks incident and the current sentencing, require careful management.
- **Regional Dynamics:** The ongoing crisis in the Middle East, with the Israeli-Gaza conflict, further complicates the situation, with Qatar playing a role in mediating and adding another layer of complexity to the diplomatic landscape.

### UAE-India Joint Task Force Meeting Discusses Investment and Cooperation

On 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, the eleventh meeting of the UAE-India High Level Joint Task Force on Investments was held in Abu Dhabi.

- The meeting assessed progress made under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the UAE and India, in effect since May 2022.
- **CEPA has significantly reduced tariffs** on over 80% of product lines, removed trade barriers, and stimulated investment and joint ventures.
- The first year of CEPA implementation saw **bilateral non-oil trade** reach US\$50.5 billion, a 5.8% increase from the previous year, bringing the two nations closer to their US\$100 billion non-oil trade target by 2030.
- Discussions highlighted the status of negotiations for **the India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty**, emphasizing the need for balanced agreements that benefit both nations and investors.
- The meeting explored strategies and incentives for promoting increased investment flows from UAE sovereign investment entities into India, with a focus on sectors like renewable energy and asset monetization.
- Progress on the creation of the **Fast Track Mechanism for Indian investment** in the UAE was discussed, with a specific emphasis on priority sectors like renewable energy.

# Prelims GS Roundup-3

Dear Readers,

In this **December** issue of Civil Services Chronicle, we have come up with the **Prelims GS Roundup-3**. The **Prelims GS Roundup Series** was started from the October issue of the magazine (**CSE Prelims GS Roundup-1, October 2023**). The content published in this section will cater to the needs of the UPSC/State PCS Civil Services Prelims exams.

A careful analysis of the past 10 years Prelims questions reveals that the questions (especially in UPSC CSE) are never repeated but the topics are repeated. Questions are framed from different dimensions of the topics.

Accordingly, the **Prelims GS Roundup-3** covers **46 most important topics of Geography and Indian Economy** from which questions are frequently asked in the Civil Services Preliminary Examination.

**The GS Roundup Series** will cover the **entire syllabus of the Prelims exam**, comprising Indian History, Art & Culture, Geography, Indian Polity & Governance, Economy, General Science & Science & Technology, and Ecology & Environment.

We hope you find the content helpful in your preparation for the Civil Services Examinations.

We encourage you to send us your feedback at [cscenglish@chronicleindia.in](mailto:cscenglish@chronicleindia.in)

Happy reading!

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# Geography

## **Erosional and Depositional Landforms by Rivers and Wind**

*Erosional landforms are physical features on the Earth's surface that have been shaped and formed primarily through the process of erosion. Depositional landforms, on the other hand, are physical features on the Earth's surface that have been built up and formed by the deposition of sediment or material carried by natural agents like rivers, wind, glaciers, or ocean currents.*

### **Erosional Landforms by Rivers** **Valleys, Gorges, and Canyons**

- Valleys primarily originate from the erosive action of flowing water.
- Rills, initially created by surface runoff, eventually evolve into gullies. Over time, these gullies progressively deepen and broaden, eventually shaping into valleys.
- A gorge is a profoundly deep valley characterized by its exceptionally steep to nearly vertical sides.
- On the other hand, a canyon exhibits steep, terrace-like sidewalls and can reach comparable depths to a gorge.
- Notably, a gorge tends to maintain relatively consistent width from its top to its base and typically forms in areas with durable rock formations.
- Conversely, canyons are wider at their upper portions than at their lower regions, usually taking shape in horizontally layered sedimentary rock formations.

### **Potholes and Plunge Pools**

- Potholes are essentially circular hollows that develop on the rocky beds of streams in hilly terrain.
- These depressions begin as relatively small and shallow indentations, gradually accumulating pebbles and boulders.
- The flowing water causes these stones to rotate within the depressions, leading to the expansion of the potholes over time.
- Plunge pools, in contrast, are essentially large and deep versions of potholes, typically located at the base of waterfalls.
- They form as a result of the powerful impact of cascading water and the continuous rotation of boulders.

### **Incised or Entrenched Meanders**

- These are exceptionally deep and broad meanders, resembling loop-like channels, and are typically observed in hard rock formations.

- As time progresses, they undergo a process of deepening and widening, ultimately shaping into gorges or canyons within the resistant hard rock.
- The distinctive feature setting apart incised or entrenched meanders from conventional meanders is their occurrence exclusively in hard rock environments.

### **River Terraces**

- They are flat surfaces that serve as historical indicators of previous valley floors or flood plains.
- These terraces come into existence through the process of vertical erosion carried out by the rivers.
- When these terraces exhibit an identical elevation on both sides of the river, they are referred to as paired terraces.
- In contrast, if terraces are found only on one side of the river, without any corresponding terraces on the opposite side, or if the elevations differ significantly, they are categorized as unpaired terraces.

### **Depositional Landforms by Rivers**

#### **Alluvial Fans**

- These geological features are typically located in the middle segment of a river, positioned at the base of a slope or mountain.
- As the river transitions from higher elevations and encounters a gently sloping plain, it experiences a reduction in the energy required for transporting a significant portion of its sediment load.
- Consequently, these sediments are deposited and dispersed, forming expansive, cone-shaped accumulations known as alluvial fans.
- Notably, the sediment deposits within alluvial fans tend to exhibit a relatively poor degree of sorting.

#### **Deltas**

- Deltas share similarities with alluvial fans, but they form in distinct locations – specifically, at the mouths of rivers, which represent the final destination for the river's depositional activities.
- Unlike alluvial fans, deltas exhibit well-organized sediment deposits with clear stratification.
- Coarser materials settle out first, while finer materials such as silt and clay are carried away into the sea.

#### **Flood Plains and Natural Levees**

- Much like erosion gives rise to valleys, deposition results in the creation of floodplains.
- The riverbed, composed of sedimentary deposits, constitutes the active floodplain, while the floodplain located beyond the riverbank is known as inactive floodplain.

# Indian Economy

## Inflation: Measurement and Control Measures

*Inflation is the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time. Inflation is typically a broad measure, such as the overall increase in prices or the increase in the cost of living in a country.*

### Measurement

- The rate of inflation is measured on the basis of price indices which are of two kinds— Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- A price index is a measure of the average level of prices, which means that it does not show the exact price rise or fall of a single good.
- The rate of inflation is the rate of change of general price level which is measured as follows:  
$$\text{Rate of inflation (year } x) = \frac{\text{Price level (year } x) - \text{Price level (year } x-1)}{\text{Price level (year } x-1)} \times 100$$
- This rate shows up in percentage form (%), though inflation is also shown in numbers, i.e., digits.
- A price index is a weighted average of the prices of a number of goods and services.
- In the index the total weight is taken as 100 at a particular year of the past (the base year). This, when compared to the current year, shows a rise or fall in the prices of current year; there is a rise or fall in the '100' in comparison to the base year—and this inflation is measured in digits.
- Inflation is measured 'point-to-point'. It means that the reference dates for the annual inflation is January 1 to January 1 of two consecutive years (not for January 1 to December 31 of the concerned year).

### Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

- It is the most widely used inflation indicator in India.
- Published by the Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- All transactions at the first point of bulk sale in the domestic market are included. Major criticism for this index is that the general public does not buy products at wholesale price.
- The new series of the WPI was released by the Government with the revised base year as 2011–12. The earlier base year was 2004–05.
- The new base year aligns with the base year of other indicators like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

### Consumer Price Index (CPI)

- It measures price changes from the perspective of a retail buyer.
- It measures changes over time in the level of retail prices of selected goods and services on which consumers of a defined group spend their incomes.
- Four types of CPI are as follows:
- **Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW)**
  - ✓ Basically, this index specifies the government employees (other than banks' and embassies' personnel) income.
  - ✓ The wages/salaries of the central government employees are revised on the basis of the changes occurring in this index; the dearness allowance (DA) is announced twice a year.
  - ✓ When the Pay Commission recommends pay revisions, the base is the CPI (IW).
- **Consumer Price Index for Urban Non-Manual Employees (CPI-UNME)**
  - ✓ An urban non-manual employee is defined as one who derives 50 per cent or more of his or her income from gainful employment on non-manual work in the urban non-agricultural sector.
  - ✓ The current CPI (UNME) series with base 1984-85, introduced in November 1987, derives the weighting pattern from the family living survey conducted during 1982-83 in 59 selected urban centres.
  - ✓ The index is being released by CSO with a time lag of about two weeks.
  - ✓ Some of the State Governments, public and private sector undertakings, foreign embassies, etc. are making use of this index for purposes of regulating Dearness Allowance.
  - ✓ The index is also used for computing the advance tax liability of tax payers from capital gains by the Central Board of Direct Taxes.
- **Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL)**
  - ✓ A person is treated as an agricultural labourer if he or she follows one or more of the agricultural occupations in the capacity of a labourer on hire, whether paid in cash or kind or partly in cash and partly in kind.
  - ✓ The Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) has 1986–87 as its base year.
  - ✓ The data is collected in 600 villages with a monthly frequency and has three weeks time lag.





# Competition CHRONICLE

For General Competitive Examinations

- ✓ News Snippets
- ✓ Terms in Vogue
- ✓ State Watch
- ✓ News Notes
- ✓ GS PT Pointers
- ✓ Exam Pointers
- ✓ Current Affairs Model MCQs
- ✓ Parliament Q & A
- ✓ Fact Sheet
- ✓ PIB/AIR/PTI Info Bytes

*From this issue of Civil Services Chronicle, we are starting this special section called 'Competition Chronicle'. This section has been conceptualized to cater to the needs of aspirants preparing for general competitive examinations. It has been designed keeping in mind the questions related to general knowledge and current events asked in competitive examinations.*

*In this section, contemporary developments will be presented for the examinations conducted by State Public Service Commissions, Staff Selection Commissions, State Subordinate Commissions and other equivalent graduate level examinations like CDS, Railway, Banking, etc.*

*The nature of current affairs questions asked in the UPSC Civil Services Examination has seen a drastic change over the years; now these questions are asked from the general studies background of current events. Therefore, there is a need to study current affairs as per the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of questions for UPSC-CSE. Keeping this in mind, the initial part of the magazine covering Articles, In Focus, Regular Columns and Special Section has been dedicated exclusively to UPSC-CSE.*

*Current affairs questions asked in general competitive examinations are directly related to current events and the nature of these questions is factual. For these examinations, point-wise and factual study of general knowledge and contemporary events is required, not analytical study. Keeping this need of the candidates in mind, we have started this new section.*

# News Snippets

## India Watch

### **Poorvottar Sampark Setu**

- Recently, the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region launched “Poorvottar Sampark Setu”, an online tool to monitor development in northeast.
- Poorvottar Sampark Setu is a powerful tool designed to streamline and enhance monitoring of fortnightly visits of Union Ministers to North Eastern Region (NER).
- The dashboard provides valuable insights and graphical information about State-wise/ District-wise visits to the NER by Union Ministers to be used by all the stakeholders in one place.
- The portal generates an organized list of Ministers who can be nominated for visit to NER in the upcoming months.
- This list is dynamic and takes into account several factors to streamline the visits.
- After the visit, the Minister can submit their tour reports along with their recommendations online.

### **Special Leave Petitions**

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) highlighted that Special Leave Petitions (SLPs) in criminal cases often lacked crucial information including number of bails asked, complete chargesheet and number of witnesses examined.
- The Special Leave Petitions provides the aggrieved party a special permission to be heard in SC as an appeal against any judgment or order given by any court or tribunal in Indian territory (except military tribunal and court martial).
- It has been provided as a “residual power” to the SC and can be exercised only in cases when any substantial question of law is involved, or gross injustice has been done.
- Article 136 of Indian Constitution vests the SC with a special power to grant special leave, to appeal against any judgment or order or decree in any matter or cause, passed or made by any Court/tribunal in the territory of India.
- It is discretionary power of SC and the SC may in its discretion refuse to grant leave to appeal and hence it is not a right of aggrieved party to be heard in SC.

### **Section 106 of the Indian Evidence Act (1872)**

- Recently, the Supreme Court held that Section 106 of the Indian Evidence Act does not inherently impose a burden on the accused but comes into play when the accused fails to provide any explanation regarding facts that should be within their knowledge.
- Section 106 deals with the burden of proof in cases where a fact is within the special knowledge of a person.
- This section applies to civil and criminal cases alike and lays down an important principle of evidence.
- The section states that when any fact is especially within the knowledge of any person, the burden of proving that fact is upon that person.
- This means that if a fact is known to a particular person and not to others, it is the responsibility of that person to prove it in court.
- The burden of proof under Section 106 is not absolute, and the person who has the special knowledge of the fact is only required to prove it to the extent that is reasonable in the circumstances.

### **Mandatory Penny-Drop Verification for NPS**

- Recently, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has introduced mandatory ‘penny drop’ verification for National Pension System (NPS) subscribers, ensuring timely fund transfers during withdrawals.
- The penny drop verification process involves Central Recordkeeping Agencies (CRA) verifying the active status of the savings bank account and cross-referencing the name in the account with the subscriber’s Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN) or submitted documents.
- The verification success, inclusive of name matching, is vital for processing exit/withdrawal requests and modifying subscriber bank account details.
- Failure in the penny drop verification prohibits any such requests, prompting CRA to collaborate with nodal offices for rectification.

# STATE WATCH

## Kerala

### Kasaragod: First District in India to Declare Official Tree, Flower and Bird

- Kasaragod becomes first district in India to declare official tree, flower and bird.
- The official tree of the district is 'Kanjiram' (*Strychnos nux-vomica* Linn), a species deriving its name from 'kasara', meaning wormwood, from which the name of the district originates.
- The district bird is the White Bellied Sea Hawk, which is native to the region spanning from Mahe to Manjeswaram. Notably, it is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- The Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle, locally known as 'Bheemanama', has been chosen as the district species. This rare species is listed on the Red List of Endangered Freshwater Turtles.
- The district flower, 'Periya Polathali' or *Crinum malabarica*, with its distinctive white flowers tinged with red, is another remarkable addition to the list. This plant is found exclusively in the streams originating from the laterite hills in Kasaragod, emphasising its significance.

### Kerala Becomes First State With Hallmarking Centres In Every District

- With the inauguration of a hallmarking centre in Idukki, Kerala became the first state in India to have hallmarking centres in all 14 districts.
- The inauguration of these hallmarking centres is a significant step in ensuring the quality and reliability of gold ornaments for consumers.
- The gold business in Kerala is valued at over Rs. 1 lakh crore, with annual sales of around 250 tonnes.

### Kerala Gets Its First 3D-Printed Building

- Kerala has unveiled its first 3D-printed building, named Amaze-28, which is situated within the Kerala State Nirmithi Kendra (Kesnik) campus in PTP Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram.
- The project was undertaken by Kerala State Nirmithi Kendra with the collaborative support of Tvasta, a Chennai-based construction technology start-up founded by IIT-Madras alumni.
- 3D printing is a cutting-edge manufacturing technique that relies on layer-by-layer printing. It involves three key processes: data processing, material processing, and robotic printing.

## Punjab

### PUSA-44

- Recently, Punjab Chief Minister announced that the state will ban the cultivation of the PUSA-44 paddy variety from next year onwards.
- PUSA-44 is a paddy variety which was developed in 1993 by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- By the end of 2010s, it had gained widespread popularity among farmers across the Punjab, covering approximately 70 to 80% of the area under paddy cultivation.
- Farmers claim that PUSA-44 yields nearly 85 to 100 mann (34 to 40 quintals) per acre, while other varieties' yield average is 28 to 30 quintals per acre.
- It is a long-duration variety, taking around 160 days to mature.
- This is around 35 to 40 days more than other varieties, requiring 5-6 extra cycles of irrigation.
- Moreover, this variety is also known to exacerbate the long-running issue of stubble burning in the state.
- This variety generates around 2 per cent more stubble than short varieties, which becomes a significant concern when cultivated on a large scale.

# PIB/AIR/PTI Info Bytes

- Which initiative has been recently launched by the Ministry of Education, Government of India?  
**-One Nation One Student ID Card**
- Where was a conference of the Association of Indian Economists and Allied Sciences held recently?  
**-Srinagar**
- How many votes approved the 'Gaza Resolution' in the recent United Nations General Assembly? **-121**
- How many cities were recently included in the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme in India? **-30**
- Which international network did the Competition Commission of India recently become a member of?  
**- International Competition Network**
- Who was recently elected as the new Speaker of the US House of Representatives? **-Mike Johnson**
- Which country recently experienced the arrival of hurricane 'Otis'? **-Mexico**
- Where was the International Travel Exhibition Asia recently held? **-Singapore**
- In which country was the 'North East India' festival recently organized? **-Vietnam**
- Which Indian company is set to manufacture Apple's iPhone in the country? **-Tata**
- Who became the first Indian woman to participate in the British Endurance Championship recently?  
**-Humaira Mushtaq**
- Who won the gold medal at the World U-23 Wrestling Championships? **-Ritika Hooda**
- How many medals did India win in the recently concluded Asian Para Games? **-111**
- Who has recently been appointed as the new King of Malaysia? **-Sultan Ibrahim Iskander**
- In which country was the world's highest nuclear research reactor recently installed? **-Bolivia**
- Where was "Shri Anna Mahotsav" recently inaugurated? **-Lucknow**
- Which country's court has sentenced eight former Indian marines to death? **-Qatar**
- What amount of investment has the Central Government approved for the expansion of the Prime Minister's Crop Insurance Portal?  
**-30 thousand crore rupees**
- Which celebrity has been recently made the icon of Election Commission of India? **-Rajukumar Rao**
- Where did 'Aadi Mahotsav', an annual initiative of the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Limited recently start? **-Ahmedabad**
- Where was the National Conference on Improved and Traditional Seed Production in Cooperative Sector held recently? **-New Delhi**
- In which country was the 'Future Investment Initiative' recently organized? **-Saudi Arabia**
- What partnership did India recently sign with Japan in the business and economics sector?  
**-Semiconductor supply chain**
- Where did the 37th National Games recently begin? **-Goa**
- Who has been appointed as the head coach of the Indian women's cricket team? **-Amol Majumdar**
- What is the focus of the National Hackathon 'Vimarsh-2023', recently being organized?  
**-5G in police**
- Which country is set to become the second largest economy in Asia by 2030? **-India**
- Where was the world's first liquid DAP plant recently inaugurated? **-Gujarat**
- Where will the e-prix formula be held in 2024?  
**-Hyderabad**
- Who recently became the first player in the world to score the fastest 2000 runs in ODIs? **-Shubman Gill**
- Who recently became the Director General of Military Hospital Service, making history as the first woman in the role? **-Sadhna Saxena**
- What award was recently received by Udhampur Military Station? **-'Best Green Military Station'**
- What did space startup company Skyroot recently introduce? **-Vikram-1 rocket**
- What was the name of the joint military exercise between the armies of India and Malaysia?  
**-'Harimau Shakti'**
- Which species was recently discovered in Himachal Pradesh? **-Paintbrush Swift butterfly**
- Where was Uttar Pradesh's first 'Mission Shakti Cafe', run by self-help group members, opened? **-Gonda**
- Who has been appointed as the Managing Director and CEO of Kotak Mahindra Bank recently? **-Ashok Vaswani**
- Where will the country's first Naval Bravery Museum be built? **-Lucknow ■■**