

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY



MAINS ARTICLE

GS-I

- ☐ CLOUD PATTERNS & IMPACT ON INDIA'S MONSOON DYNAMICS

GS-II

- ☐ JUDGING THE JUDGES
- ☐ TORTURE SHADOWS INDIA'S JUSTICE SYSTEM

GS-III

- ☐ GLOBAL ENERGY REVIEW 2025
- ☐ CBDT EXPANDS SAFE HARBOUR RULES
- ☐ CHALLENGE OF POLICING DIGITAL GIANTS
- ☐ INDIA-US AGRICULTURE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

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- ☐ Dr Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- ☐ World Happiness Report
- ☐ Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)
- ☐ International Criminal Court
- ☐ Raisina Dialogue 2025

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- ☐ Centre notifies hike in salaries of MPs
- ☐ "Samarth" Incubation Program
- ☐ Moran Community
- ☐ Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs)

ECONOMY

- ☐ Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)

- ☐ Equalisation Levy
- ☐ Municipal Bonds
- ☐ Doubly secure ink to thwart counterfeiting

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- ☐ World Tuberculosis (TB) Day – 2025
- ☐ Bose metal
- ☐ Sonic Weapons
- ☐ Satellite-based tolling

ENVIRONMENT

- ☐ Global Glacier Loss
- ☐ World Water Day
- ☐ International Day of Forests
- ☐ World Sparrow Day
- ☐ Targeted Conservation Efforts
- ☐ Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary

GS SCORE

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DISCLAIMER

The current affairs articles are segregated from prelims and mains perspective, such separation is maintained in terms of structure of articles. Mains articles have more focus on analysis and prelims articles have more focus on facts.

However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

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SECTION -A

MAINS ISSUES

CLOUD PATTERNS & IMPACT
ON INDIA'S MONSOON
DYNAMICS

Context

A recent study shows that during India's summer monsoon, **deep convective clouds** (which bring heavy rain) have **risen by about 1 km in the last 20 years**. This means **more intense monsoon rains and extreme weather events** like floods and heavy storms.

Why is this Happening?

- **Warmer Oceans:** The **Indian Ocean's rising temperature** is fueling stronger cloud formation.
- **Increased Convection:** More heat and moisture lead to **taller clouds**, which bring **more intense rainfall**.

Impact on India

- **More Floods in Northwest India:** Stronger monsoon storms increase flooding risks in states like Rajasthan, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh.
- **Heavier Rain on Coastal Regions:**
 - ▶ **Western Coast (Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra)** sees intense rainfall due to warm ocean air.
 - ▶ Eastern Coast (Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal) experiences stronger storms.
- **Increased Rain in Northeast India:** States like Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh may see more intense rainfall.



FACT BOX

Types of Clouds (Based on Height and Appearance)

- **High Clouds (Above 6,000 meters)**
 - ▶ **Cirrus** – Wispy, feather-like clouds; indicate fair weather but may signal storms.
 - ▶ **Cirrostratus** – Thin, sheet-like clouds covering the sky; cause a "halo" around the sun/moon.
 - ▶ **Cirrocumulus** – Small, white patches in a wave pattern; called "mackerel sky".
- **Middle Clouds (2,000–6,000 meters)**
 - ▶ **Altostratus** – Grayish cloud layers covering the sky; bring light rain.
 - ▶ **Alto cumulus** – White or gray patches in groups; indicate weather change.
- **Low Clouds (Below 2,000 meters)**
 - ▶ **Stratus** – Uniform, gray clouds covering the sky; cause light drizzle.
 - ▶ **Stratocumulus** – Low, lumpy clouds; can bring light rain but mostly dry.
 - ▶ **Nimbostratus** – Thick, dark clouds bringing **continuous rain** or snow.
- **Vertical Clouds (Can Grow from Low to High Levels)**
 - ▶ **Cumulus** – Puffy, white clouds with a flat base; indicate fair weather.

- ▶ **Cumulonimbus (Deep Convective Clouds)** – Towering clouds with an **anvil-shaped** top; bring **thunderstorms, heavy rain, hail, or tornadoes**.

Deep Convective Clouds

- These are large towering clouds that reach high into the atmosphere.
- They form due to strong rising air (convection) caused by heat and moisture. They bring heavy rain, thunderstorms, and extreme weather events.

Indian Monsoon

- The **monsoon** is a seasonal wind pattern that brings heavy rains to India, especially in summer. It has two phases:
- **Southwest Monsoon (June–September):** Brings **rainfall to most of India** (majority of annual rainfall). It is the main rainy season.
- **Northeast Monsoon (October–December):** Brings **rainfall mainly to Tamil Nadu and South India**.
- **Formation Mechanism:**
 - ▶ **Heat and Low Pressure:** During summer, the Indian landmass heats up more than the surrounding oceans. This creates a low-pressure area over northern India and Central Asia.
 - ▶ **Moist Air Influx:** Moist air from the Indian Ocean is drawn towards this low-pressure area. As the moist air reaches land, it is forced to rise.
 - ▶ **Cloud Formation and Rain:** As the air rises, it cools down, forming clouds. The cooling causes water vapor to condense into rain, leading to heavy downpours.

Wind Reversal:

- ▶ **Before Monsoon,** winds blow from the northeast.
- ▶ **During Monsoon,** the wind direction reverses (to the southwest), bringing in moist air from the ocean.
- ▶ **After Monsoon,** when the land cools down with the onset of winter, winds reverse again (to the northeast), marking the retreat of the monsoon.
- **Climate pattern impacting Monsoon:** El Nino, La Nina, Indian Ocean Dipole, Oscillations; and Jet Stream, etc.

UPSC PYQ

Q: How far do you agree that the behavior of the Indian monsoon has been changing due to humanizing landscape? Discuss. (2015)

JUDGING THE JUDGES

Context

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna has constituted a three-member panel to examine the alleged recovery of a huge stash of cash from the residence of sitting Delhi High Court Judge Justice Yashwant Varma.

How a Sitting Judge Can Be Removed From Office?

- The Indian Constitution provides that a judge can be removed from office only by an order of the President.

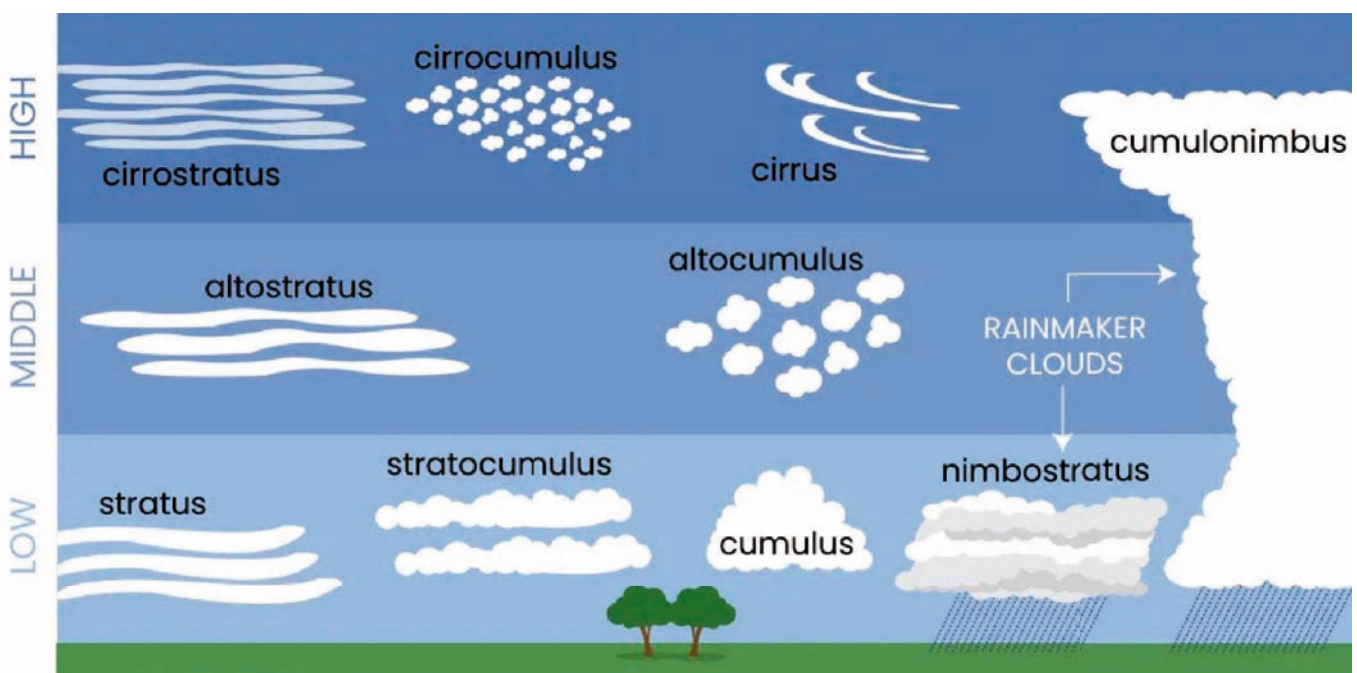


Figure No. 01

- ▶ The process of impeachment of a judge of the Supreme Court is laid down in **Article 124(4)** of the Constitution of India.
- ▶ **Article 218** says the same provisions shall apply in relation to a judge of the High Court.
- However, this drastic step is not taken lightly. The removal process is designed to ensure judicial independence while also maintaining accountability.
- The process is outlined in the **Judges Inquiry Act, 1968**.

Key Steps in the Removal Process

- **Initiation of the Impeachment Motion:** The process can start in either house of Parliament.
 - ▶ For the Lok Sabha, at least 100 members must sign a notice.
 - ▶ For the Rajya Sabha, at least 50 members must sign a notice.
 - ◆ Once the notice is submitted, the Speaker (for Lok Sabha) or the Chairman (for Rajya Sabha) examines the complaint and decides whether to admit the motion.
- **Formation of an Investigatory Committee:** If the motion is admitted, a three-member committee is formed. This committee is made up of:
 - ▶ A judge from the Supreme Court
 - ▶ The Chief Justice of a High Court
 - ▶ A distinguished Jurist
- This panel investigates the charges and frames the specific allegations against the judge. A copy of these charges is then sent to the accused judge, who is given an opportunity to present a written defence.
- **Review and Debate in Parliament:** After the committee completes its investigation, it submits a report to the Speaker or Chairman. The report is then discussed in the respective house of Parliament. For the motion to pass, it must be adopted by:
 - ◆ A majority of the total membership of the house, and
 - ◆ At least two-thirds of the members present and voting.
 - ▶ Once one house passes the motion, it is sent to the other house for consideration.
- **Final Decision by the President:** If both houses of Parliament adopt the motion, the final step is for the President to issue an order removing the judge from office.

What is the In-House Inquiry Process?

Before a judge faces impeachment proceedings in Parliament, there is an **internal or "in-house" inquiry process** to address allegations of misconduct.

- **Initial Complaint and Decision:** When a complaint is received, the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** first decides if further investigation is necessary. The accused judge is asked for a response, and the Chief Justice of the respective High Court is required to submit a report.

- **Formation of a Probe Committee:** If the complaint warrants further investigation, the CJI may set up a three-member panel.
 - ▶ **For a regular High Court judge, the panel usually comprises:**
 - ◆ Two Chief Justices (CJs) from other High Courts,
 - ◆ One judge from a High Court.
 - ▶ **For a High Court Chief Justice, the panel includes:**
 - ◆ One Supreme Court judge and two High Court Chief Justices.
 - ▶ **For a Supreme Court judge, the panel consists of three Supreme Court judges.**
- **Investigation and Recommendations:** The panel conducts a detailed inquiry and prepares a report. If the panel finds that the judge's conduct merits removal, the CJI can advise the judge to resign.
 - ▶ If the judge refuse to resign, the CJI has the authority to:
 - ◆ Remove the judge from handling judicial duties,
 - ◆ Inform the President and the Prime Minister, thereby triggering formal impeachment proceedings.
 - ▶ If the alleged misconduct is less serious, the CJI may choose to issue advice or a warning to the judge.

Why This Process Matters?

- **Judicial Independence vs. Accountability:** The removal process is deliberately stringent to ensure that judges can perform their duties without fear of political retribution, while still providing a mechanism to remove those who commit serious misconduct.
- **Checks and Balances:** By involving multiple branches of government—the judiciary (through the CJI and probe committees) and the legislature (through Parliament)—the process ensures that no single entity has unchecked power over a judge's tenure.
 - ▶ Unlike politicians, most judges are not legally required to disclose their assets, contributing to low transparency.
- **Public Confidence:** A transparent and fair process is crucial for maintaining public trust in the judicial system, especially when high-profile cases raise concerns over integrity and accountability.

How the Indian Judiciary Protects Its Interests?

- **Kesavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala (1973)** challenged Kerala's land reform that restricted religious institutions' land holdings.
 - ▶ **Outcome:** Established the "basic structure" doctrine, limiting Parliament's power to amend core constitutional features, thereby safeguarding judicial independence.
- **K. Veeraswami vs. Union of India (1991):** Former Chief Justice K. Veeraswami contested criminal charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

- ▶ **Outcome:** Ruled that Supreme Court and High Court judges, as “public servants,” require prior sanction before prosecution, protecting them from politically motivated charges.
- **Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association vs. Union of India (1993) – Birth of the Collegium System:** A dispute over judicial appointments led to a challenge against executive control.
 - ▶ **Outcome:** The Supreme Court redefined “consultation” as “concurrence,” establishing the collegium system where senior judges, led by the Chief Justice of India, hold the final say on appointments.
- **Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill (2010)** proposed to require judges to disclose assets and set up oversight committees.
 - ▶ **Outcome:** Faced strong resistance from within the judiciary; although passed in the Lok Sabha, it stalled in Parliament due to concerns over judicial independence.
- **NJAC Case – Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association vs. Union of India (2015):** The NJAC aimed to replace the collegium system with a commission involving executive and legislative members.
 - ▶ **Outcome:** The Supreme Court struck down the NJAC as unconstitutional, reaffirming the collegium system to protect judicial autonomy.
- **Justice CS Karnan vs. Supreme Court of India (2017):** Justice CS Karnan was imprisoned after making controversial remarks against fellow judges.
 - ▶ **Outcome:** Highlighted internal disciplinary measures within the judiciary, though critics argued it served to shield the institution from external accountability.

UPSC PYQ

Q: With reference to the Indian judiciary, consider the following statements: (2021)

- (1) Any retired judge of the Supreme Court of India can be called back to sit and act as a Supreme Court judge by the Chief Justice of India with the prior permission of the President of India.
- (2) A High Court in India has the power to review its own judgement as the Supreme Court does.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: (c)

TORTURE SHADOWS INDIA'S JUSTICE SYSTEM

Context

In a recent decision by the **King's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice in London**, concerns were raised

about the potential risk of **custodial mistreatment** if Sanjay Bhandari were to be extradited to India. The court, mindful of **India's non-ratification of the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT)**, recognized credible apprehensions regarding the conditions awaiting him in custody. Bhandari, facing charges related to tax evasion and money laundering, thus benefited from this protective stance.

Custodial Torture:

- In India, incidents of torture in police custody have raised serious concerns about human rights and the proper implementation of criminal laws.
- In 2019, approximately 1,723 custodial deaths were reported—averaging about five deaths every day.

Reasons for the continuing impunity for Custodial Torture

- **Systemic failure:** The problem of custodial torture stems from a systemic failure within law enforcement agencies, where violence is often normalised as part of police work.
 - ▶ Despite strict guidelines, the authorities routinely fail to conduct rigorous investigations and prosecute police officials implicated in torture and ill-treatment of arrested persons.
- **Lack of Comprehensive Legislation:** Although India signed the **UN Convention Against Torture (CAT)**, it has not ratified the treaty or enacted a central law to prevent custodial violence.
- **Ineffectiveness:** The NHRC, established under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**, monitors and addresses human rights violations, including custodial torture. Despite its efforts, the persistent statistics indicate a gap in the enforcement of existing laws.
- **Lack of Police Reforms:** In 2006, the Supreme Court in a landmark decision, **Prakash Singh v. Union of India**, issued six binding directives to the central and state governments to kick-start police reforms.
- **Extended Police Custody:** Under **Section 187 of the Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita**, police may extend custody to complete investigations. However, this can give police ample time to extract confessions through coercion.



FACT BOX

Custody

- Custody generally means the state of being kept by the police or kept in the jail, usually while waiting to go to court for trial.
- **Type of Custody:** There are two types of Custody
 - ▶ **Judicial Custody:** In this person is sent to jail and the police don't have physical custody and if they want to interrogate the accused, they have to take the permission of the magistrate.

- ▶ **Police Custody:** In this police have the actual physical custody of the accused.
- ▣ **Rights and Remedies for the accused in custody**
 - ▶ He has the right to know on which grounds he is being arrested
 - ▶ He has the right to get a lawyer of his own choice.
 - ▶ He has the right to get bail.
 - ▶ He has the right to get Medical Treatment.
- An arrested person can apply for the **Writ of the Habeas Corpus** if he thinks that his arrest is illegal and the procedure of custody is not followed according to law.

Legal and Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 20:** The prohibitions imposed by Article 20 of the Constitution are directly relevant to the criminal process.
 - ▶ **Article 20(1)** prohibits retrospective operation of penal legislations.
 - ▶ **Article 20(2)** guards against double jeopardy for the same offence.
- **Article 21:** Indian constitution has granted rights to every person and under fundamental rights enshrined under Article 21. Right to life, it includes the person who has been detained or convicted or arrested.
- **Article 22:** Basic human rights cannot be taken away plus under Article 22, rights are laid down for people who are being arrested and detained.
- **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC):** Under Section 46 and Section 50, the law mandates that arrests must be made with dignity and that the police must inform the arrested individual of the reasons for their detention.
- **Section 187 of the Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita,** prescribes the procedure when investigation cannot be completed in twenty-four hours.
- **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** constituted under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1935 addresses violation of human rights, including the custodial torture.

Key Supreme Court Cases

- **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal:** The court issued guidelines to prevent custodial deaths. These include preparing a memorandum at the time of arrest and ensuring a family member’s presence.
- **Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar:** Guidelines were set to prevent unnecessary arrests and to require police to justify detentions before a Magistrate.
- **Sunil Batra v. State (UT of Delhi):** The court scrutinized practices like indiscriminate handcuffing and separate confinement, emphasizing that such measures can violate the rights to life, dignity, and freedom of movement.

- **Prem Shankar Shukla v. State (UT of Delhi):** This ruling declared routine handcuffing as inhuman and arbitrary, requiring police to obtain a Judge’s approval before using such measures.

UPSC PYQ

Q: Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analysing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures. (2021)

GLOBAL ENERGY REVIEW 2025

Context:

The **Global Energy Review 2025**, released by the International Energy Agency, marks the impact of extreme weather on energy demand in 2024.

Key Findings of the Report

- ▣ **Impact of Extreme Temperatures on Energy Demand**
 - ▶ **Cooling Demand:** Extreme heat drove a 20% contribution to the growth in both natural gas and electricity demand.
 - ▶ **Record Global Cooling Degree Days:** A 6% increase compared to 2023, especially affecting regions like China, India, and the United States.
 - ▶ **Growth in Global Electricity Demand:** Global electricity demand grew by 4.3% in 2024, up from 2.5% in 2023.
- ▣ **Sector Contributions:**
 - ▶ **Buildings:** Grew by 5% (over 600 TWh), driven by rising air conditioning needs and new data centres, accounting for nearly 60% of total electricity growth.
 - ▶ **Industry:** Electricity use increased by nearly 4%, boosted by electro-intensive manufacturing.
 - ▶ **Transport:** A rise of over 8% due to the growing adoption of electric vehicles; global electric car sales surged by over 25%.
- ▣ **Generation Mix:**
 - ▶ 80% of the increase in global electricity generation came from renewable sources and nuclear power.
 - ◆ **Renewables** alone provided 32% of total generation.
 - ◆ **Nuclear power** added over 7 GW of new capacity, a 33% increase over 2023, marking the fifth-highest addition in three decades.

- ▶ **Coal Use:** Global coal demand rose by 1%, with China remaining the largest consumer (58% of global coal use). Coal emissions increased by 0.9% (135 Mt CO₂).
- ◆ **Natural Gas:** Emissions from natural gas grew by around 2.5% (180 Mt CO₂), making it the largest contributor to global carbon emissions growth, driven by higher consumption in major regions including China, the U.S., the Middle East, and India.

CBDT EXPANDS SAFE HARBOUR RULES

Context

The **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** has made important changes to **India's Income-Tax (I-T) Rules, 1962**, to expand the scope of safe harbour rules. These changes, announced aim to provide tax benefits to **electric vehicle (EV) and EV battery makers in India**.

What Are Safe Harbour Rules?

- Safe harbour rules are defined under **Section 92CB of the Income-tax Act, 1961** for the determination of arm's length price under **section 92C or section 92CA**.
- Safe harbour means circumstances in which the **income-tax authorities** accept the transfer price as declared by the assessee.
 - ▶ **Transfer Price** is the actual price charged in a transaction between related entities which are part of the same **multi-national enterprises (MNE) group**.
- Safe harbour rules help businesses by giving them **tax certainty**.
- They allow companies to determine the prices of their international transactions without disputes with tax authorities.
- If a company follows these rules, the tax department will accept their pricing without further questioning, reducing legal issues.

Key Changes in Safe Harbour Rules

- **Higher Threshold for Safe Harbour:** The limit for companies to qualify for safe harbour has been increased from **Rs 200 crore to Rs 300 crore**. This means more businesses can now benefit from tax certainty and avoid lengthy tax disputes.
- **Inclusion of Lithium-Ion Batteries:** Lithium-ion batteries used in electric or hybrid EVs are now considered **core auto components**. This helps battery manufacturers get tax benefits, encouraging investment in India's EV industry.
- These amendments will be applicable for **two assessment years: 2025-26 and 2026-27**.

Who Benefits from These Changes?

- **Large Companies:** More businesses will be able to take advantage of safe harbour rules, reducing tax-related legal troubles.

- **EV Industry:** Battery manufacturers and EV makers get tax certainty, which will boost growth in the sector.
- **Taxpayers:** Companies involved in international transactions get **clearer tax guidelines**, making compliance easier and encouraging investment in India's EV industry.

CHALLENGE OF POLICING DIGITAL GIANTS

Context

The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** fined Meta Rs 213 crore and banned it from sharing WhatsApp user data with Facebook and Instagram for five years, citing **unfair trade practices**. However, the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** stayed the ban and penalty, highlighting the challenges of regulating Big Tech in India. This case is a **wake-up call** for India to **modernize its digital competition laws**.

What is the core issue (data as a tool for market dominance)?

- The CCI's order stemmed from **WhatsApp's 2021 privacy policy** update, which forced users to consent to expanded data-sharing.
- By aggregating **WhatsApp's user data** with its broader ecosystem, Meta gained an **unfair edge in online display advertising, strengthening its control over India's digital economy**.
- ▢ **Key concerns raised by CCI:**
 - **Take-it-or-leave-it model:** Users had no real choice but to accept Meta's data-sharing terms.
 - **Anti-competitive impact:** Exclusive access to WhatsApp data gave Meta a self-reinforcing market advantage.
 - **Barrier to competition:** Other messaging platforms struggled to compete with Meta's entrenched dominance.

How Big Tech Uses Data to Cement Its Power?

- The **21st-century economy is data-driven**, with digital platforms leveraging user data to consolidate power. Unlike traditional industries, **data has unlimited utility**—it can be collected, processed, and exploited indefinitely.
 - ▶ **Network Effects:** More users generate **more data**, making platforms **more valuable**, attracting **even more users**.
 - ▶ **Personalized Advertising:** Targeted ads powered by **large-scale data analytics** drive ad revenues, reinforcing dominance.
 - ▶ **Lock-in Effect:** Seamless integration across platforms makes **switching difficult**, limiting consumer choice.
 - ▶ **Algorithmic Advantage:** AI-powered personalization **increases engagement**, further monopolizing user attention.

- This ability to **accumulate and utilize vast amounts of data** enables companies like Meta to **entrench their position**, reducing market competition and raising concerns about consumer rights and privacy.

Challenges in Regulating Big Tech in India

- **Old Competition Laws:** The **Competition Act, 2002** does not address **data-driven monopolies**.
- **Lack of Coordination:** Different regulatory bodies (CCI, MeitY) don't work together effectively.
- **Legal Loopholes:** Outdated laws let Big Tech companies **exploit unclear regulations**.
- **Global Reach of Tech Firms:** National laws don't apply effectively to companies operating worldwide.
- **No AI Regulations:** There are no clear rules on **AI-generated content** or **algorithm-driven decisions**.
- **Platform Control:** Companies like **Google and Apple** control app stores, advertising, and data, limiting fair competition.

India's Competition Laws and Data Regulation

- **Competition Act, 2002** empowers the **CCI** to investigate and regulate anti-competitive practices, including those in digital markets.
 - ▶ **Key Amendments (2023):** Introduced deal value thresholds to address high-value acquisitions.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000** governs digital transactions, cybersecurity, and cybercrime.
- **IT Rules, 2021** regulates social media, OTT platforms, and digital news media by enforcing content moderation, grievance redressal, and user verification requirements.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** includes dedicated **e-commerce guidelines**.
- **E-commerce Rules, 2020** addresses unfair trade practices, fraud, and consumer rights violations in digital marketplaces.

Basic Concepts

- **Dominant position:** A firm holds a dominant position if it can operate within the market without taking full account of the reaction of its competitors or final consumers.
- **Abuse of Dominant position** occurs when a group or an enterprise uses its dominant position in the marketplace to exclude or exploit others.
- **Competitive advantage** refers to factors that allow a company to produce goods or services better or more cheaply than its rivals.

INDIA-US AGRICULTURE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Context

The ongoing trade negotiations between India and the United States have put a spotlight on **agricultural market access**. The US is pushing for greater entry into India's farm sector, emphasizing the principle of **reciprocity in trade agreements**. However, a major sticking point remains the **disparity in government support for farmers in both countries**. Extensive subsidies for American farmers make their produce significantly cheaper, raising concerns about fair competition and the potential impact on Indian farmers' livelihoods.

How India and the US Support Their Farmers?

- **India:** India's agricultural support primarily targets **small and marginal farmers** by providing **subsidized fertilizers, irrigation, and electricity**.
 - ▶ The Minimum Support Price (MSP) ensures price stability for key crops, while low-interest loans and crop insurance schemes help mitigate financial risks.
- **United States:** The US relies on **direct financial support** for farmers, ensuring income stability through various programs.
 - ▶ These include **Price Loss Coverage**, which compensates farmers when market prices fall below a threshold, and **Agriculture Risk Coverage**, which provides financial protection against revenue losses.
 - ▶ Additionally, the US government supports dairy farmers, offers extensive crop insurance, and provides disaster assistance in times of extreme weather events.

Challenges for Indian Agriculture

- **Unequal Competition and Market Pressures:** The significant difference in subsidy structures creates an uneven field for Indian farmers. While the high cost of inputs already makes Indian agriculture less competitive, the influx of **cheaper American products** could further erode their market position.
 - ▶ If Indian tariffs on agricultural imports are lowered, local farmers may struggle to compete with heavily subsidized US goods, potentially affecting their income and livelihoods.
- **Trade Commitments vs Domestic Needs:** India has traditionally maintained high tariffs to shield its farmers from the impact of subsidized imports. The US, however, has been pushing for reduced tariffs to enhance its market access in India.
- **India's Position at the WTO:** India has consistently defended its **right to protect its agricultural sector** under **World Trade Organization (WTO) rules**, which allow developing nations to use tariffs and subsidies to support their farmers.

- ▶ The principle of “**non-reciprocity**” recognizes that developed countries should not expect equal market access in return for trade concessions granted to emerging economies.

▣ **Government Subsidies for Farmers:**

- ▶ **Seeds:** Implemented through Sub-Mission on Seeds & Planting Materials (SMSP) to promote quality seed production. Financial assistance provided for distributing foundation/certified seeds at subsidized rates.
- ▶ **Mechanization & Technology:** Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) focuses on inclusive growth in mechanization.
- ▶ **Irrigation:** Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)
- ▶ **Godowns:** Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure (AMI) scheme
- ▶ **Fertilizer:** Urea provided at subsidized rates to farmers, with the difference between production cost and market price subsidized by the government.

- ▶ **Nutrient Based Subsidy Policy** implemented for **Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilizers**, providing fixed subsidies based on nutrient content.
- ▶ **Other Subsidized Schemes:** National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), and Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)

UPSC PYQ

- Q: **What are the direct and indirect subsidies provided to farm sector in India? Discuss the issues raised by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in relation to agricultural subsidies. [2023]**
- Q: **WTO is an important international institution where decisions taken affect countries in a profound manner. What is the mandate of WTO and how binding are their decisions? Critically analyse India’s stand on the latest round of talks on Food security. [2014]**



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SECTION - B

QUICK BYTES

SHAHEED DIWAS 2025

CONTEXT

India celebrates **Shaheed Diwas**, or **Martyrs' Day** on January 30 to honor different freedom fighters, **March 23** holds special significance. On this day in **1931**, three young revolutionaries—**Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar**—were executed by the British.

Why is March 23 Observed as Shaheed Diwas?

- March 23 marks the execution of **Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev** in **Lahore Central Jail**. These three revolutionaries were part of the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**, a group committed to overthrowing British rule through revolutionary activities.
- Their most notable action was the **Lahore Conspiracy Case**, in which they were accused of assassinating British police officer **John Saunders** in **1928**.
 - ▶ This act was in retaliation for the brutal lathi charge on **Lala Lajpat Rai**, a respected leader of the freedom movement, who succumbed to his injuries.

◦ **Bhagat Singh – The Revolutionary Thinker**

- ▶ Bhagat Singh was born on September 28, 1907 in the village of Banga in Lyallpur district (present-day Faisalabad, Pakistan).
- ▶ He was an influential Indian revolutionary, great patriot, socialist revolutionary and freedom fighter known for his activism against British colonial rule.
- ▶ He supported Mahatma Gandhi in the Non-Cooperation Movement and was affected by

the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919)** and the violence against unarmed Akali protestors at **Nankana Sahib (1921)**.



- ▶ He founded the **Naujawan Bharat Sabha** in the year 1926 to encourage the peasants and workers to fight against British rule. He was the secretary of that organisation.
- ▶ Singh joined the **Kirti Kisan Party** in 1926 in Lahore. He started writing for 'Kirti' and wrote against the atrocities of the British.
- ▶ In 1928, the **Hindustan Socialist Association (HSRA)** was also established by him, along with **Sukhdev, Chandrasekhar Azad** and others.

- ▶ The main events which changed the course of the life of Bhagat Singh leading to his early martyrdom at the age of 23 were the –
 - ◆ the Rowlatt Act
 - ◆ the Jallianwala Bagh massacre
 - ◆ the Non-Cooperation Movement
 - ◆ the event at Chauri-Chaura
 - ◆ the Kakori Train Conspiracy
 - ◆ the Central Assembly bombing at Delhi

▣ Shivaram Rajguru – The Fearless Warrior

- ▶ Shivaram Hari Rajguru was born on August 24, 1908, in **Khed, Maharashtra** (now known as Rajgurunagar).
- ▶ **Involvement in the Freedom Struggle:** As he grew older, Rajguru became actively involved in the fight for independence. He first joined the **Seva Dal**, where he attended training camps at **Ghatprabha**. Later, he became a part of the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**, an organization formed in 1928 by revolutionaries like **Chandrasekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh**.



- ▶ Rajguru was known for his sharp shooting skills, earning him the title of **“Gunman of HSRA.”** His dedication to the cause made him an integral part of the revolutionary activities undertaken by the group.
- ▶ **The Lahore Conspiracy Case:** In 1928, Rajguru, along with Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev, was involved in the assassination of John Saunders, a British police officer. The act was meant to avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, who had succumbed to injuries after a brutal police lathi charge during a peaceful protest.

▣ Sukhdev Thapar – The Strategic Mastermind

- ▶ Born on May 15, 1907, in Ludhiana, Punjab.
- ▶ He was a key member of the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**, organizing revolutionary cells in Punjab and Northern India.



- ▶ He co-founded **Naujawan Bharat Sabha (1926)** to mobilize youth for India’s freedom struggle.
- ▶ He was involved in the **Lahore Conspiracy Case (1928)**, where he, **Bhagat Singh, and Rajguru avenged Lala Lajpat Rai’s** death by mistakenly killing **J.P. Saunders instead of James A. Scott**.
- ▶ He participated in the 1929 Prison Hunger Strike against harsh treatment of prisoners.
- ▶ He was arrested and sentenced to death; hanged on March 23, 1931, in Lahore Central Jail at just 24 years old.



FACT BOX

IMPORTANT EVENTS

▣ Rowlatt Act

- ▶ The Rowlatt Act was enacted by the British government in March 1919.
- ▶ It aimed to curb the growing nationalist movements by allowing the government to imprison individuals without trial and to impose strict controls on the press and public assemblies.
- ▶ **Impact:** The Act was widely opposed in India, leading to protests and unrest, which culminated in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

▣ Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

- ▶ **Date:** The massacre occurred on April 13, 1919.
- ▶ At Amritsar’s Jallianwala Bagh, where thousands of peaceful Indian protesters had congregated to commemorate Baisakhi, the spring festival. Without warning, the British officer in charge of the **Amritsar region, Brigadier General Reginald Dyer**, marched into Jallianwala Bagh with fifty armed soldiers and ordered them to open fire on the crowd.
- ▶ The shooting lasted about ten minutes, killing an estimated 379 people and injuring over one thousand.

❑ Non-Cooperation Movement

- ▶ The movement was initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 in response to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Rowlatt Act.
- ▶ **Goals:** It aimed to resist British rule through non-violent means, encouraging Indians to boycott British goods, institutions, and honors.
- ▶ **Impact:** While it gained significant traction, the movement was called off by Gandhi in February 1922 following the violent Chauri-Chaura incident.

❑ Chauri-Chaura

- ▶ **Date:** The incident occurred on February 4, 1922.
- ▶ **Details:** A mob protesting the British police's actions set fire to a police station, resulting in the deaths of three civilians and 22 policemen.
- ▶ **Consequences:** Gandhi viewed the violence as contrary to his principles of non-violence and subsequently called off the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Kakori Train Conspiracy

- The conspiracy took place on August 9, 1925.
- **Objective:** Revolutionaries aimed to rob a train carrying government funds to finance their activities against British rule.
- **Outcome:** Several revolutionaries, including Ram Prasad Bismil, were arrested, and four were sentenced to death, while others received life imprisonment.

Central Assembly Bombing at Delhi

- The bombing occurred on April 8, 1929.
- **Perpetrators:** Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt were the main figures behind the act.
- **Purpose:** They aimed to protest repressive laws and make their voices heard in the Central Legislative Assembly. Instead of causing harm, they intended to create a spectacle to draw attention to their cause and were arrested following the bombing.

DR RAM MANOHAR LOHIA (1910-1967)

Context

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Dr Ram Manohar Lohia on his birth anniversary.

About

- Dr Ram Manohar Lohia was born on March 23, 1910, in Akbarpur, located in Uttar Pradesh's Ambedkar Nagar district. He passed away on October 12, 1967



- Lohia played a crucial role in **India's struggle for independence** and later emerged as a key figure in the country's socialist political movements.
- He was associated with the **Praja Socialist Party** and the **Samyukta Socialist Party**.
- In the post-independence era, Lohia remained active in Indian politics, advocating for social justice and empowerment.
- In 1962, he contested against then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru from Phulpur but lost.
- He later won a by-election in 1963, becoming a Member of Parliament from Farrukhabad.
- In 1967, he was elected from the Kannauj constituency.

WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT

Context

The **recently published World Happiness Report 2025** evaluates happiness levels across **147 countries** based on individuals' self-assessed life satisfaction. The rankings are based on data from the **Gallup World Poll (2022-2024)**, analyzed by leading well-being researchers.

Key Findings of the 2025 Report

- **Nordic Nations Lead Globally:** **Finland** retains the **happiest country** title for the **eighth consecutive year**, followed by **Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, and the Netherlands**.
- **Taiwan Becomes the Happiest in Asia:** Ranked **27th globally**, **Taiwan** surpasses **Singapore** to become the **happiest place in Asia**.

Top 10 Happiest Places in Asia (2025):

- Taiwan
- Singapore
- Vietnam
- Thailand
- Japan
- Philippines
- Republic of Korea

- Malaysia
- China
- Mongolia

- A major factor contributing to Taiwan’s happiness is **social connectedness**, particularly high levels of **meal-sharing**.
- The US has dropped to 24th place—its lowest ranking ever. Similarly, the United Kingdom finds itself at 23rd place, reflecting growing concerns over quality of life and economic uncertainty.

India ranks 118th out of 147 countries, with a happiness score of 4.389. This places it below its neighbors **Nepal, Bangladesh, and China**. The drop is linked to growing mental health concerns, exacerbated by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing economic pressures.

About the World Happiness Index

- The index ranks countries based on **subjective well-being** and six objective factors:
 - ▶ **GDP per capita** – Economic prosperity.
 - ▶ **Social support** – Availability of close relationships.
 - ▶ **Healthy life expectancy** – Overall health and longevity.
 - ▶ **Freedom** – Perceived personal choices.
 - ▶ **Generosity** – Willingness to help others.
 - ▶ **Corruption levels** – Trust in institutions.
- While personal life evaluations determine the rankings, these six factors help explain national differences.
- From 2024, the World Happiness Report is a publication of the **Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, UK**.

INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)

Context

As India prepares to assume **chairmanship of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in November 2025**, it aims to enhance **funding, technology integration, and maritime education**.

About IORA

- **Established in:** 1997
- The **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** is a key regional organization that fosters economic cooperation and security among countries in **Asia, Africa, and Australia**.
- As India prepares to assume **chairmanship in November 2025**, it aims to enhance **funding, technology integration, and maritime education**.

- **Members:** 23 members and 10 dialogue partners.
 - ▶ **Member countries:** Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, and Yemen.
 - ▶ **Newest country member:** France first joined IORA as a “Dialogue Partner” in 2001, before becoming a formal Member State on 17 December 2020 (with effect from 1 January 2021).
 - ▶ **Dialogue partners:** 11 dialogue partners: China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, US and UK.
- **Headquarters:** Its Secretariat is based in Cyber City, Ebène, Mauritius.
- Strategic Importance of the Indian Ocean Region
 - ▶ **Critical Trade Route:** Facilitates 75% of global trade and 50% of daily oil consumption.
 - ▶ **Economic Significance:** Produces **USD 1 trillion in goods and services**; intra-IORA trade reached **USD 800 billion in 2023**.
 - ▶ **Security Challenges:** Faces issues like **piracy, terrorism, trafficking, and climate-related disasters**.
 - ▶ **Development Gaps:** Many member states struggle with **economic limitations, political instability, and environmental degradation**.

UPSC PYQ

Q: With reference to ‘Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), consider the following statements: (2015)

- (1) It was established very recently in response to incidents of piracy and accidents of oil spills.
- (2) It is an alliance meant for maritime security only.

Which of the statements given above is/ are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: (d)

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Context

In a **historic first for Asia**, former **Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte** was arrested and transferred to The Hague within **five days of his warrant being issued**. His case, along with ongoing investigations into leaders like **Vladimir Putin** and **Benjamin Netanyahu**, has sparked global debate over the **International Criminal Court’s reach, legitimacy, and selective prosecution concerns**.

About ICC

- ICC is the world's first permanent international criminal court.
- It is governed by an international treaty called 'The Rome Statute'.
- ICC is not a UN organization but it has a cooperation agreement with the United Nations.
- Headquarters:** The Hague, the Netherlands.
- Jurisdiction:** The Rome Statute, grants the ICC jurisdiction over four main crimes:
- The crime of Genocide**
 - Crimes against Humanity
 - War crimes
 - Crime of Aggression
- Membership:** Most countries on Earth – 123 of them – are parties to the treaty, but there are very large and notable exceptions, including Russia, India and the US. And, for that matter, Ukraine.
- Ukraine also is not a member of the international court, but it has granted it jurisdiction over its territory.

Rome Statute

- The Rome Statute, a multilateral treaty, is the foundation and governing document of the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**.
- The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is an agreement that led to the formation of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

RAISINA DIALOGUE 2025

Context

India hosted the **10th edition of the Raisina Dialogue** in New Delhi, with **New Zealand's Prime Minister, Christopher Luxon**, as the **Chief Guest**.

What is the Raisina Dialogue?

- Launched in 2016** by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and **organized annually** with the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**.
- Named after **Raisina Hills**, where India's government institutions are located.
- India's premier geopolitical and geo-economic conference**, akin to the **Munich Security Conference** and **Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue**.
- Brings together **global leaders, policymakers, academics, industry experts, and journalists** to discuss international challenges.
- Theme for 2025:** "*Kalachakra – People, Peace, and Planet*".

Key Takeaways from Raisina Dialogue 2025

- Weaponisation of Trade & Economy:** India's **External Affairs Minister (EAM)** warned against the use of **trade**

sanctions, tariffs, and financial controls as geopolitical tools.

- India is reassessing trade partnerships based on **trust, transparency, and strategic alignment**, particularly in talks with the **US, EU, and UK**.

Indo-Pacific Concerns

- Quad defence leaders** raised concerns over **China's assertive maritime activities** in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- India reaffirmed its commitment to **maintaining a peaceful and secure IOR** through partnerships with **small island nations and external allies**.
- The **Philippines invited India to join the "Squad" alliance** (US, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines) to counter China's actions in the **South China Sea**.
- Digital Sovereignty:** India is cautious about **data flow, AI development, and digital trade regulations**. **Regulatory frameworks for big data and AI** are becoming **key components of India's economic diplomacy**.

UPSC PYQ

Q: Consider the following pairs: (2020)

International agreement/set-up : Subject

- Alma-Ata Declaration : Healthcare of the people
- Hague Convention : Biological and chemical weapons
- Talanoa Dialogue : Global climate change
- Under2 Coalition : Child right

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 4 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Solution: (c)

CENTRE NOTIFIES HIKE IN SALARIES OF MPS

Context

The Centre notified a 24% increase in the salaries of MPs on March 24, 2025, effective from April 1, 2023.

Legal Basis:

- The hike in the salaries and pensions was notified in exercise of the powers granted under the **Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act** on the basis of the **Cost Inflation Index** specified in the **Income Tax Act of 1961**.

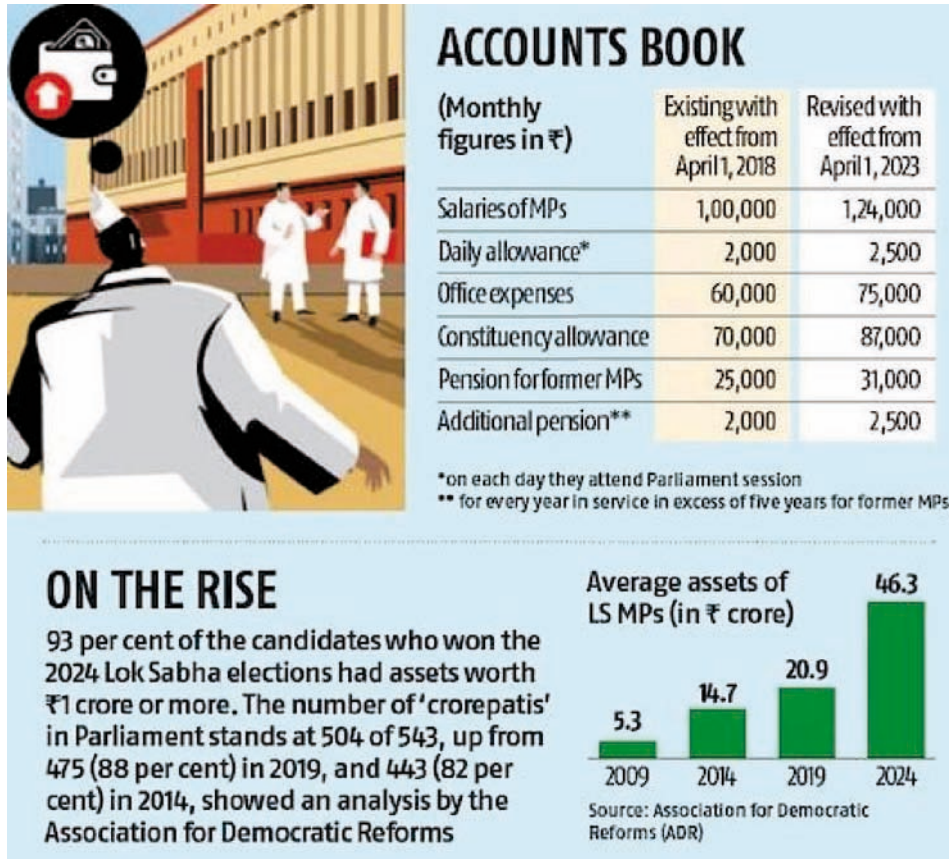


Figure: 01

Other Benefits:

- ▶ **Official Accommodation:** MPs receive rent-free housing in New Delhi during their five-year term. Those who do not take up official accommodations are eligible for a monthly housing allowance.
- ▶ Article 106 of the Constitution empowers MPs to determine their salaries and allowances by enacting laws.

- ◆ Must be an Indian citizen.
- ◆ **Age:**
- ◆ Lok Sabha: Minimum 25 years.
- ◆ Rajya Sabha: Minimum 30 years.

Additional Criteria (Representation of People Act, 1951):

- ▶ Must be a registered voter in any parliamentary constituency.
- ▶ Cannot be disqualified due to legal or mental incapacity or by other statutory conditions.
- **Oath/Affirmation:** Before taking office, MPs must swear an oath or affirm their allegiance to the Constitution. Without this, they cannot participate in parliamentary proceedings.

FACT BOX

What is a Member of Parliament (MP)?

- An MP represents the people in India's Parliament and acts as a link between the legislative and executive branches.
- **Two Houses of Parliament:**
 - ▶ **Lok Sabha (House of the People):** Directly elected by citizens; currently has 543 members.
 - ▶ **Rajya Sabha (Council of States):** Members represent states/UTs (238 elected) and 12 are nominated by the President; maximum of 250 members.

Eligibility & Qualifications

- ▶ **Basic Requirements:**

“SAMARTH” INCUBATION PROGRAM

Context

The **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT)**, an autonomous **Telecom R&D centre** under the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India**, has launched its **first cohort of the 'Samarth' Incubation Program** to foster **innovation and technological advancements in the telecom sector**.

GROSS FIXED CAPITAL FORMATION (GFCF)

Context

The share of **private capital expenditure (capex)** in India's **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)** has dropped to a ten-year low of 33 per cent in FY2024, according to a report by ICRA.

What is GFCF?

- Capital Formation is defined as that part of country's current output and imports which is not consumed or exported during the accounting period, but is set aside as an addition to its stock of capital goods.
- **Total Capital Formation** can be broadly classified into
 - Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)
 - Change in stock of raw materials, semi-finished and finished goods.
- **GFCF (Gross Fixed Capital Formation)** refers to the investment in fixed assets (like buildings, machinery, etc.) that adds to the country's productive capacity.
- **Statistics:** It makes up about 30% of India's nominal GDP. Private capex now forms only 33% of GFCF—this is the lowest in the last 10 years.
 - It is the second-largest component after private final consumption expenditure.
 - **Private Capex** refers to the portion of these investments made by private companies.

UPSC PYQ

Q: A decrease in tax to GDP ratio of a country indicates which of the following? (2015)

- (1) Slowing economic growth rate
- (2) Less equitable distribution of national income

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: (a)

EQUALISATION LEVY

Context

In a significant policy shift, the **Indian government has proposed to abolish the Equalisation Levy (EL) on online advertisements** as part of amendments to the **Finance Bill, 2025**. This move is expected to **benefit American tech giants like Google, Meta, and Amazon**, and also **ease trade tensions with the United States**, which has criticized India's digital taxation policies.

What is the Equalisation Levy (EL)?

- Introduced in **2016**, the **6% equalisation levy** was imposed on payments exceeding ₹1 lakh per year made to **non-resident service providers** for **online advertisements**.
- It aimed to create a **level playing field** between Indian digital companies and foreign tech giants that **earned revenue from India without paying direct taxes**.
- This tax is often referred to as the "**Google Tax**" because it largely affected foreign digital advertising platforms.

Why is India Removing the Levy?

- **Trade Diplomacy with the US:** In **2020**, India imposed an additional **2% equalisation levy** on **e-commerce platforms** providing services in India, which faced strong opposition from the **United States**.
 - The **US Trade Representative (USTR)** argued that India's digital tax **discriminated against American companies** and threatened retaliatory tariffs.
 - To ease tensions, India **removed the 2% EL in 2024** and is now proposing to **remove the 6% EL on online ads from April 1, 2025**.
- **OECD Global Tax Framework:** India, along with the **US and other OECD/G20 nations**, is working on a **global digital taxation framework** to replace **unilateral taxes** like the equalisation levy.
- **Significant Economic Presence (SEP) Framework:** India has introduced the **Significant Economic Presence (SEP) concept**, which allows taxation of foreign companies with a **substantial digital footprint** in India. This makes the **equalisation levy redundant** as SEP can address tax challenges more effectively.

MUNICIPAL BONDS

Context

The **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** has launched a **dedicated website for municipal bonds** to **boost transparency, investor awareness, and accessibility** in this emerging asset class.

About the Website

- The website serves as a one-stop platform for investors, policymakers, and market participants to access:
 - Municipal bond issuances – List of bonds issued by local governments.
 - Credit ratings – Helps investors assess bond safety.
 - Trading volumes & yields – Tracks bond performance and liquidity.
 - Nifty India Municipal Bond Index – Measures the overall performance of municipal bonds in India.
 - Market insights & regulations – Offers reports, guidelines, and real-time data.
- This initiative bridges the information gap in India's municipal bond market, encouraging both institutional and retail participation.

Municipal Bonds in India

- Municipal bonds are **debt instruments issued by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** to finance **urban infrastructure and development projects**, such as roads, water supply, sanitation, and smart cities.
- Despite their **importance in city financing**, municipal bonds **have not gained much popularity in India** due to factors like **lack of awareness, limited investor participation, and regulatory challenges**.
- They are governed by **SEBI guidelines** and issued by financially strong ULBs.

What are Bonds?

- A **bond** is a **fixed-income instrument** where investors lend money to an issuer (government, corporations, or municipalities) in exchange for **regular interest payments and principal repayment at maturity**.
- **Types of Bonds:**
 - ▶ **Treasury Bonds** – Issued by the government; low risk.
 - ▶ **Municipal Bonds** – Issued by city/local governments.
 - ▶ **Corporate Bonds** – Issued by companies to raise funds.
 - ▶ **Floating Rate Bonds** – Interest rate changes over time.
 - ▶ **Zero-Coupon Bonds** – No periodic interest, only principal at maturity.
 - ▶ **Convertible Bonds** – Can be converted into equity shares.
 - ▶ **Inflation-Protected Bonds** – Adjusted for inflation.

- Under 365 nanometer ultraviolet light, it emits a blue glow
 - ▶ Under 395 nanometer ultraviolet light, it emits a magenta glow
 - ▶ Under 980 nanometer infrared light, it emits an orange-red glow
 - ▶ This multi-wavelength fluorescence makes it more difficult to counterfeit.

Understanding Security Printing

- Security printing includes features that help authenticate documents and prevent counterfeiting. These features can be
 - **Visible to the Human Eye**
 - ▶ Optically variable ink, which changes color when viewed at different angles
 - ▶ Watermarks, which are embedded patterns visible when held against the light
 - ▶ Holograms, which are three-dimensional images that are difficult to duplicate
 - ▶ Security threads, which are embedded strips visible under certain conditions
 - ▶ Textured features, which are raised prints detectable by touch
 - **Detectable by Machines**
 - ▶ Ultraviolet fluorescent ink, which becomes visible under ultraviolet light
 - ▶ Invisible barcodes and digital watermarks, which are scannable security markers
 - ▶ RFID chips in passports, which allow machine-readable verification

DOUBLY SECURE INK TO THWART COUNTERFEITING

Scientists from the Institute of Nano Science and Technology in Mohali and the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Mumbai have developed a **new security ink** using **nanoparticles of strontium bismuth fluoride doped with lanthanide ions** to prevent counterfeiting.

The new Nanoparticle-Based Ink

- Scientists used a process called the **coprecipitation technique**.
- Metal salts were dissolved in a solvent.
- A precipitation agent was added while stirring.
- The solution was centrifuged to extract the nanoparticles.
- The material was blended with polyvinyl chloride ink.
- Screen printing was used to apply the ink to paper.
- **The Two-Light Trick:** Unlike conventional fluorescent inks, which glow under either ultraviolet or infrared light, this ink fluoresces under both.

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS (TB) DAY – 2025

Context

Every year, 24 March is observed as World TB Day to amplify the urgency of ending tuberculosis (TB), the world's deadliest infectious disease.

About Tuberculosis (TB)

- TB is caused by a bacterium known as *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which belongs to a family of around 200 bacteria species called *Mycobacteriaceae*.
- **Types of TB:** TB primarily affects the lungs (pulmonary TB) in humans. However, it can also affect other organs (extra-pulmonary TB).
- **Historical Context:** TB is an ancient disease, with evidence of its existence dating back to 3000 BC in Egypt.

- **Treatability:** TB is treatable and curable with appropriate medication and management.
- **Transmission:** TB spreads from person to person through the air. When individuals with lung TB cough, sneeze, or spit, they release TB germs into the air, which can be inhaled by others.
- **Treatment:** Current biomedical strategies to reduce new infections include the
 - **BCG vaccine**, which protects against severe forms of childhood TB
 - **Tuberculosis preventive treatment (TPT)** which aims to cover other household contacts, clinical-risk groups apart from children younger than five years and household contacts with HIV
 - **Effective rifamycin-based regimes**

National and international initiatives:

- National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)
- National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025)
- TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign
- TB Free India Campaign
- Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP)
- International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)
- India aims to accelerate efforts to reduce TB morbidity and mortality, with a target to eliminate TB by 2025.

BOSE METAL

Context

A team of researchers from China and Japan has found experimental evidence that **Niobium Diselenide (NbSe₂)** exhibits properties of a Bose metal.

What is a Bose Metal?

- It is a quantum state where electron pairs (Cooper pairs) form but do not transition into superconductivity.
- Unlike superconductors, Bose metals do not have zero resistance but conduct better than normal metals.
- **Key Features:**
 - **No Superconducting Transition** – Copper pairs form, but the material does not reach zero resistance.
 - **Anomalous Metallic State (AMS)** – Defies conventional theory that materials must be either superconductors or insulators at low temperatures.
 - **Intermediate Conductivity** – Conductivity lies between that of insulators and superconductors, influenced by quantum fluctuations and external conditions.
- **Applications:** Quantum Computing, Advanced Electronics, Superconductivity Research

Niobium Diselenide (NbSe₂)

- It is a type-II superconductor that allows some magnetic field penetration without losing superconductivity.

Cooper Pairs:

- It was discovered by Leon Cooper in 1956.
- In superconductors, they enable zero resistance, but in Bose metals, they do not form a superconducting state.

SONIC WEAPONS

Context

The Serbian government has denied allegations that its police used sonic weapons to disperse anti-government protesters.

What are Sonic Weapons?

- Sonic weapons use amplified sound waves to control crowds or disable targets. The United States first used them in Iraq in 2004.
- **Types of Sonic Weapons:**
 - **Long-Range Acoustic Device (LRAD)** – Produces sounds up to 160 decibels, causing hearing damage and discomfort.
 - **Mosquito** – Emits high-pitched sounds affecting only younger individuals (under 30).
 - **Infrasonic Weapons** – Use low-frequency sounds to cause pain and disorientation.

Serbia and Kosovo Conflict

- Serbia is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe.
- Kosovo declared independence in 2008, but Serbia does not recognize its sovereignty.

SATELLITE-BASED TOLLING

Context

The Union government has decided to put on hold the rollout of a satellite-based highway toll collection system that could eventually pave the way for fare booths to be removed.

What is the new proposed highway tolling system?

- The global navigation satellite system uses a large constellation of satellites to provide more accurate location and navigation information to users globally as compared to the GPS alone.
- The new system's implementation will involve an **On-Board Unit (OBU)**, or a tracking device, fitted inside a vehicle whose location can be mapped using

- The co-ordinates of the entire length of the country's national highways will have to be logged with the help of digital image processing, and software will be used to assign the toll rate on a particular highway, calculate the toll amount for a vehicle as per the distance travelled by it and then deduct it from a wallet linked to the OBU.
- The system will additionally have gantries, or arches mounted with CCTV cameras, at various points on a highway for enforcement purposes.
- These will capture an image of the vehicle's high security registration plate and cross verify if a road user is trying to trick the system by either removing the tracking device or travelling without an OBU onboard.



FACT BOX

GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN)

- It is a Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS) implemented jointly with Airport Authority of India (AAI).
- The main objectives of GAGAN are to provide **Satellite-based Navigation** services with accuracy and integrity required for civil aviation applications and to provide better Air Traffic Management over Indian Airspace.
- At present, the most widely used GNSS is the **American global positioning system (GPS)**.
- The Indian alternative to the GPS, known as the **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)** is fully operational.
 - ▶ IRNSS, also known as NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation), has till now sent up 11 satellites but a number of these have suffered malfunctions, making it far from fully ready till now.
 - ▶ Relying on the Indian system will pose a crucial benefit:
 - ◆ IRNSS is expected to be accurate down to 3m, compared to roughly 30m of the GPS system when used in India.
 - ◆ NavIC using dual frequencies (L5 and S bands) is expected to work better in equatorial countries like India than GPS.

GLOBAL GLACIER LOSS

Context

A new UNESCO report, "**The United Nations World Water Development Report 2025 – Mountains and Glaciers: Water Towers,**" highlights the alarming rate of changes in mountain ecosystems due to global warming. Released on **March 21** to mark the **first-ever World Day for Glaciers**, the report details how rising temperatures are drastically altering mountain landscapes.

Key Findings

- Since 1975, glaciers (excluding Greenland and Antarctica) have lost over **9,000 billion tonnes of ice**—equivalent to a 25-meter-thick ice block covering Germany.
- **Wildfires and dust storms** are accelerating melting by depositing **black carbon** and **particulate matter** on glaciers, making them absorb more heat.
- In 2024 alone, glaciers lost **450 gigatons** of mass, with regions such as **Scandinavia and North Asia** experiencing record-breaking losses.
- Glacier melt contributes to **25-30% of global sea-level rise**. Between 2006 and 2016, glacier mass loss led to an increase of **1 mm in sea level per year**, potentially exposing **300,000 people annually** to flooding.
- **Accelerating Permafrost Thaw:** Permafrost, the permanently frozen ground, is melting at an increased rate, releasing large amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere and exacerbating climate change.
 - ▶ Mountain permafrost stores 4.5% of global soil organic carbon, and its thawing contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.
 - ▶ Thawing permafrost destabilizes landscapes, increasing the risk of landslides and infrastructure collapse.
- **Declining Snow Cover:** Snow cover in most mountain regions has declined, particularly during spring and summer, and is projected to shrink further.
- **Erratic Snowfall Patterns:** The elevation at which snowfall occurs is shifting upwards due to warming.

Why Does This Matter?

- Around **2 billion people** depend on mountain water from glaciers. If glaciers continue to melt at the current rate, water supply from these "water towers" will become erratic, affecting agriculture, drinking water, and hydropower.
- Melting glaciers and permafrost thaw increase the likelihood of **glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs)**—sudden and destructive floods caused by the collapse of natural ice dams.
- In the past 200 years, GLOFs have resulted in **over 12,000 deaths** and severe damage to infrastructure, homes, and farmlands.

Key Concepts

- **Glacier Mass Balance** is the balance between snow accumulation and ice melt determines whether a glacier is growing or shrinking. A negative mass balance (more melting than accumulation) leads to glacier retreat.
- **Permafrost and Carbon Release:** Permafrost is permanently frozen ground that stores vast amounts of organic carbon. As it thaws, carbon is released in the form of methane (CH₄) and carbon dioxide (CO₂), intensifying global warming.

- **Albedo Effect:** The albedo effect refers to the ability of a surface to reflect sunlight. Fresh snow has a high albedo, reflecting most sunlight, whereas darker surfaces absorb heat.
- **Black carbon:** Black carbon from pollution and wildfires reduces albedo, increasing glacier melt rates.
- **Snowpack:** Snowpack is the seasonal accumulation of snow that gradually melts to provide freshwater.
- **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs):** These occur when glacial lakes, formed by melting ice, suddenly burst due to dam failure. GLOFs cause flash floods, landslides, and destruction in downstream communities.

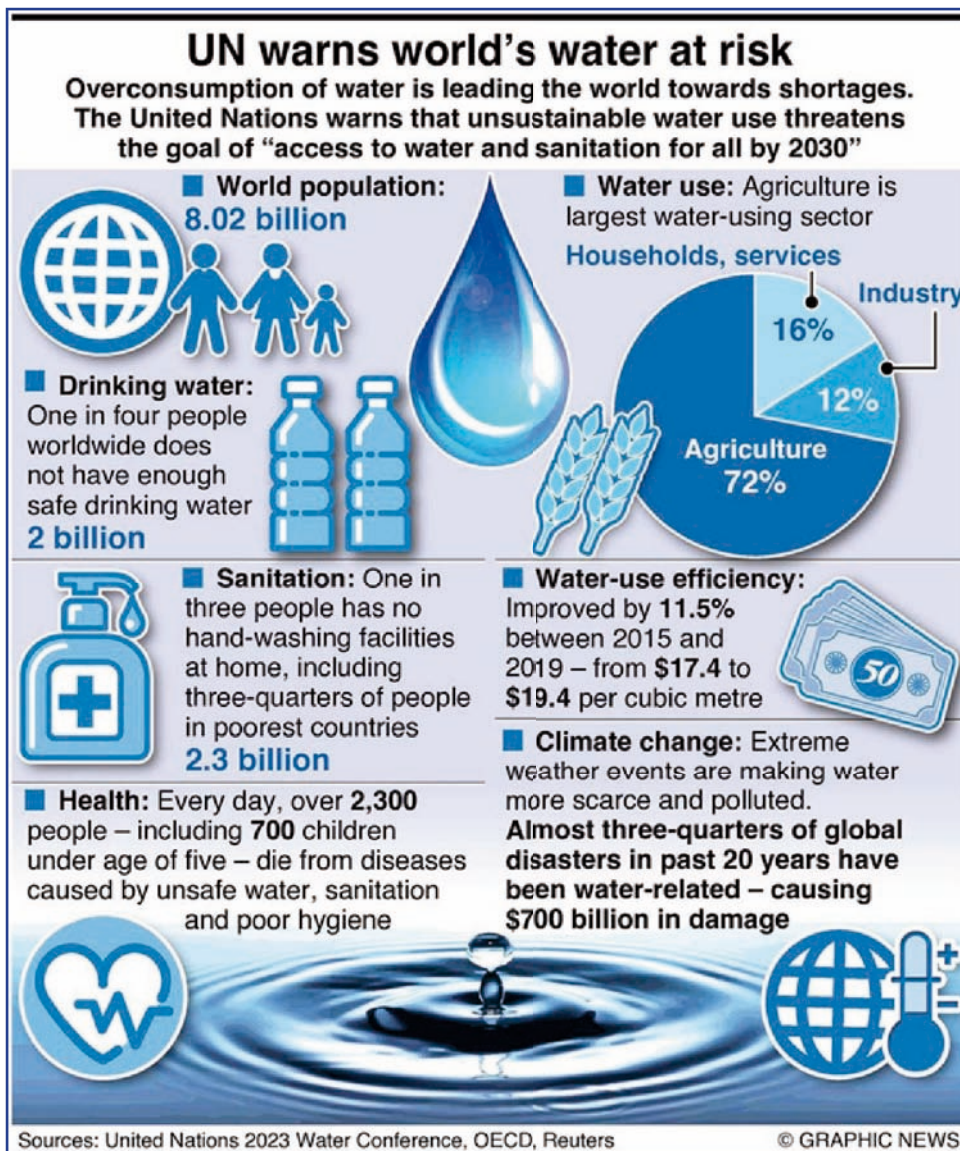
About

- The day was established by the United Nations in 1992, during the world Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.
- The celebration is closely linked to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which aims to ensure water and sanitation for all by 2030.
- Currently, around 2.2 billion people lack access to clean and safe drinking water.
- **Theme 2025:** Glacier Preservation
- **Concerned Findings:**
 - Since 1975, glaciers worldwide (excluding the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets) have lost over 9,000 billion tons of ice—an amount that would form a 25-meter-thick ice sheet over Germany.
 - According the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS), five of the past six years have recorded the fastest glacier retreat on record.

WORLD WATER DAY

Context

World Water Day is held every year on 22 March to raise awareness of global freshwater challenges and solutions.



- ▶ The period from 2022 to 2024 saw the largest three-year loss of glacier mass ever documented. The year 2024 marked the third consecutive year of net glacier mass loss in all 19 monitored regions.
- ▶ Glacier melt is now the second-largest contributor to rising sea levels, following ocean warming. Between 2000 and 2023, glaciers lost 6,542 billion tons of ice—causing an 18 mm rise in sea level.
- ▶ In 2010, the United Nations recognised the human right to water and sanitation, stating that everyone has the right to sufficient, safe, acceptable, and affordable water for personal and domestic use.

According to the NITI Aayog report, nearly 600 million Indians face high-to-extreme water stress, with around 200,000 people dying annually due to inadequate access to safe water.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS

Context

Every year on March 21, the world celebrates the International Day of Forests to celebrate all types of forests, recognize the importance of trees and forests, and take action to protect them.

About

- Forests cover about 31% of the Earth's land. They are home to 80% of terrestrial species, from plants to animals.
- In year 2012, the United Nations declared March 21 as the International Day of Forests (IDF) to celebrate and raise awareness about the vital role of forests.
- **Theme 2025:** "Forests and Food," which emphasizes the deep connection between forests and global food security.



FACT BOX

India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023,

- **Total Forest and Tree Cover:** As of 2023, India's total forest and tree cover stands at 827,357 sq km, or 17% of the total geographical area, marking a net increase of 1,445 sq km from 2021.
- **Forest Cover:** The forest cover alone has grown from 713,789 sq km in 2021 to 715,343 sq km in 2023, now covering 76% of the geographical area.
- **Tree Cover:** India's tree cover increased by 1,289 sq km, reaching 41% of the total geographical area.

◦ Carbon Stock and Sequestration:

- ▶ **Carbon Sink:** India has created an additional 29 billion tonnes of carbon sink compared to 2005 levels, contributing significantly to its climate goals.
- ▶ **Carbon Stock:** The total carbon stock in India's forests and tree cover in 2023 is estimated at 7,285.5 million tonnes, an increase of 5 million tonnes since 2021.
- ▶ By 2030, India aims to increase its carbon stock to 71 billion tonnes through enhanced forest and tree cover as part of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

◦ Bamboo and Forest Cover Details:

India's bamboo-bearing area is now estimated at 154,670 sq km, marking a 5,227 sq km increase from 2021.

▶ State-wise Performance:

- ◆ Chhattisgarh (+684 sq km), Uttar Pradesh (+559 sq km), Odisha (+559 sq km), and Rajasthan (+394 sq km) saw the largest increases in combined forest and tree cover.
- ◆ Mizoram, Gujarat, and Odisha recorded the highest gains in forest cover.

▶ Forest Cover in Hill and Northeastern Regions:

- ▶ **Hill Districts:** India's hill districts have a total forest cover of 283,713 sq km, which constitutes 40% of the geographical area in these regions. The forest cover in these districts increased by 14 sq km.
- ▶ **Northeast Region:** The northeastern region, which has a total forest and tree cover of 174,394.7 sq km (67% of the region's geographical area), saw a decrease of 3 sq km in forest cover.

◦ Other Key Findings:

- ▶ **Mangrove Cover:** India's total mangrove cover stands at 4,991.68 sq km, with a slight decrease of 43 sq km since 2021.
- ▶ **Western Ghats and Eastern States:** There is an overall loss of 22 sq km in the Western Ghats and Eastern States Area (WGESA), despite gains in very dense forests.
- ▶ While the overall area of very dense forests increased by 3,465.12 sq km, moderately dense and open forests saw a decline of 1,043.23 sq km and 2,480.11 sq km, respectively, over the past decade.

Forest Conservation Schemes/ Initiatives

- **National Agroforestry Scheme** aims to encourage farmers to adopt agroforestry for climate resilience, environmental conservation, and economic benefits.
- **Green India Mission (GIM)** also known as National Mission for a Green India, is a key part of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). It is one of the eight missions under NAPCC. The mission aims to protect, restore, and enhance India's forest cover while tackling climate change.

- **Forest Fire Prevention & Management** is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** that supports states and Union Territories in preventing and controlling forest fires. The Ministry provides financial assistance to help implement various fire prevention and management measures.
- **Van Dhan Yojana:** Launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED, the **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)** aims to improve the livelihood of tribal communities by enhancing the value of forest produce. The scheme helps tribal gatherers become entrepreneurs through skill training, infrastructure support, and market linkages.

- ▶ The Society was started by a dedicated conservationist Mohammed Dilawar.
- ▶ He was named by the Time as one of the "Heroes of the Environment" in 2008.
- The first World Sparrow Day was organised in **2010**.
- In 2011, the **World Sparrow Awards** were established.
 - ▶ The award recognises persons who have made significant contributions to environmental conservation and ordinary species protection.
- The day aims to raise awareness and protect the common house sparrows, which are not so commonly seen now due to increasing noise pollution.

UPSC PYQ

Q: At the national level, which ministry is the nodal agency to ensure effective implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006? (2021)

- (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- (b) Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- (c) Ministry of Rural Development
- (d) Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Solution: (d)

Q: A particular State in India has the following characteristics: (2012)

- (1) It is located on the same latitude which passes through northern Rajasthan.
- (2) It has over 80% of its area under forest cover.
- (3) Over 12% of forest cover constitutes the Protected Area Network in this State.

Which one among the following States has all the above characteristics?

- (a) Arunachal Pradesh (b) Assam
- (c) Himachal Pradesh (d) Uttarakhand

Solution: (a)

About the Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

- The sparrow, especially the common house sparrow, is one of the most **ubiquitous birds** on earth and is also one of the oldest companions of human beings.
- House sparrows belong to a group known as **passerines**, from the order
- These small, grey-brown birds are **sexually dimorphic**, meaning that the males and females do not look similar.
- They are highly opportunistic feeders.
 - ▶ Height: 16 centimeter
 - ▶ Wingspan: 21 centimeter
 - ▶ Weight: 25-40 grams
- **IUCN Status:** Endangered

TARGETED CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Context

A global study published in **PLOS Biology** has revealed the significant impact of targeted conservation efforts in preventing the extinction of numerous animal species. The study highlights how species-specific conservation actions have led to positive changes in the status of various species, showing that well-planned, focused interventions can indeed turn the tide in the fight against global biodiversity loss.

How Have Targeted Conservation Efforts Impacted Global Biodiversity?

- **Direct Impact:**
 - ▶ Nearly 99.3% of species that improved in the IUCN Red List category since 1980 benefited from conservation actions.
 - ▶ Among 969 species with increasing populations, 78.3% had active conservation interventions in place.
- **Species-Specific Outcomes:**
- **Iberian Lynx:** From a near extinction crisis, the Iberian lynx population has grown from just a few hundred to several thousand individuals through targeted breeding programs and habitat management.

WORLD SPARROW DAY

Context

World Sparrow Day (WSD) is celebrated every year on March 20th.

About World Sparrow Day:

- World Sparrow Day is an initiative started by the **Nature Forever Society of India** along with the **Eco-Sys Action Foundation of France**.

- **Kākāpō:** The critically endangered nocturnal parrot of New Zealand, the kākāpō, saw recovery thanks to intensive monitoring and predator control measures.
- **European Bison:** This species was hunted to extinction in the wild during the early 20th century but is now thriving in parts of Eastern Europe through successful reintroduction programs.
- **Whales:** Populations of humpback and blue whales, which were decimated by commercial whaling, have rebounded significantly following the international moratorium on whaling.

- **Pangolin Conservation Efforts:** The Maharashtra forest department has introduced a dedicated action plan for pangolin conservation. These shy creatures are listed under Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, ensuring they receive the highest degree of protection.
- **Project Cheetah (2022):** After being extinct in India for over 70 years, cheetahs have been reintroduced in Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. The first cheetah birth in India's wild was recorded in 2023.

India's Species-Specific Conservation Programme

- **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH-2008):** Approved for continuation during the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021–26), this program strengthens conservation efforts for critically endangered species through captive breeding, habitat restoration, and community participation.
- **Species Recovery Programme:** This program prioritizes 22 species, including 16 terrestrial and 6 aquatic, for focused conservation efforts. Some of the key projects include:
 - ▶ **Project Tiger (1973):** A flagship initiative focused on the conservation of tigers in India.
 - ▶ **Project Elephant (1992):** Launched to ensure the protection and conservation of elephants in India.
 - ▶ **Project Lion & Project Cheetah:** These projects aim to protect Asiatic lions and reintroduce cheetahs into the wild after their extinction in India in 1952.
- **Project Crocodile (1975):** Initiated by the UN and the Government of India, this project boosted crocodile populations, particularly in Bhitarkanika, where the saltwater crocodile population increased from 95 individuals in 1975 to 1,811.
- **Sea Turtle Conservation Project (1999):** Focusing on the conservation of Olive Ridley turtles and other sea turtles, particularly in Odisha, this project has been instrumental in protecting nesting sites.
- **Vulture Conservation Plan (2020-25):** Launched to address the decline in vulture populations due to the widespread use of Diclofenac, a harmful drug, this plan seeks to minimize its use and prevent vulture deaths from poisoned carcasses. The Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Haryana plays a key role in supporting vulture recovery efforts.
- **Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (2005):** This project aims to increase the population of the Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros in Assam. The rhino population in Kaziranga National Park now exceeds 2,600 individuals (as of 2022).

RAMADEVARA BETTA VULTURE SANCTUARY

Context

A rare and exciting sighting of the Indian Long-Billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*) at the Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary in Karnataka has underscored the success of protected area-based conservation efforts.

Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary:

- The Sanctuary is located in the Ramadevara Betta Hill Range, Ramanagara, Karnataka.
- It was established in 2012 as India's first and only vulture sanctuary.
- It was notified as an Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) in 2017 to protect endangered vulture species.
- It is home to three vulture species found in India:
 - ▶ Indian Long-Billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*)
 - ▶ Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)
 - ▶ White-Backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*)

Indian Long-Billed Vulture:

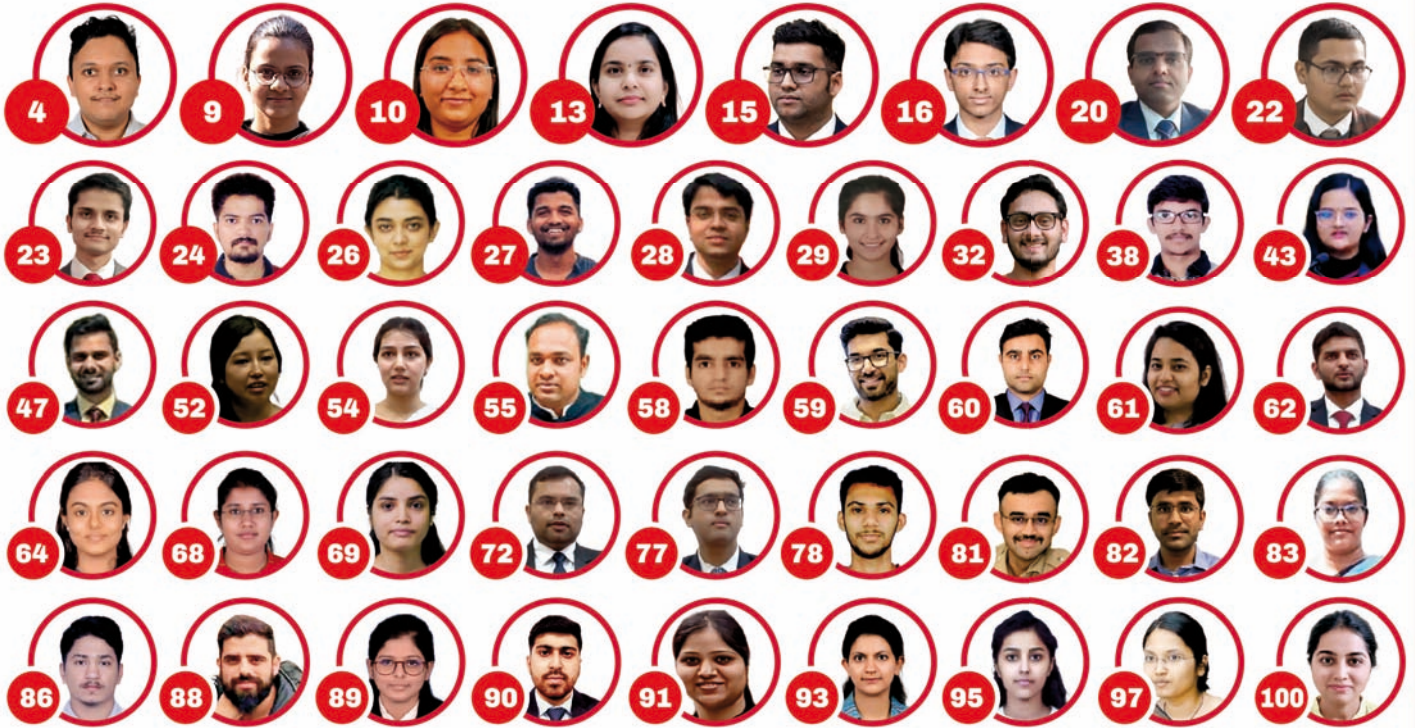
- **Scientific Name:** *Gyps indicus*
- **Size:** Medium-sized, bulky scavenger.
- **Habitat:** Prefers open landscapes near villages, cities, and cultivated areas.
- **Diet:** Feeds primarily on animal carcasses.
- **Range:** Native to India, Pakistan, and Nepal.
- **Population Decline:** 97-99% decline due to poisoning from diclofenac, a veterinary drug.
- **IUCN Status:** Critically Endangered.





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