

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## WEEKLY

WEEK: 2

APRIL  
2022

### MAINS

GS-II

- BILL INTRODUCED IN LOK SABHA TO BAN FUNDING OF 'WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION'
- CJI FIELDS FOR A SINGLE PROBE AGENCY
- STATUS OF DE-NOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES
- SC REPEALS 'VANNIYAR QUOTA ACT'
- NEW ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES TO USE UNIVERSAL DESIGN APPROACH
- THE IDEA OF TWITTER GOVERNANCE
- CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) BILL, 2022

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- INDIA AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP TRADE AGREEMENT
- MIYAWAKI FORESTS, A SUSTAINABLE WAY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION
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- IDEX INITIATIVE

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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)**

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**CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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# BILL INTRODUCED IN LOK SABHA TO BAN FUNDING OF 'WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION'

## CONTEXT:

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar introduced the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022, in Lok Sabha that seeks to prohibit the financing of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

## What are Weapons of Mass Destruction?

### Vocabulary history

The expression "weapon of mass destruction" (WMD) is usually considered to have been used first by the leader of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1937 to refer to the aerial bombing of civilians in the Basque town of Guernica by German and Italian fascists in support of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War.

- A weapon of mass destruction is a nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological, or other device that is intended to harm a large number of people.
  - Examples** include missiles or nuclear bombs, but as evident in the 9/11 terror attacks, even passenger jets can also be used as WMDs.

- Biological weapons** are defined as - 'microbial or other biological agents, or toxins that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes'.
- Chemical weapons** are defined as - the toxic chemicals and their precursors - used for activities other than the listed ones such as industrial, agricultural use, protective and military use.

## Key-highlights of the Bill

- The proposed bill focuses more on the financial bit of activities supporting WMDs and fits the missing block in fulfilling India's international obligations by adhering to the recommendations of the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** and **United Nations Security Council's targeted financial sanctions against financing of WMDs**.
- It seeks to **ban funding of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)** and **empowers the Centre to freeze and seize financial assets of people involved in such activities**.
- It also fulfils India's **international obligations** pertaining to weapons of mass destruction.

- The Bill seeks to insert a new **Section 12A** in the existing law which states that "no person shall finance any activity which is prohibited under this Act, or under the **United Nations (Security Council) Act, 1947** or any other relevant Act for the time being in force, or by an order issued under any such Act, in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems".
- It proposes to "**prohibit any person from making funds, financial assets or economic resources** or related services available for the benefit of persons related to any activity which is prohibited under this Act."

## What is the need of the Bill?

- The bill has been introduced now because "there is a need to amend the said act to provide against the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems so as to fulfil our international obligations,".
- The bill's statement of objectives and reasons says that in recent times, regulations relating to the proliferation of WMDs and their delivery systems by international organisations have expanded.
- The **earlier law of 2005 regarding WMDs and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) only banned their manufacture**.
- The existing Act (Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005) **does not cover the financial aspect of WMD delivery systems** and inclusion of new provisions was essential to meet India's international obligations.

## Control over use of WMDs

- The use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons is regulated by a number of **international treaties and agreements**.
- Among them are the
- Geneva Protocol, 1925**, that banned the use of chemical and biological weapons
- Biological Weapons Convention, 1972**, and **Chemical Weapons Convention, 1992**, which put comprehensive bans on the biological and chemical weapons respectively.

## Objects and Reasons of the Bill



Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities)

Amendment Bill will align India with global requirements

**Bill seeks to insert a new Section 12A in the existing law which states that 'no person shall finance any activity which is prohibited under this Act, or under the United Nations (Security Council) Act, 1947, or any other relevant Act for the time being in force, or by an order issued under any such Act, in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems'**

**The original Act, passed in 2005, only banned manufacture of weapons of mass destruction**

**"In recent times, regulations relating to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems by international organisations have expanded... There is a need to amend the said Act to provide against the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems so as to fulfil our international obligations"**

**S Jaishankar**  
External Affairs Minister



- India has signed and ratified both the 1972 and 1992 treaties.
- There are very few non-signatory countries to these treaties, even though several countries have been accused of non-compliance.

- The use and proliferation of nuclear weapons is regulated by treaties such as
  - Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)
  - Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

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# CJI FIELDS FOR A SINGLE PROBE AGENCY

## CONTEXT:

The Chief Justice of India recently spoke in favour of the country having one umbrella investigating body.

### What did the Chief Justice of India say?

- While speaking at a memorial lecture the Chief Justice of India said that the working methodology of CBI has **raised doubts regarding its credibility**.
- The CJI expressed the **need to break the nexus** between investigating agencies and the political executives.
- He also pitched the **idea of creating a single statutory body** which will serve as an **umbrella organization for all central investigating organisations** like CBI, Enforcement Directorate, Serious Fraud Investigation Office etc.

#### Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is a premier investigating police agency in India.
- It serves as the main agency of the Central Government and is responsible for a wide variety of criminal and national security matters.
- It was established on April 1, 1963, and draws its power from the Special Police Force (SPE).
- Later on, it was brought under the **Home Ministry of Government of India**.

#### Enforcement Directorate (ED)

- Directorate of Enforcement is a specialized financial investigation agency under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, which enforces the following laws: -
  - **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)** - A Civil Law, with officers empowered to conduct investigations into suspected contraventions of the Foreign Exchange Laws and Regulations, adjudicate, contraventions, and impose penalties on those adjudged to have contravened the law.
  - **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)** - A Criminal Law, with the officers empowered to conduct investigations to trace assets derived out of the proceeds of crime, to provisionally attach/ confiscate the same, and to arrest and prosecute the offenders found to be involved in Money Laundering.

#### Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)

- Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) is a fraud investigation agency set up to solve serious, complex frauds under the **Companies Act, 2013**.
- It is a statutory institution meant to resolve frauds in the central services and others.

### Why is the CBI in favour of creating an umbrella investigating agency?

- According to the CBI setting up an umbrella investigating agency **will end multiplicity of proceedings**.
- This, as per the CJI, will also save the probe agencies from being blamed as **tools of political harassment**.

### What are the merits in the proposition of a single investigating agency made by CJI?

- CJI is correct in saying that an umbrella investigating agency **will terminate the problem of multiple agencies** probing the same act from different perspectives of law.

An example to the situation is the Harshad Mehta case, where CBI investigated the matter from the point of view of stock market manipulation and the ED probed it from the viewpoint of money laundering.

- This causes **jurisdictional havoc** and results in **turf war** between the agencies.
- The above situation also may lead to and has led to in the past to **prolonging trial**.
- Unification of agencies will make investigation by single entity possible with all aspects of the case taken into consideration by it.

### Is creation of single probe agency advisable?

- Setting up a single agency may lead to **concentration of all investigating powers in the hands of a single agency** and individuals administering that agency.



- **Independence** of such a unified probe agency from the influence of political executives **cannot be guaranteed** just because it is a statutory body.

It has to be remembered that even CBI is a statutory body but has been termed as "Parrot of Executive" by the Supreme Court itself.

- In fact collaboration between a unified agency and the executive government may harm the democratic fabric of this country even more.
- Existence of multiple investigating organizations is also due to the fact that they **specialize** in probing specific types of crime.
- Merger of all the agencies may lead to **dilution of such specialization** and hence the same is not advisable.

#### What has to be done?

- Severing the connections between central investigating agencies and political executives can only happen over the period of time.
- For the above to happen it is important for the personnel of such agencies to see **career benefits of serving the country with fear or favour.**
- **Better coordination** between different agencies can be established through regular seminars and interaction making it easy for them to investigate the same act from their respective jurisdictional perspective in a much smoother way.

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## STATUS OF DE-NOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES

### CONTEXT:

A standing committee of Parliament has criticised the functioning of the development programme for de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

#### About the terms:

- **Denotified tribes** are communities that were 'notified' as being 'born criminal' during the British regime under a series of laws starting with the **Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871**.
  - **After India gained Independence**, these tribes were '**de-notified**' from the list of Criminal Tribes, and, hence, the term.
  - The CTA was repealed and the **Habitual Offenders Act (HOA)** was enacted in various States.
  - Currently, a variant of the HOA Model Bill as proposed by the Union Government stands enforced in 10 States across the country, having been enacted in many more.
- **Nomadic and semi-nomadic** communities are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living at one place all the time.

#### Steps taken by Government:

- A **National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was constituted in 2006**.
  - It was headed by **Balkrishna Sidram Renke** and submitted its report in June **2008**.
  - The report stated that, "It is an irony that these tribes somehow escaped the attention of our Constitution makers and thus got deprived of the Constitutional support unlike Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."
  - The Renke commission estimated **their population** at around **10.74 crore** based on Census 2001.
- A **new Commission** constituted in February **2014** to prepare a state-wise list, which submitted its report in January, 2018, **identified 1,262 communities as de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic**.

- The government set up the **Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC)** under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** under the aegis of **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** for the purpose of implementing welfare programmes.
  - The DWBDNC was constituted in February, **2019** under the chairmanship of **Bhiku Ramji Idate**.
- Also, a committee has been set up by the **NITI Aayog** to complete the process of **identification of the de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities (DNCs)**.
- **Ethnographic studies of DNCs** are being conducted by the **Anthropological Survey of India**, with a budget of Rs 2.26 crore sanctioned.

#### Standing committee report:

The Committee noted that:

- At present **269 such Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities** are specified and a survey is now in under process to place these castes in SC, ST and BC categories.
- The Scheme for economic empowerment of DNT communities formulated to provide coaching, health insurance, facilitate livelihood and financial assistance for construction of homes for the members of DNT, with total outlays of **Rs 200 crore** for the period of five years **from 2021-22 to 2025-26**.
  - However, the **DWBDNC could not spend even a single rupee in 2021-22**.
- The budgetary allocation has been reduced to **Rs 28 crore for 2022-23** against the budgetary allocation of Rs 50 crore for 2021-22.
- The DWBDNC has not been able to take any decision till date hence they would like the Department to take necessary action in this regard so that these castes are placed either under SCs, STs or BCs and avail benefits.

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## SC REPEALS 'VANNIYAR QUOTA ACT'

### CONTEXT:

The Supreme Court has recently repealed the Tamil Nadu special reservation Act of 2021, also known as the 'Vanniyar quota Act'.

This judgement has led the Government to overview the present quota system followed by the States and its related validity.

#### What is Reservation?

- **Reservation** is a system of **affirmative action** in India that provides historically disadvantaged groups representation in **education, employment and politics**.
- Based on provisions in the Indian Constitution, it allows the Union Government and also the States and Territories of India to **set reserved quotas or seats**, which lower the qualifications needed in **exams, job openings** and etc. for "**socially and educationally backward citizens**".
- Reservation is primarily given to all 4 groups: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Economically Weaker Section, abbreviated as SC, ST, OBC, EWS respectively.

- ▶ In **1954**, the Ministry of Education suggested that 20 percent of places should be reserved for the SCs and STs in **educational institutions** with a provision to relax minimum qualifying marks for admission by **5 percent** wherever required.
- ▶ A significant change began in **1979** when the **Mandal Commission** or the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Commission was established to assess the situation of the socially and educationally backward classes.
- ▶ In **2019** the government announces the **10% reservation in educational institutions and government jobs for economically weaker section** of the general category.

#### Historical background

- **Before Independence:** the quota system in India has started during the British India.
  - ▶ **Rajarshi shahu**, maharaja of princely state of Kolhapur, introduced the reservation in favour of non-Brahmins and backward classes in 1902.
  - ▶ In **1918**, **raja nalvardi krishnaraja wadiyar** created committee to implement reservations for non-Brahmins in government jobs and education.
  - ▶ In **Government of India Act of 1909**, element of reservation has been introduced by British government.
  - ▶ **By communal Award**, separate representation was to be provided for Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo Indians and Europeans.
  - ▶ This was forced by **Poona pact in 1932**.
- **After Independence:** After the independence of India in 1947 there were some major initiatives in favour of the STs, SCs and after the 1980s in favour of OBCs (Other Backward Castes) and in 2019 for poor in the general category. The country's affirmative action program was launched in 1950 as one of the oldest such programme in the world.

#### Mandal commission on backward classes

- Mandal Commission was set up in **1979** January by **Morarji Desai government** to identify the socially or educationally backward classes to consider the question of seat reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination, and **used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness**.
- It was chaired by **B. P. Mandal**. The commission submitted the report to the president on **December 30, 1980**. It **recommended 27% reservation quota for OBC** resulting in total 49.5% quota in government jobs and public universities.
- The commission did not have exact population figures for the OBCs and so used data from the **1931 census**, thus estimating the group's population **at 52 percent**.

#### Constitutional provisions for reservation

- **Article 15(4):** Nothing in clause (2) of the **Article 29** shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially, and educationally backward classes of citizens of or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

- **Article 46** of the Constitution states that "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."
- The Supreme Court of India ruled in **1992** that reservations could **not exceed 50 %** anything above which it judged would violate equal access as **guaranteed by the Constitution**. It thus put a cap on reservations.

### Reservation schemes in India and related concerns

- **In Employment:** Government and public sector will hire job seekers based on reservation percentage from two different categories (a) **reservation category** (SC, ST, OBC, EWC and other minorities) (b) **Open category** (General, SC, ST, OBC, EWC and other minorities).
  - ▶ Major priority is given to reservation category including **33% reservation** for **women** priority in hiring is given by Other Minorities women, ST women, SC women, ST Men, SC Men, OBC women, OBC Men, EWC Women, EWC Men and then after Open category Will be considered.
  - ▶ In 1993, the Supreme Court ruling the **Indra sawhey case**, said that reservations in job promotions are "unconstitutional" and not in accordance with the political constitution but allowed its continuation for five years.
  - ▶ **Haryanastate employment of local candidate bill, 2020-** The Act provides private sector employers to reserve **75% of job posts** for candidates who are **domiciled in the state of Haryana**. The other states i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Telangana, have recently implemented reservations for the local candidate's employment in the **public as well as the private sector**.
- **In education:** In India student aids are available for—SCs, STs, BCs, OBCs, women, Muslims, and other minorities. Only about **0.7% of student aids in India** is based on merit, given the grossly inadequate representation of above-mentioned categories in employment and education due to historic, societal and cultural reasons.
- In Tamil Nadu, OBC reservation is divided into 26.5% Backward Caste, 3.5 Backward Caste and 20% Most Backward Caste and 10.5% sub quota for Vanniyars.
- The Act had envisaged the distribution of the 20% quota for Most Backward Classes (MBC) and De-notified Communities (DNCs) in education and public employment by assigning 10.5% to Vanniyars or the Vanniyakula Kshatriya community, 7% for 25 MBCs and 68 DNCs, and 2.5% for the remaining 22 MBCs.
- The Supreme Court has rightly **quashed the Tamil Nadu Special Reservation Act of 2021, or the Vanniyar quota law**, on the ground that it was not based on updated quantifiable data.
- **In States:** The reservation percentage for states has been raised to 49.5% by including an additional 27% reservation for OBCs.
  - ▶ Government of Andhra Pradesh introduced a law enabling 4 percent reservations for Muslims in 2004. This law was upheld by the Supreme Court in an interim order in 2010 but it constituted a **Constitution bench** to look further into the issue.

### Need of the Hour

- **Adequate law for reservation criteria-** India needs a comprehensive law for reservation quota allocation for different backward classes.
- **For States-** the states must overview their reservation criteria for backwardness and categorization of castes and the provisions should be justifiable **in the court of law**.
- **The role of Judiciary-** the role of Supreme Court and other courts are crucial for scrutinizing the law made regarding the reservation criteria in different states for providing adequate help to the needy (**SC, ST, OBC and EWS**).
- **Formation of committee at central and state levels-** formation of committee will bring transparency and will reduce the judicial burden for checking the reservations system in India.
- **Collection of proper data and Updation-** the census based on socio-economic data must be revised regularly for providing help to the real beneficiary.

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## NEW ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES TO USE UNIVERSAL DESIGN APPROACH

### CONTEXT:

Notification of guidelines, to be issued in the near future, by the Central Government that will make access to buildings more universal.

#### What are the guidelines about?

- The Union Government will very soon notify the **Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility, 2021**.
- This guidelines will help make the entry and movement in a building **accessible to all**.
- This framework will help with the swift implementation of the guidelines **in all new and retrofitting construction** work so that the problem of non-accessibility becomes the thing of past.
- These guidelines **will be shared** with the State governments and city administrations for being implemented.
- **Ramps, grab rails and other facilities** for persons with disabilities (PwD) would be built under the above guidelines.
- Attention would also be paid to **cleanliness** of the building premises as the same also becomes a reason for people not accessing the compound.
- The abovementioned guidelines have been prepared by a team of **Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee and National Institute of Urban Affairs**.

**National Institute of Urban Affairs:** It is an institute for research, training and information dissemination in urban development and management. It works as a think tank for Union Ministry of Urban Affairs.

#### Why are these guidelines needed?

- Equality to access of premises falls under the broader realm of Right to Equality mentioned in **Article 15** and Right to live with dignity as mentioned in **Article 21** of the Indian Constitution.
- It is important to remember that **accessibility is not an option, it is a necessity** and should be mandatory to transcend all forms for age, ability and gender.
- Buildings that are accessible are important because it allows for **more equal**, and hopefully equitable, **access for people** with various abilities.
- By not providing equal access to a premises a **person's true potential** in academics, corporate world etc. **may not be achieved** which ultimately would affect the whole of society.
- Hence it is imperative that the built environment is inherently **accessible to all**.

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# THE IDEA OF TWITTER GOVERNANCE

## CONTEXT:

Telangana government providing governance to the people of state using twitter as the medium of interaction.

### What is twitter governance?

- The state government of Telangana has started using **twitter as a forum for grievance redressal**.
- People of the state have been using twitter to **raise issues with the Telangana government** concerning health, education, cleanliness etc. and the same are addressed at the earliest by the officials and notified to the aggrieved individuals.

**Twitter:** It is a microblogging and social networking service on which users post and interact with messages known as "tweets".

### How effective has this initiative been?

- People reaching out to the state government through the above route to a large extend have been **receiving the required assistance**.
- The method was seen to be **effective during the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of Covid**, as state government could reach out to those sending SOS due to migrant and food crises in the state.



### What are the merits of using social media to reach government?

- Using social media to make one's grievances heard by the government is **easy and cost effective**.
- The only equipment required for the same are a **smartphone and internet** connection.
- Due to the **increase in the digital workforce** of government, it is more likely that the grievance would be received and addressed to the concerned department for appropriate action to be taken.

- There is almost **negligible time lag in the process** of grievance being send and it reaching the government.
- People may therefore reach the government and the vice-versa **without brick and mortal apparatus** of administration coming in to play.
- The above therefore is truly creating the scenario of "**Minimum Government, Maximum Governance**".
- As the person does not have to physically interact with the aggrieved individual, the **scope of corruption drastically reduces**.
- As twitter is an open platform, **follow-up of the grievance and evaluation of the government** in terms of action taken by it to address the concern of the people may be evaluated.

### Why relying on social media alone may not be a good idea?

- In India, **digital literacy is still low** and therefore access to social media platforms such as **twitter is limited**.
- The **workforce** allocated by the government in India to address grievances of people through social medium **is still not optimum** and **increase in both their number and capabilities is needed**.
- Grievances on twitter may not be send by the aggrieved person to the concerned department and hence solution to his problem could only happen once he **attends the concerned office in person**.
- There is **no official means in India of holding a government personnel accountable** for him not acting on a grievance received through social media.

### Way forward:

- Using twitter or other social media platforms for the purpose of addressing governance issues is a positive step but **attention also needs to be paid to traditional methods** of interaction between people and government.
- **Government servants need to be trained** on getting grievances, whether received through online or offline medium, redressed at the earliest.



- **Administrators also need to empathize** with the problems of the people, which would lead to them taking sincere efforts in providing relief to the citizens.
- **Right to Information Act** needs to cover the grievances send to administrators through twitter, hence accountability of officials not acting on them could be fixed.

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# CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) BILL, 2022

## CONTEXT:

Lok Sabha recently passed the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill that seeks to take measurements of convicts and other persons for purposes of identification and investigation in criminal matters.

### Highlights of the Bill:

- It seeks to **repeal The Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920** under which “measurements” of only “finger impressions” and “footprint impressions” are allowed.
- **The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill seeks to:**
  - Define “measurements”

The Bill seeks to provide legal sanction to the police to take physical and biological samples of those who have been convicted, arrested or detained — including **impressions of fingerprints, palm prints and footprints; photos; iris and retina scans; analysis of physical and biological samples; and behavioural attributes, including signature and handwriting.**

- Empower the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** to collect, store and preserve the record of measurements and for sharing, dissemination, destruction and disposal of records.
- **Empower a Magistrate** to direct any person to give measurements; a Magistrate can also direct law enforcement officials to collect fingerprints, footprint impressions and photographs in the case of a specified category of convicted and non-convicted persons;
- Empower **police or prison officers** to take measurements of any person who resists or refuses to give measurements
- The bill also authorises **police to record signatures, handwriting or other behavioural attributes referred to in Section 53 or section 53A** of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, for the purposes of analysis.
- **In case of refusal to comply**
  - Resistance to or refusal to allow the taking of measurements under this Act shall be deemed to be an **offence under section 186** of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- No suit or any other proceeding shall lie against any person for anything done, or intended to be done in good faith under this Act or any rule made thereunder
- Central government or state government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, **make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act**
- Manner of collection, storing, preservation of measurements and sharing, dissemination, destruction and disposal of records under sub-section (1) of section 4;
- **Storage of data:**
  - The Bill authorised officers in charge of police stations or those **not below Head Constable rank to take the “measurements”** — records of these measurements shall be retained for 75 years from the date of collection.
    - The present law covers **officers in charge of stations**, those conducting an investigation, or others not below the rank of Sub-Inspector.
  - The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will be the repository** of physical and biological samples, signature and handwriting data.

### Conviction Rates:

- According to the 2020 **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** data, the overall conviction rate in murder cases in India was just 44%; 39% in rape cases; 24% in cases of attempted murder; 38% in robbery; and 29% in dacoity cases.
- Whereas, in the United Kingdom the average conviction rate was 83.6%, it was 68% in Canada, 82% in South Africa, 97% in Australia (2020-21) and about 93% in the United States.
- All these countries were champions of human rights and had more stringent laws in place

### Objection to the Bill:

- The opposition has alleged that Bill violates fundamental right of citizens and infringes upon their Right to Privacy. It has contended that the Parliament cannot bring any law that **violates the fundamental rights of citizens.**

- The proposed law will be debated against **Article 20(3) of the Constitution** — a fundamental right ensuring right against self-incrimination.
- The Supreme Court's ruling in **the Puttaswamy vs Union of India case** stated that any state action infringing upon the **right to privacy** needs to be backed by legislation.

- The proposed law was a violation of both Article 20, Sub-Article 3 and **Article 21** of the Constitution of India and, therefore, beyond the legislative competence of this House.

It also violates human rights provisions as laid out in the United Nations charter.

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## AREAS UNDER AFSPA REGIME REDUCED: SHAH

### CONTEXT:

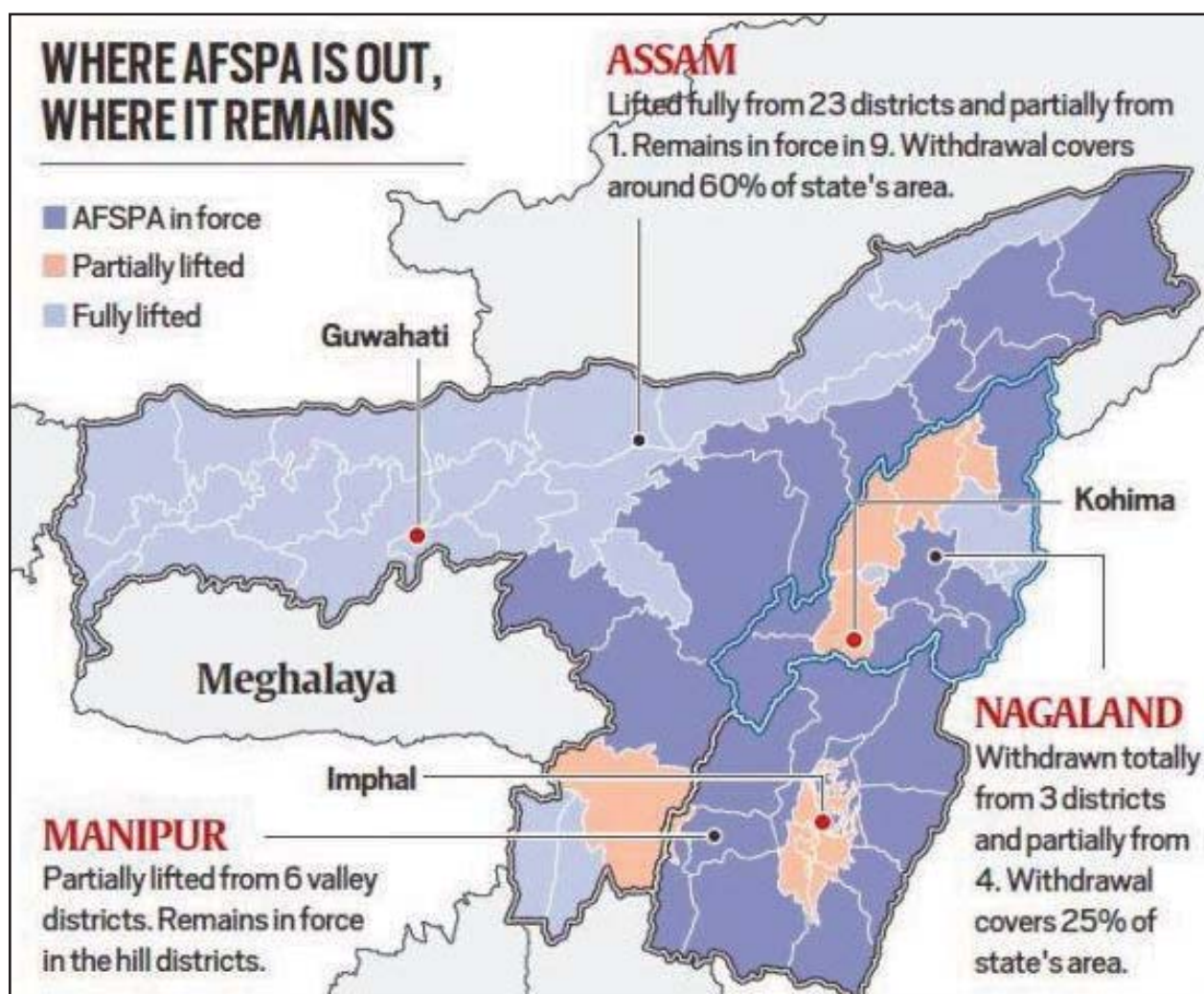
The central government has decided to reduce the disturbed areas under the ambit of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur after decades.

### ◎ BACKGROUND

- The Northeast has lived under the shadow of AFSPA for nearly 60 years, creating a feeling of alienation from the rest of the country.
- The footprint of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958 has been, withdrawn entirely

from 23 districts in Assam; and partially from seven districts in Nagaland, six districts in Manipur, and one district in Assam.

- Once the decision is notified in the gazette, AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.



- The move is expected to help demilitarise the region; it will lift restrictions of movements through check points and frisking of residents.

### ◎ ANALYSIS

#### What is AFSPA?

- AFSPA, which has been called draconian, gives sweeping powers to the armed forces.

- For example, it allows them to open fire, even causing death, against any person in contravention to the law or carrying arms and ammunition, and gives them powers to arrest individuals without warrants, on the basis of "reasonable suspicion", and also search premises without warrants.

- It can be imposed by the Centre or the Governor of a state, on the state or parts of it, after these areas are declared "disturbed" under Section 3.

**What is the immediate reason of the move?**

- The decision has come as the result of a combination of circumstances.
- Over the last two decades, various parts of the Northeast have seen a reduction in insurgencies, some of them up to 60 years old. A number of major groups were already in talks with the Indian government, and these talks received traction during the current regime.
- In Nagaland, all major groups — the NSCN (I-M) and Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) — are at advanced stages of concluding agreements with the government.
- In Manipur, insurgency as well as heavy militarisation have been on the decline since 2012, when the Supreme Court started hearing a PIL on extra-judicial killings.
- In Nagaland, the killing of 14 villagers in Oting, Mon, is seen as having had a telling impact on reviving the demand to repeal AFSPA.

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# INDIA AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP TRADE AGREEMENT

## CONTEXT:

India and Australia have signed a new trade deal. It is a historic deal and the two countries are looking at each other to make the most of this agreement.

## ◎ BACKGROUND

- India and Australia enjoy excellent bilateral relations that have undergone transformative evolution in recent years, developing along a positive track, into a friendly partnership.
- This is a special partnership characterized by shared values of a pluralistic, parliamentary democracies, Commonwealth traditions, expanding economic engagement, long standing people-to-people ties and increasing high level interaction.
- The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA), was signed on April 2, 2022.
- This has been called a historic deal for India for a reason.
- India has never had an agreement of this scale with a 'developed nation' in about a decade and this agreement marks the moment of change for India.
- This is the third **free trade agreement** for India, who has previously signed similar trade agreements with Japan and Korea.

## ◎ ANALYSIS

### Quick summary of the Agreement

- Aim:** The aim is to enhance the bilateral trade to \$45 billion in the next five years (currently at \$27.5 billion), with a clear focus on job creation and exports.
- Australia will get a greater market access for a range of its products like sheep meat, wool, wine, coal, alumina and metallic ores while Indian service professionals will get easier access to employment opportunities.
- Zero-duty access:** Australia is offering zero duty access to India for about 96.4 per cent of exports (by value) from day one. This covers many products which currently attract 4-5 per cent customs duty in Australia.

- Pharma sector:** For the pharma segment, the pact would provide fast-track approvals and fast-track quality assessment/inspections of manufacturing facilities.
- Cheaper raw material:** Since Australian exports are more concentrated in raw materials and intermediates, many industries in India will get cheaper raw materials which will make them competitive, in particular sectors like steel, aluminium and fabric/ garments.
- Tariff reduction:** The comprehensive IndAus ECTA provides for competitive tariff elimination or tariff reduction on a wide range of goods and opens new services markets for suppliers across both markets.
  - Australia trades in about 6,500 tariff lines, while India has over 11,500 tariff lines.
- Service sector:** In the services space, some of the key offers from Australia include: quota for chefs and yoga teachers; post study work visa of 2-4 years for Indian students on a reciprocal basis; mutual recognition of professional services and other licensed occupations; and work & holiday visa arrangement for young professionals.
- Labour-intensive sectors:** Labour-intensive sectors which would gain immensely include textiles and apparel, few agricultural and fish products, leather, footwear, furniture, sports goods, jewellery, machinery, electrical goods and railway wagons.

### Status of India's current trade with Australia:

- Australia is the 17th largest trading partner of India, while New Delhi is Canberra's 9th largest partner.
- Bilateral trade in goods and services stood at \$27.5 billion in 2021.
- India's goods exports were worth \$6.9 billion and imports aggregated to \$15.1 billion in 2021.
- Exports:** Major exports by India to Australia include petroleum products, textiles and apparels, engineering goods, leather, chemicals and gems and jewellery.
- Imports:** Imports mainly include raw materials, coal, minerals and intermediate goods.



**Excluded Items:**

- To safeguard sensitive sectors, India has several goods in the exclusion category in which no duty concessions will be accorded to Australian imports.
- Such goods will include milk and other dairy products, toys, sunflowers, seed oil, walnuts, pistachio nuts, platinum, wheat, rice, bajra, apple, sugar, oil cake, gold, silver, chickpeas, jewellery, iron ore and most medical devices.

**About Free Trade Agreement:**

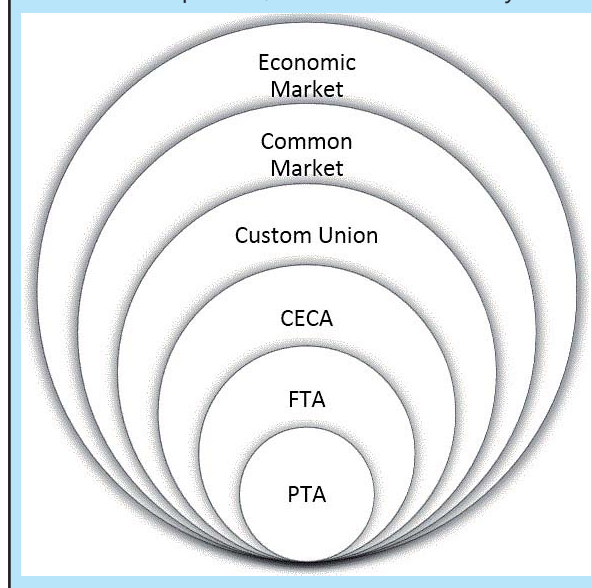
- A free trade agreement (FTA) is an agreement where two or more countries agree to provide preferential trade terms, tariff concession etc. to the partner country.
- In this agreement, a negative list of products and services is maintained by the negotiating countries on which the terms of FTA are not applicable hence it is more comprehensive than preferential trade agreement.

**Types of Regional Trading Agreements:**

- Regional trading agreements vary depending on the level of commitment and the arrangement among the member countries.
- **Preferential Trade Areas:** The preferential trading agreement requires the lowest level of commitment to reducing trade barriers, though member countries do not eliminate the barriers among themselves. Also, preferential trade areas do not share common external trade barriers.
- **Free Trade Area:** In a free trade agreement, all trade barriers among members are eliminated, which means that they can freely move goods and services among themselves. When it comes to dealing with non-members, the trade policies of each member still take effect.
- **Customs Union:** Member countries of a customs union remove trade barriers among themselves and adopt common external trade barriers.
- **Common Market:** A common market is a type of trading agreement wherein members remove internal trade barriers, adopt common policies

when it comes to dealing with non-members, and allow members to move resources among themselves freely.

- **Full Integration:** The full integration of member countries is the final level of trading agreements.
- **Economic Union:** An economic union is a trading agreement wherein members eliminate trade barriers among themselves, adopt common external barriers, allow free import and export of resources, adopt a set of economic policies, and use one currency.

**Impact of the Agreement**

- The two-way trade between India and Australia has always grown over time.
- The value of trade grew from \$13.6 billion in 2007 to \$24.3 billion in 2020 to \$27.5 billion at present.
- Now, with a trade deal in place, bilateral trade is expected to touch \$45 billion in the next five years.
- The agreement will see both governments secure alternative supply chains with each other and counter China by slashing duties on more than 85% of export goods. It is expected to be implemented in the coming four months.

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# MIYAWAKI FORESTS, A SUSTAINABLE WAY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

## CONTEXT:

There are hundreds of thousands of Miyawaki forest trees in India. Also, this method is quickly finding favour in government corridors and corporate boardrooms to restore urban spaces.

### What is the concept of Miyawaki Forest?

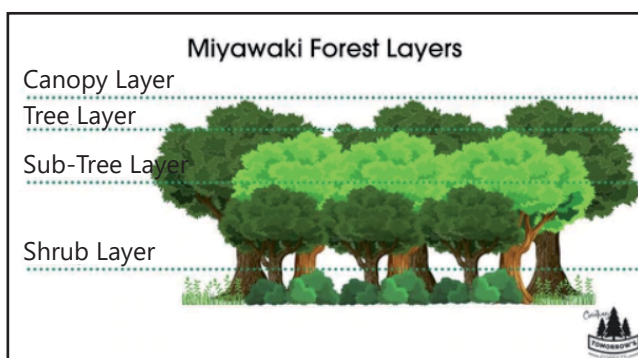
- Miyawaki is a technique **pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki**, which helps build dense, native forests.
- It is effective because it is based on **natural reforestation principles**, i.e. using trees native to the area and replicating natural forest regeneration processes.
- It has some significant benefits over more traditional forestry methods when used in smaller afforestation projects and is **particularly effective in the urban environment**.
- The trees planted by this method **grow much faster, jump starting the forest creation process and capturing more carbon**.
- The approach is supposed to ensure that plant growth is 10 times faster and the resulting plantation is 30 times denser than usual.
- It **involves planting dozens of native species** in the same area, and becomes maintenance-free after the first three years.
- Higher biodiversity has been recorded in Miyawaki forests than in neighbouring woodland, so it's an ideal method for creating diverse forest ecosystems quickly.
- Within the context of the current climate change emergency and stark warnings about the global loss of biodiversity, being able to create diverse, **healthy forests quickly could prove vital to meeting international targets and tackling these issues**.

stable multi-layered forest community in **20 to 30 years instead of hundreds of years**

- The growing **trees absorb more carbon in a Miyawaki forest** than in a plantation or in standard afforestation projects because they grow more quickly and there are thirty times as many
- The Miyawaki method has been **successful where other planting projects have failed**, such as in arid Mediterranean habitats, due to high survival rates
- Native trees thrive in the conditions to which they are adapted and are **more resilient to environmental changes**
- Miyawaki forests have been found to have **far higher biodiversity** than neighbouring woodland, on average 18 times higher

### Criticism of the Miyawaki Method:

- Critics have accused him of shilling for corporations like Toyota, which have contributed to deforestation in places such as India, and of creating monotonous-looking forests that are expensive to boot.
- Environmentalists have questioned the efficacy of the method that accelerates the growth of trees and claims to match a forest's complex ecosystem. They believe that it is not a good idea to force plants to photosynthesise fast. Also, a forest is not just the trees, but a complex ecosystem.
- The technique was started by the Japanese considering the climate in Japan and the regular occurrence of natural calamities like earthquakes. Environmentalists have questioned the suitability of the method for a tropical country like India.
- Miyawaki forests can only be grown at smaller spaces in or near cities. Such forests also lack some qualities of natural forests, such as medicinal properties and the ability to bring rain.
- Miyawaki Forests are very dense, which restricts the movement of any possible wildlife the forest might attract. Experts are of the opinion that nothing can replace something that is very natural in its form, like natural forests. However, it cannot be denied that these plantations can supplement and complement them.



### What are the benefits?

- Trees in a Miyawaki forest **grow up to ten times faster** at around a metre per year, reaching a



# WHY INDIA SHOULD ENACT A SPECIAL LAW FOR CONSERVING ITS SACRED GROVES

## CONTEXT:

India's sacred groves are being gradually altered due to ever-expanding human populations, pollution and removal of biomass; effective conservation is the need of the hour to maintain their functional values.

### What are sacred groves?

- A sacred forest or grove comprises **patches of natural vegetation** – from a few trees to several acres – that are dedicated to local deities or tree spirits.
- Sacred groves are patches of natural vegetation preserved by ancient societies on religious and cultural grounds. These patches of vegetation are **rich in biodiversity and act as habitats of many endangered and threatened plant species**.
- These spaces are protected by local communities because of their religious beliefs and traditional rituals that run through several generations.
- A sacred grove usually consists of a dense cover of vegetation including climbers, herbs, shrubs and trees, with the **presence of a village deity and is mostly situated near a perennial water source**.
- Sacred groves are considered to be **symbols of the primitive practice of nature worship** and support nature conservation to a great extent.
- The degree of sanctity accorded to the sacred groves varies from one area to another. In some forests, even the dry foliage and fallen fruits are not touched.
  - People believe that any kind of disturbance will offend the local deity, causing diseases, natural calamities or failure of crops.
  - For example, the **Garo and the Khasi tribes** of north-eastern India prohibit any human interference in the sacred groves.

- In other places, deadwood or dried leaves may be picked up, but the live tree or its branches are never cut.
  - For example, **the Gonds of central India** prohibit the cutting of a tree but allow fallen parts to be used.
- The introduction of **Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2002, provides government protection to these lands**.

### Counting Numbers

- It is estimated that India may have about 100,000 such groves. The names of such groves vary depending upon the region and language of our country.
- They are called with **different names in different states**:
  - Sarna in Bihar
  - Dev Van in Himachal Pradesh
  - Devarakadu in Karnataka
  - Kavu in Kerala
  - Dev in Madhya Pradesh
  - Devarahati or Devarai in Maharashtra
  - Lai Umang in Maharashtra
  - Law Kyntang or Asong Khosi in Meghalaya
  - Oran in Rajasthan
  - Kovil Kadu or Sarpa Kavu in Tamil Nadu

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# **SECTION: B**

## **(PRELIMS)**

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### **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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## ‘KANNAGI TEMPLE’ FEST

### ◎ CONTEXT:

After two years the district administrations of Theni in Tamil Nadu and Idukki in Kerala have proposed to conduct the annual Kannagi festival at the famous ‘Mangala Devi Temple’ situated between Tamil Nadu and Kerala forests.

#### About

- **Mangala Devi Kannagi** temple is a historic temple located in the Idukki District of Kerala bordering Tamil Nadu, about **7 km from Pazhiyankudi** in Theni district and **15 km from Thekkady** in Idukki district.
- **Cheran Chenguttuvan**, the king of ancient **Tamilakam** had erected the temple for Kannagi around **2000 years** back at **Vannathipaarai** and called it ‘**Kannagi Kottam**’ or ‘**Mangaladevi Kannagi temple**’.
- It sits at an altitude of **about 1,337 m** above the mean sea level.
- It is celebrated around the ‘**Chitra poornima festival**’.



## PREHISTORIC RELICS POINT TO RIVERINE SETTLEMENT AT ATTAPPADY

### ◎ CONTEXT:

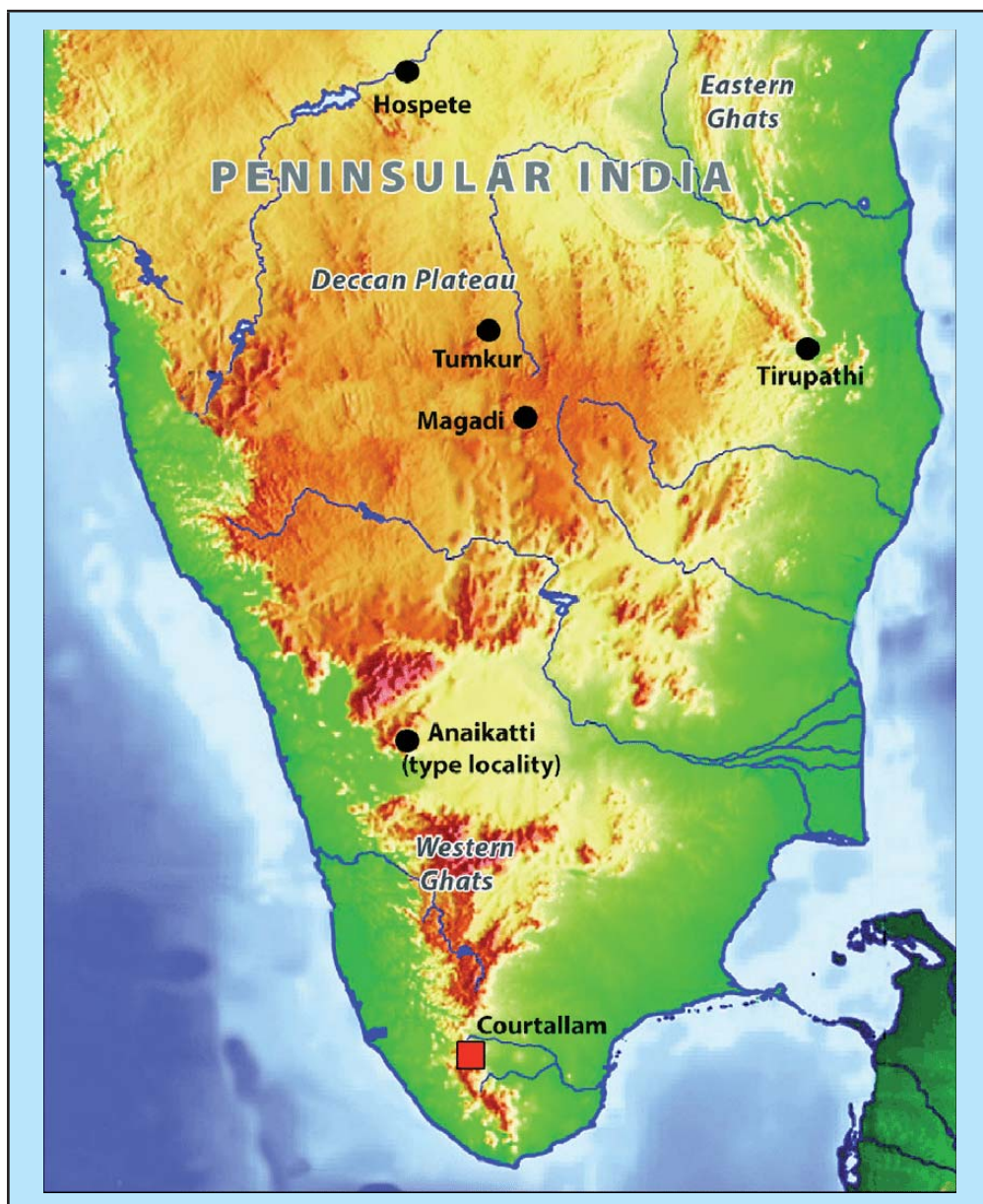
Several prehistoric artifacts and archaeological remains have been found on the banks of three rivers flowing through the Attappady hills in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

#### Key-highlights of the findings:

- **Location:** Bhavani, Siruvani, and Kodumkara Pallam, or Anakatti rivers.
- The presence of a mature settlement is indicated by the **discovery of several prehistoric artefacts and archaeological remains**.
- Prehistoric humans discovered **many stone tools, inhabited caves, menhirs, cisterns or burial chambers, stone circles, burial urns, black and red pottery, terracotta images, stone carvings, and granite inscriptions in the tribal area of Attappadi**.
- **Surprisingly, one of Kottathara’s tribal settlements** is known as **Nattakkallu Ooru** (meaning “menhir village”), despite the fact that all but **one 11-foot menhir** have been destroyed.
- **On both sides of the Kodumkara Pallam, which separates Kerala and Tamil Nadu**, researchers discovered **cist burial sites and shards of black and red pottery**.
- Recently, a **private land near Anaikatti** yielded **black and red polished earthenware with various patterns**.

#### Anaikatti

- The name Anaikatti, which means a ‘group of elephants’.
- Nestled in the foothills of the Nilgiris, the hills are located just 30km from Coimbatore.
- Anaikatti has another claim to fame - it’s home to the River Siruvani, India’s sweetest river.



## J&K: 9TH-CENTURY SCULPTURE OF LORD VISHNU RECOVERED FROM JEHLUM RIVER IN PULWAMA

### ◎ CONTEXT:

In the Kashmir Valley, an ancient sculpture of Lord Vishnu dating back to 9th Century was recovered from river Jehlum in Kakapora area of the Pulwama district.

### About the Sculpture:

- The sculpture is a **three headed Lord Vishnu** and is made of **black and green colour stone**, is a unique sculpture of the 9th Century, was later handed over to the **Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums of Jammu and Kashmir**.
- The recovered sculpture is a unique three-headed idol of **Lord Vishnu** and represents him as the **Supreme Being**.

- Reportedly, the frontal human face is that of '**Vasudeva**', the right face is of a lion and is called '**Samkarsana**', the left one boar is north facing and of '**Aniruddha**'.
- The small idol on Vishnu's left is that of '**Chakrapurusha**' which personifies his battle mace.



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## ARMY INDUCTS RUSSIAN MANPADS

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© **CONTEXT:**

The Army has inducted a small number of MANPADS, Igla-S systems recently procured from Russia under emergency procurement.

**What are MANPADS?**

- They are the short-range, lightweight, and portable surface-to-air missiles that may be fired by individuals or small groups to kill aeroplanes or helicopters are known as Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems.
- They aid in the protection of troops from aerial attacks and are particularly efficient against low-flying aircraft.
- Man-Portable Anti-Tank Systems, or MANPATs, are identical but are used to destroy military tanks.
- MANPADS can be fired from a helicopter or boat, or launched from atop a ground vehicle.

**About Very short-range air-defense system (VSHORAD)**

- Very Short Range Air Defense Missiles are regarded as critical for the defence of any major city or strategically significant location.



- The VSHORAD will replace the existing Igla in service, which is in desperate need of replacement, with a maximum range of 6 km, altitude of 3 km, and all-weather capability.
- VSHORADS are the soldier's last line of defense against enemy combat aircraft and helicopters in the multilayered air defense network.

#### Igla-S systems

- Igla-S systems are developed by Russia.
- It is a man-portable air defence system (MANPADS).
- "Igla-S" is an air defense system that can be carried by a single person.
- It is designed to defeat all types of visible fixed- and rotary-winged aircraft, as well as small aerial targets, on head-on and pursuit courses.
- The Defense Ministry is reviewing a much larger contract for Igla-S systems as part of the very short-range air-defense system (VSHORAD) deal.
- It is designed for use against visible aerial targets at short range such as tactical aircraft, helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAVs), cruise missile, head-on or receding, in presence of natural (background) clutter and countermeasures.
- As per requirements of the Indian Army, it will have a maximum range of 6 km, altitude of 3 km along with all-weather capability.
- Igla-S missile system will replace the existing Igla in service which is in urgent need of replacement.

## INDIA NEPAL TIES, NEW CROSS BORDER TRAIN

### ◎ CONTEXT:

**Prime Minister and his Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba recently jointly inaugurated cross-border passenger train services, RuPay payment system in Nepal and signed several MoUs. The leaders also held a delegation-level meeting at Hyderabad House in Delhi.**

#### Key highlights

- Four documents and MoUs were signed and exchanged between India and Nepal to expand ties in areas such as **railways and energy**.
- The Prime Ministers also inaugurated **Solu Corridor 132 KV power transmission line** and sub-station in Nepal built under the government of India's Line of Credit. Further, **Nepal joined the International Solar Alliance**.
- Prime Minister Modi and Nepal's PM Deuba also launched **RuPay payment card in Nepal**.
- The launch of the RuPay card in Nepal will add a new chapter to our **financial connectivity**: PM Narendra Modi issues joint statement with Nepal PM Sher Bahadur Deuba.

#### New cross border train:

- PM Modi and Deuba also inaugurated **cross-border rail network between Jaynagar in Bihar and Nepal's Kurtha**.
- This is going to be **Nepal's first broad gauge passenger train service**, all of which has been hand-held by India from the start.
- Part of the **68.73-km Jaynagar-Bardibas train service** from Nepal side beyond Janakpur had to be stopped due to flooding of some railway bridges in 2001, while service from Janakpur to Jaynagar continued until March 2014 when India and Nepal decided to go for converting the entire narrow gauge link into broad gauge.

- The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** is **funding** the network between Jaynagar in Bihar and Barbidas in Nepal at a cost of Rs 784 crore. The length of the Jaynagar-Bijalpura-Bardibas rail link is 68.72 km, of which a 2.975-km stretch is in India and a 65.745-km stretch is in Nepal.

## GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES BROADCAST SEVA PORTAL FOR TV, RADIO STATIONS

### ◎ CONTEXT:

The Government recently launched the 'Broadcast Seva Portal', an online portal solution for speedy filing and processing of applications for various kinds of licences, permissions and registrations among other services.

#### About 'Broadcast Seva Portal':

- Broadcast Seva Portal is an **online portal solution** for speedy filing and processing of applications of broadcasters for **various kinds of licenses, permissions, registrations**, etc.
- This simple and **user-friendly web portal** provides a broadcaster with an end-to-end solution with just a click of a mouse.
- It will **boost the business environment and empower the entire broadcast sector** by directly benefiting more than 900 Satellite TV Channels, 70 Teleport operators, 1700 Multi-service operators, 350 Community Radio Stations (CRS), and 380 Private FM Channels and others.
- All facilities for filing new applications or making changes or payments will be available on this portal. It'll soon be **linked with National Single Window System**.
- The Minister informed the audience that the test run of the portal received positive feedback from end-users.



**Broadcast Seva Portal**  
*Solutions For All In One Click*

**Features**

- ▶ Analytics, Reporting and Management Information System (MIS)
- ▶ Application forms & status tracking
- ▶ Alerts to stakeholders (SMS/E-Mails)
- ▶ Integrated Helpdesk



**Broadcast Seva Portal: Objective**

- The Broadcast Seva (BS) Portal will provide a **single point facility to the stakeholders and applicants** to apply for various registrations, permissions and licences issued by I&B Ministry for broadcast related activities.
- The portal will enable establishment of an **efficient and transparent system** for the growth and management of the Broadcast sector.
- The portal will enable **smooth communication between the applicants and different stakeholders and speed up processing of applications.**

**Significance**

The Broadcast Seva Portal is in line with PM Narendra Modi's vision for enabling **Ease of Doing Business and promoting Make in India and Digital India initiatives.**

**Broadcast Seva Portal Services**

- The portal has a database of institutions including TV channels, news agencies, TRP agencies, OTT and Digital Media, local cable operators, DTH Operators, FM channels, community radio stations, Multi-System Operators, Satellite TV Channels, Teleports, HITS Operators and user information system.
- Payment of Annual Permission Fees for TV Channels / Teleports
- Application and process guidelines for setting up of Community Radio Stations
- Application and process guidelines for registration as Multi-System Operators
- Application guidelines for Temporary uplink of Live Events

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## 13 NEW DISTRICTS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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**◎ CONTEXT:**

Andhra Pradesh government inaugurated 13 new districts in the state. The state now has 26 districts, double the earlier number of 13.

- **Total districts in India: With this new development, there are now a total of 755 districts in the country.**

According to the 2011 Census, there were 593 districts in the country.

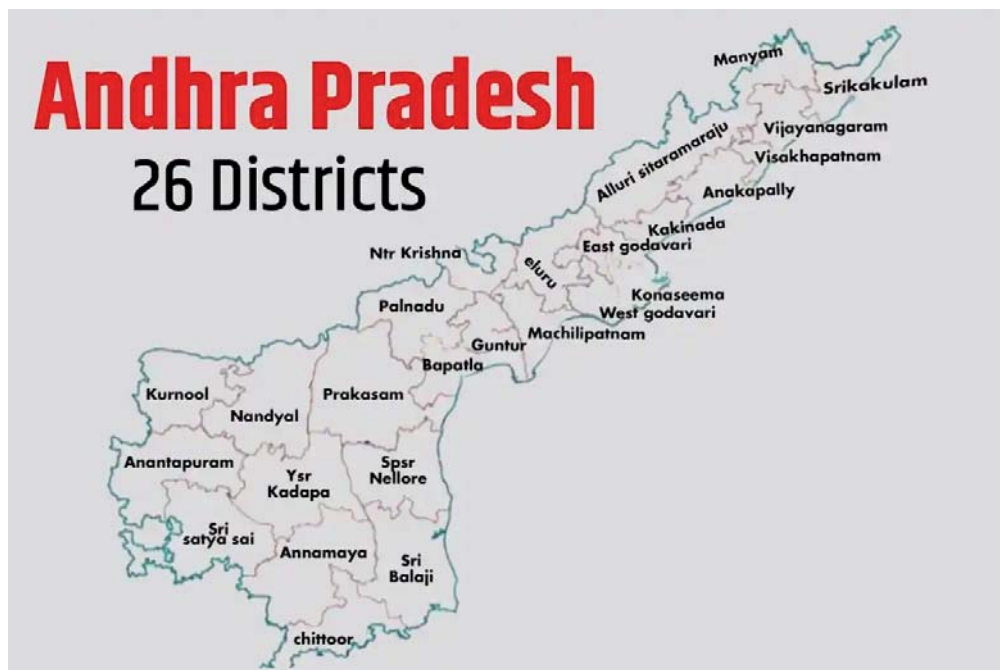
**The new districts**

The new districts are: 1) Parvathipuram Manyam, 2) Anakapalli, 3) Alluri Seetharama Raju, 4) Kakinada, 5) Konaseema, 6) Eluru, 7) Palnadu, 8) Bapatla, 9) Nandyala, 10) Sri Sathya Sai, 11) Sri Balaji, 12) Annamaya, and 13) NTR.

The state has 25 Lok Sabha seats.

**How a new district is created?**

- The power to create new districts or alter or abolish existing districts rests with the State governments.
- This can either be done through an executive order or by passing a law in the State Assembly.
- Many States prefer the executive route by simply issuing a notification in the official gazette.



#### Role of Centre

- The Centre has no role to play in the alteration of districts or creation of new ones. States are free to decide.
- The Home Ministry comes into the picture when a State wants to change the name of a district or a railway station.
- The State government's request is sent to other departments and agencies such as the **Ministry of Earth Sciences, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Posts, Geographical Survey of India Sciences and the Railway Ministry** seeking clearance.
- A no-objection certificate may be issued after examining their replies.

## GENDER BIAS SUCCESSION ACT

#### ◎ CONTEXT:

The Supreme Court has asked centre to reply on the petition on gender discrimination in Hindu succession law.

- The Petitioners has challenged the section 15 and 16 of Hindu succession Act, 1956.

#### The Hindu Succession Act, 1956

- It is an act to **amend and codify** the law relating to the **Intestate succession** among Hindus.
- **The act applies to the persons:**
  - Who is a Hindu by religion in any of its forms or developments, including a Virashaiva, a Lingayat or a follower of the Brahmo, Prarthana or Arya Samaj,

- Who is a Buddhist, Jaina or Sikh by religion, and\
- Who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion, unless it is proved that any such person would not have been governed by the Hindu law or by any custom or usage as part of that law in respect of any of the matters dealt with herein if this Act had not been passed.

- **Section-15 of the act:** The relevant provisions of this Act do not consider a Hindu woman to be an independent person capable of transferring her property to her blood relatives.
- **Section-16 of the act:** The order of succession among the heirs referred to in section 15 shall be confined to the son or male member of the family of the female.

### Gender biased restriction in the law

- The Hindu succession law does not give freedom to a female to inherit a property to her blood relatives **owned by her after her husband's death** or presence if she alone is the owner of the property.
- Some other laws are:
  - **The law for Dowry death-** The law puts condition on the level of cruelty against women for Dowry in her in law's place. It puts time period of 7 years for filing a case against the husband or relatives.

## HDFC BANK MERGER

### ◎ CONTEXT:

HDFC Bank and HDFC Ltd recently announced the merger of the two entities, setting the stage for one of the biggest deals in the Indian financial sector.

### About Merger:

- As per the transaction structure, **HDFC Limited**, India's largest housing finance company with Assets under Management (AUM) worth Rs 5.26 trillion and a market cap of Rs 4.44 trillion will merge with **HDFC Bank**, India's largest private sector bank by assets with a market cap of Rs 8.35 trillion.
- The subsidiary or **associates of HDFC Limited will also be transferred to HDFC Bank.**
- Post the merger, HDFC Limited's shareholding in HDFC Bank will be extinguished and **HDFC Bank will be 100 per cent owned by public shareholders.**
  - **Existing shareholders of HDFC Limited will own 41% of HDFC Bank.**
- The combined market capitalisation will enable HDFC Bank to overtake TCS and become No. 2 in valuation after Reliance Industries Ltd (Rs 18.01 lakh crore).

### Benefit:

- While this will **improve the ability to cross-sell products to a larger customer base**, the move will help them leverage their distribution across urban, semi-urban and rural geographies.
- A larger balance sheet and capital base will **allow greater flow of credit into the economy.**

- It will enable underwriting of larger ticket loans including infrastructure, which is an urgent need of the country.
- The customer will be the biggest beneficiary, it is estimated that as of date over 70% of **HDFC Bank's customers do not have a mortgage** further under the combined entity cross sell of the group products insurance both life and non-life, asset management and pensions will see significant improvement in efficiencies and in profitability.
- The proposed merger will dovetail the **efficiencies of HDFC as a premium mortgage originator** with over 45 years of domain expertise, inefficient mortgage processing at a significantly attractive cost income ratio into the lower cost of funds of the bank and its wide distribution capability.
- HDFC is a significant provider of **home loans to lower income and the middle income group** segments under the affordable housing initiatives of the Government of India under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Access to housing finance for this category would improve further on account of the low cost funds available with HDFC Bank.

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## DIP IN CHILIKA LAKE'S DOLPHIN POPULATION

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### ◎ CONTEXT:

The Odisha Government has conducted the Annual Dolphin Census recently.

- The Census was carried out in Chilika Lake, Rajnagar Mangrove wildlife division, Baleswar wildlife division, Bhadrak wildlife division, Puri wildlife division and Berhampur forest division.

### Key findings from the Annual Dolphin Census:

- The Dolphin population recorded along **Odisha's coast** and in its water bodies has increased overall. It has gone up from 544 in 2021 to **726 in 2022**.
- A total of **six species of dolphins — Irrawaddy, bottlenose, humpback, striped, finless and Spinner dolphins** have been found in this census.
- The increase in the dolphin population in Odisha is largely due to high sightings in the Mangrove Wildlife Division of the Rajnagar jurisdiction, where 540 dolphins were found in 2022 compared with 342 in 2021.
- However, the **Chilika Lake** which is a major tourist attraction for its Irrawaddy dolphins saw the number of Irrawaddy Dolphins drop sharply from 162 in 2021 to **151 in 2022**.
- In the remaining four Wildlife Divisions — Puri, Berhampur, Bhadrak and Balasore — dolphin sightings were negligible.
- As per the 2022 dolphin census, **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary** and nearby areas in Bhitarkanika saw dolphin count skyrocket **to 540** from 342 last year.
  - These included 45 Irrawaddy, 135 bottlenose, 332 humpbacks, and 13 striped and 15 spinner dolphins.

### About Chilika Lake

- **Chilika Lake is a brackish water lagoon**, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha state on the east coast of India, at the **mouth of the Daya River**, flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
- It is **Asia's largest salt-water lagoon** and is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a sandy ridge.
- It is the **largest wintering ground for migratory birds** on the Indian sub-continent. These birds travel great distances; migratory birds probably follow much longer routes than the straight lines, possibly up to 12,000 km, to reach Chilika Lake.

- Chilka Lake is designated as a **wetland of international importance** under the Ramsar Convention.
  - The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.
- The **Irrawaddy dolphin** has been found in Chilika Lake. It is a euryhaline species of oceanic dolphin found in discontinuous subpopulations near sea coasts and in estuaries and rivers in parts of the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia.

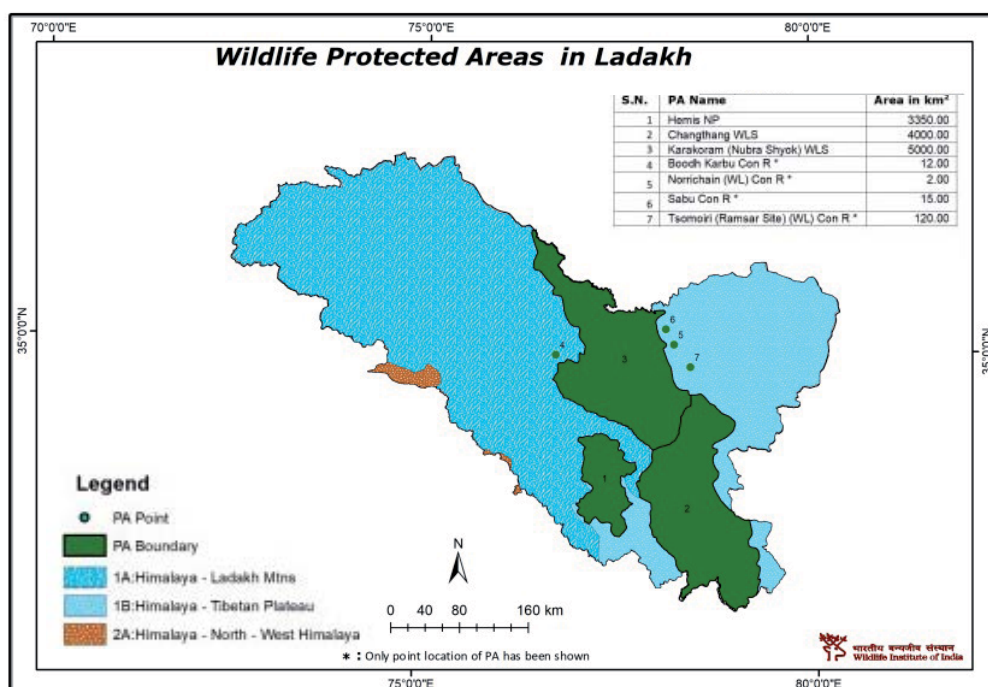
#### About Irrawaddy Dolphins

- Scientific Name:** Orcaella brevirostris
- Habitat:** Irrawaddy dolphins are found in coastal areas in **South and Southeast Asia**, and in three rivers: the Ayeyarwady (Myanmar), the Mahakam (Indonesian Borneo) and the Mekong.
  - The **Mekong River** Irrawaddy dolphins inhabit a **118-mile stretch** of the river between **Cambodia and Lao PDR**.
  - These dolphins have a **bulging forehead, short beak**, and 12-19 teeth on each side of both jaws.
- Conservation Status:** Irrawaddy dolphins fall under **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and are mentioned in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of **Endangered Species**.

## BOUNDARIES OF SANCTUARIES IN LADAKH TO BE 'RATIONALISED'

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Ladakh has identified proper mapping and boundary identification of Changthang and Karakoram sanctuaries along the India-China border as a priority concern.

About:





- The **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** has been asked to map and identify areas of 'high conservation value' **to help 'rationalise' boundaries** - allowing for addition or deletion of land.
- The Ladakh administration is holding a series of meetings to expedite the process, which will impact not only the rich biodiversity of the cold desert but also the economic, agricultural and strategic planning in and around the sanctuaries.
- Both areas were declared **national wildlife sanctuaries in 1987**. However, according to sources, the 1987 notification failed to map the boundaries correctly.
- Also, the growth of the human population has changed the dynamics there.

### Developmental Projects in the area:

- To **construct roads or outposts near the India-China border**, armed forces, Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the Border Roads Organisation require clearance from the National Board of Wildlife.
  - The environment ministry has been expediting these projects, especially after the 2020 conflict.
  - A few days ago, the wildlife board cleared the construction of roads through these sanctuaries.
- Also, the country's **first Geothermal Field Development project** has been cleared and it will come up at in Ladakh.

### With Focus on Strategic Implications



Karakoram (Nubra Shyok) and Changthang are high-altitude wildlife sanctuaries and home to rare fauna and flora



To construct roads or outposts near the India-China border, armed forces, ITBP and BRO require clearance from the National Board of Wildlife



**In March 2021, Changthang wildlife sanctuary land was diverted for constructing 24 outposts at Chushul, Hot Spring, Chumar, Dungti, Dhan Singh, PP 16, Silung La, Hanley, Lukung, Bao Nallah and other adjoining areas**



The wildlife board okayed a dozen roads along the India-China border in August 2021 and followed it up with more nods in October



These included roads in the vicinity of the Pangong Tso as well as the Saser Brangsa Gapshan road off the Karakoram sanctuary – an alternative alignment to the Daulat Beg Oldie site – leading to India's highest airstrip

- In March 2021, Changthang wildlife sanctuary land was diverted for constructing **24 outposts at Chushul, Hot Spring, Chumar, Dungti, Dhan Singh, PP 16, Silung La, Hanley, Lukung, Bao Nallah and other adjoining areas**.
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#### India's First Geothermal Project in Ladakh

- **Ladakh's administration, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishing India's first-ever geothermal field development project.
- **About the Project:** ONGC Energy Centre is the implementing agency for this pilot project, which aims to generate a new green energy source for the UT.
- **Location:**
  - In **Eastern Ladakh, Puga and Chumathang** are said to be the most promising geothermal fields in India.
  - These areas were discovered in the 1970s and initial exploratory efforts were made in the 1980s by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
  - However, subsequent efforts at the exploitation by various government and private agencies did not materialise.

## CLIMATE CHANGE: WIND AND SOLAR REACH MILESTONE AS DEMAND SURGES

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** A new analysis shows, Wind and solar installations grew at pace in 2021 Wind and solar-generated 10% of global electricity for the first time in 2021.

#### Highlights of the research

- Fifty countries get more than a tenth of their power from wind and solar sources, according to research from Ember, a climate and energy think tank.
- Demand for electricity grew at a record pace. This saw a surge in coal power, rising at the fastest rate since 1985.
- The research shows the growth in the need for electricity last year was the equivalent of adding a new India to the world's grid.
- **Solar and wind and other clean sources generated 38% of the world's electricity in 2021.**
  - For the first time wind turbines and solar panels generated 10% of the total.
- The share coming from wind and sun has doubled since 2015, when the Paris climate agreement was signed.
- The **fastest switching** to wind and solar took place in the **Netherlands, Australia, and Vietnam**. All three have moved a tenth of their electricity demand from fossil fuels to green sources in the last two years.
  - The **Netherlands** is a great example of a more northern latitude country proving that it's not just where the Sun shines, it's also about having the right policy environment that makes the big difference in whether solar takes off.
  - **Vietnam** also saw spectacular growth, particularly in solar which rose by over 300% in just one year.



- ▶ In the case of Vietnam, there was a massive step up in solar generation and it was driven by feed-in tariffs - money the government pays you for generating electricity - which made it very attractive for households and for utilities to be deploying large amounts of solar.

## SUPREME COURT SEEKS UPDATE ON POWER CABLES AT GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD'S HABITAT

### ◎ CONTEXT:

The Supreme Court of India sought an update from the committee formed for making power lines underground in Rajasthan and Gujarat ordered a year ago.

### The Great Indian Bustard (GIB) or Godavan

- **Scientific Name:** *Ardeotis nigriceps*
- **Heaviest** of the flying birds.
- These birds are often found associated in the **same habitat as blackbuck**.
- **Habitat:** Arid and semi-arid grasslands with scattered short scrub, bushes and low intensity cultivation in flat or gently undulating terrain. It avoids irrigated areas.
- **Distribution:**
  - The Species were formerly widespread across **India and Pakistan**.
  - However, at present, its population is estimated to be of **less than 200** across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
  - Typically, it is found in Kutch (Gujarat), Solapur and Chandrapur (Maharashtra), Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh), Bellary (Karnataka), and in pockets of Rajasthan, primarily concentrated near the Desert National Park (DNP).

### Major Reasons for decline in Population:

- **Loss of Habitat** due to increase in population, agriculture and infrastructure development etc.
- GIBs are large in size and usually take low flights which often result in deaths due to collision with **electricity transmission lines**.
  - The habitat is under threat due to the zigzag web of high-tension power lines through the sacred groves of Jaisalmer.
- **Stray dogs** which are known to attack the bustard's eggs and young ones.
- Poaching outside the protected areas.

### Protected areas dedicated to GIB

- Rajasthan: **Desert National Park** – Jaisalmer and Balmer
- Gujarat: **Naliya Sanctuary** in Kutch
- Madhya Pradesh: **Karera Wildlife Sanctuary** (The species disappeared from Madhya Pradesh in early 90s')
- Maharashtra: **Nannaj Grasslands**, Solapur
- Andhra Pradesh: **Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary**

### Conservation Status

- Listed under **Critically Endangered** Category of IUCN Red List.
- Listed in **Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

- It is also listed in **Appendix I of CITES**.
- Identified for the species recovery program under Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats Scheme.
- It is declared as **state bird of Rajasthan**.



## MAGICAL MUSHROOM: SCALING UP GANODERMA LUCIDUM CULTIVATION

### ◎ CONTEXT:

**Ganoderma lucidum** is a medicinal mushroom in use for centuries to heal diseases like diabetes, cancer, inflammation, ulcer as well as bacterial and skin infections.

#### About Ganoderma lucidum:

- The mushroom is **shiny red-brown in colour** and **naturally grows on wood**.
  - It prefers broad-leaved tree species like acacia, poplar, oak, maple, melia, eucalyptus, hevea, tectona and grewia.
- The **lower surface** of this mushroom is **porous, pale white in colour** and produces red spores on maturity.
- It thrives well in **warm and humid climates**, and grows preferably in **mixed forests of sub-tropical to temperate regions**.

- It is considered one of the most important **medicinal mushrooms** in the world since its chemical constituents exhibit numerous medicinal properties.
- They have earned it monikers such as "**mushroom of immortality**", "**celestial herb**" and "**auspicious herb**".
  - It is globally also known as "**red reishi mushroom**".
- The history of consumption of this mushroom can be traced back to 5,000 years ago in China.
  - It also finds mention in the historical and medical records of countries **like Japan, Korea, Malaysia and India**.
- Ganoderma contains more than **400 chemical constituents**, including triterpenes, polysaccharides, nucleotides, alkaloids, steroids, amino acids, fatty acids and phenols.
  - These show medicinal properties such as **immunomodulatory, anti-hepatitis, anti-tumour, antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-HIV, antimalarial, hypoglycaemic and anti-inflammatory properties**.
- Unlike normal mushrooms, the peculiar character of this one is that **it grows on wood or wood-based substrate only**.
- Ganoderma lucidum is also **used as a base material for manufacturing products** such as tea, coffee, energy supplements, health boosters, **beverages, baked goods and anti-ageing cosmetics**.



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## NASA'S HUBBLE DISCOVERS FARTHEST STAR DETECTED TILL DATE: EARENDEL

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◎ **CONTEXT:** NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has discovered the farthest star ever seen to date.

### About the star:

- The star is more than **12.9 billion light-years away**.
- It is likely existed **within the first billion years after the beginning of the universe**.
- The star system is officially called **WHL0137-LS**.
- It has been nicknamed "**Earendel**", which means "**morning star**" in Old English.

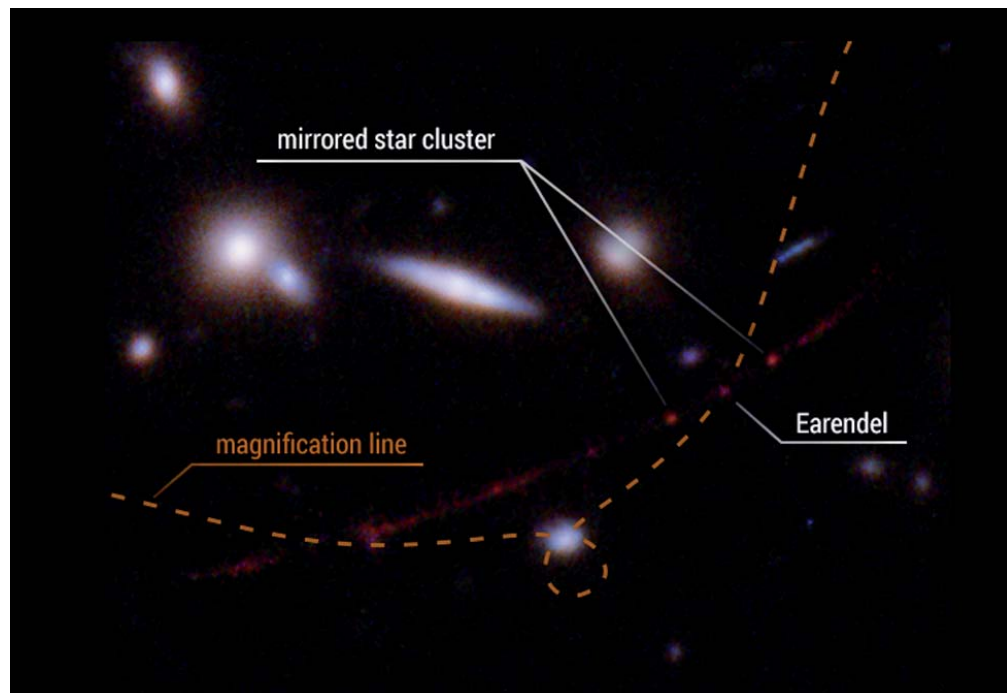
### Other record-holding star:

- **Icarus:**
  - This discovery is a massive leap from the previous record-holding star: "Icarus" or officially, MACS J1149+2223 Lensed Star 1.
  - Icarus existed at a time when the universe was about 4 billion years old or about one-third of its current age, at a time that astronomers refer to as "**redshift 1.5**."
  - Scientists use the word "redshift" because as the universe expands, light from distant objects is stretched or "shifted" to longer, redder wavelengths as it travels toward us.

- The oldest known star, nicknamed "**Methuselah**," discovered by Hubble in 2013.
- Hubble also holds the **cosmic distance record for a galaxy**. Its light took 13.4 billion years to reach Earth.

### What made such farthest star visible?

- It happened because of phenomenon of **gravitational lensing**.
- Gravitational lensing occurs when a cluster of stars warps the fabric of space.
- This creates a sort of massive **magnifying glass that distorts and amplifies the light from distant objects behind it**.
- In the case of Earendel, this is caused by a huge **galaxy cluster called WHL0137-08**.
- Scientists expect Earendel to remain highly magnified in the years to come when it can be observed by NASA's new James Webb Space Telescope.
- Webb has a high sensitivity to infrared light which will be useful when trying to learn more about the newly-discovered star because its light is redshifted to longer infrared wavelengths.



### Hubble Space Telescope

- It is named after the **astronomer Edwin Hubble**.
- The observatory is the **first major optical telescope** to be placed in space and has made ground-breaking discoveries in the field of astronomy since its launch (into Low Earth orbit in **1990**).
- It is said to be the "**most significant advance in astronomy since Galileo's telescope**."
- It is a part of NASA's Great Observatories Program - a family of four space-based observatories, each observing the Universe in a different kind of light.
  - The other missions in the program include the visible-light **Spitzer Space Telescope**, **Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory (CGRO)**, and the **Chandra X-Ray Observatory (CXO)**.

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## **IDEX INITIATIVE**

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◎ **CONTEXT:**      **The Government has approved a central sector scheme for iDEX with budgetary support of Rs. 498.78 crore for the next 5 years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.**

### **Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX):**

- It was launched by the Government in April 2018, primarily aims at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace
- It aims at engaging Industries including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes & academia for defence technology to be made and fostered in India.
- It will provide them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D which has good potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs.
- iDEX is funded and managed by a 'Defence Innovation Organization (DIO)'.
- iDEX functions as the executive arm of DIO, carrying out all the required activities while DIO will provide high level policy guidance to iDEX.

### **Key Functions of iDex:**

- Co-Innovation/co-creation
- Piloting of candidate technologies in important platforms
- Indigenization of various defence and aerospace related platforms being manufactured in the country based on ToT.

#### **Defence Innovation Organization (DIO)**

- DIO is a 'not for profit' company registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act 2013.
- Its two founding members are Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) & Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) - Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs).
- HAL and BEL are navratna companies.

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# **SECTION: C**

## **(QUICK FACTS)**



## NATIONAL MARITIME DAY

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently India celebrated its 59th National Maritime day on April 5 under the theme for 2022, 'Sustainable Shipping beyond COVID 19'.

### Historical background

- It was first celebrated in the year **1964** to commemorate India's **first merchant sea voyage in the trading world**.

### Significance

- On this day in **1919**, navigation history was created when **SS loyalty** (the first ship of the **Scindia steam navigation company ltd**) journeyed to the United Kingdom.
- It was a crucial step for India's shipping history when sea routes were controlled by the British.

#### Scindia steam navigation company limited:

- The Maharaja of Gwalior** bought the **RMS express** from the British to help Indian troops, converting it into a **hospital ship** in 1914.
- Later it was sold to Scindia navigation company ltd in 1919.
- It became the first India owned ship to travel till UK during British period for **trade**.

- The day is observed yearly by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways**.
- The day is celebrated to show gratitude to the men who spend many months in the sea, carrying out the bulk of **India's trade and commerce at a global level**.

## EXERCISE VARUNA 2022

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The culmination of 20th edition of the Indo-French bilateral Naval Exercise 'Varuna 2022' took place on April 3 at Arabian Sea.

- The exercise for this year has an expanded scope for both the countries in maritime operations and long way strengthening the strategic partnership between India and France.

- ◎ **BACKGROUND:** This exercise between India and France is generally conducted either in **Indian Ocean or Mediterranean Sea**.

- The aim of improving Indo-French coordination on capabilities like **cross-deck operations, replenishment-at-sea, minesweeping, anti-submarine warfare and information sharing**.
- It was first started in **1983**, though given its present name in 2001. These exercise naming Varuna were held earlier in the years **2006, 2009 and 2015 and 2019**.

### Significance

- The event of tactical sea phase of the exercise laid primary focus on advanced anti-submarine **warfare tactics, gunnery shoots, seamanship evolutions, tactical manoeuvres and extensive air operations**.

**Different weapons and naval instruments involved**

- INS Chennai with Sea King Mk 42B, maritime patrol aircraft P8i, French Navy frigate FS Courbet, support vessel FS Loire, and other units exercised on full spectrum of ASW operations.

**Other India-France Exercises**

- **Garuda and Desert knight-21** are the Air Exercises.
- **Shakti**- the Army exercise.

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## DIKSHA

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**Why in news?**

- DIKSHA is the platform for providing quality **e-content** for school education in States/UTs and **QR coded Energized Textbooks** for all grades.
- This scheme is under '**one nation, one digital platform**'.

**Significance**

- DIKSHA will enable people with visual impairments to access the website using assistive technologies, such as screen readers.
  - It is compiled by World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 level AA.

**DAISY Portal: Digitally Accessible Information System**

- DAISY is the emerging world standard for digital talking books for people who are **visually impaired** or have a **print disability**.
- DAISY books have "**embedded navigation**" that enables readers to instantly jump to any part of a work, the same way a sighted person can turn to any page.
- With DAISY, the text is delineated with tags, such as part, chapter, page, paragraph, etc., and synced with the audio files.

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## GRAMMY AWARDS

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**© CONTEXT:**

**At the 64th Grammy Awards held on Las Vegas, Falguni Shah and Rickey Kej have won the Award for singing and music.**

**About Grammy Awards**

- It is an award presented by the Recording Academy to recognize "Outstanding Achievement in the music industry" of the United States. The trophy depicts a gilded gramophone.
- The first Grammy Awards ceremony was held **on May 4, 1959**, to honour the musical accomplishments of performers for the year 1958.

- **Falguni Shah**- She is a Mumbai born star went to US, known for her stage name 'falu'.
- ▶ She won her first grammy award for A colourful World in the best children's Album category.
- **Rickey Kej**- He was a US born Indian origin person, moved back to India and won award for career in Music.
- ▶ He is recently based in Bengaluru and won his first Grammy award in 2015 for best new age album.

## RICE DEVELOPMENT BY INDIA TO HELP NEPAL

### ◎ CONTEXT:

**The Indira Gandhi Agriculture University , IGA to provide 4 Rice Varieties containing high levels of zinc, protein to help Nepal fight Malnutrition.**

#### About

- The four varieties of rice is introduced on the recommendations of **Manila based International Rice research Institute**.
- Under the aegis of South Asian Association for regional cooperation (SAARC), India is going to help Nepal with 8 south Asian country members of SAARC.
- These rice varieties have already being released by the IGA and also distributed among **Krishi Vigyan Kendras** for distribution among **farmers in Chhattisgarh**.

#### The Four Rice varieties:

- The 4 rice varieties being shared with Nepal are:-
  - ▶ CG Z R1- Chhattisgarh zinc rice contains 22-24 ppm of zinc.
  - ▶ CG Z R2- 24-26 ppm zinc particles.
  - ▶ Zinco rice
  - ▶ Prota rice

#### Features of the rice varieties

- The rice varieties will help to combat the malnourishment among **children and adults**.
- Normal rice has **only 12-16 ppm of zinc**.
- The CG R1 AND R2 rice varieties have productivity of **45 quintals** per hectare and **60 quintals per hectares** respectively.
- They have time duration for productivity as 110-130 days.

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