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National Security Guards in Jammu

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has permanently established a **National Security Guards (NSG)** unit in **Jammu** to swiftly respond to any large-scale **terrorist incident**.

- Previously, NSG commandos had to be airlifted from Delhi or Chandigarh, causing delays.

Key Points

- **Enhanced Security Measures in Jammu City:**
 - A **security review** has led to measures for protecting high-rise buildings, critical installations, and public areas in Jammu City.
 - **Regular assessments** are conducted to ensure preparedness and prevent attacks.
 - Permanent deployment has significantly **reduced response times**.
- **Integration with Broader Anti-Terror Strategy:**
 - Deployment of NSG complements the anti-terror plan devised by the Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP).
 - Focus areas include high-risk locations like multi-story buildings, critical infrastructure, and crowded spaces.
- **Multi-Layered Security Approach:**
 - Officials assert that the city's multi-layered security perimeter prevents terrorist infiltration.
 - The NSG serves as a backup force for prolonged engagements, supporting primary responders like the **Special Operations Group (SOG)**.
 - SOG and allied units are the **first responders, with other security agencies available for support**.
- **Recent Terrorist Incidents and Counter-Operations:**
 - In 2024, **Jammu region saw multiple terrorist attacks** in districts like Kathua, Udhampur, Kishtwar, Doda, Reasi, Rajouri, and Poonch.
 - **Counter-operations** have eliminated several **terrorists**, minimizing their impact.
 - In October 2024, Pakistani infiltrators planning a **major attack were neutralized** in the Khour sector of Akhnoor by Army personnel.

National Security Guards (NSG)

- **About:**
 - The NSG was **created in 1984** as a **federal contingency force to tackle terrorism**.
 - Its mission is to **train, equip, and keep in readiness a special force** capable of swiftly and effectively combating terrorism, living up to its motto **'Sarvatra Sarvottam Suraksha'**.
- **Structure:**
 - It was modeled on the **Special Air Service (SAS)** of the United Kingdom and GSG-9 of Germany, with two complementary elements - the **Special Action Group (SAG)** comprising Army personnel and the **Special Ranger Groups (SRG)** comprising personnel from Central Armed Police Forces and State Police Forces.

Jammu and Kashmir Film Policy-2024

Why in News?

Recently, to promote and propagate the **Jammu and Kashmir Film Policy-2024**, the J&K administration has set up a pavilion at the Film Bazaar of the **55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa**.

Key Points

- The **Jammu and Kashmir Film Policy-2024** highlights its potential to establish J&K as a **leading destination for film production**.
- **Policy Objectives:**
 - The policy seeks to boost both domestic and international film production in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - It includes plans for **high-impact financial incentives** to make J&K an attractive filming destination.
 - The policy focuses on **developing film studios, production facilities, and hosting promotional events** such as film conclaves.
- **Natural and Cultural Diversity:**
 - J&K offers **diverse filming locations**, including scenic valleys, lakes, historic sites, and modern urban landscapes.
 - This unparalleled diversity makes J&K a unique hub for filmmakers.

Note:

- **Single-Window Clearance System:**
 - A **single-window clearance system** has been developed to **streamline the process** of obtaining shooting permissions.
 - This system ensures **time-bound approvals**, simplifying production logistics for filmmakers.
- **Financial Incentives:**
 - Filmmakers can avail a **10% subsidy on the cost of production**.
 - An **additional 25% subsidy** is provided for movies that win **national** or international awards.
- **Economic Impact:**
 - These measures aim to revitalise J&K's economy by creating employment opportunities, increasing tourism, and promoting J&K as a **global hub for film tourism**.

International Film Festival of India (IFFI)

- **About:**
 - **Established in 1952**, IFFI is one of Asia's most prominent film festivals.
 - The festival is **held annually**, with its permanent venue in the state of **Goa since 2004**.
 - It is the only South Asian film festival accredited by the **International Federation of Film Producers and Associations (FIAPF)** as a Competitive Feature Film Festival.
- **Objectives:**
 - Provides a **platform for global filmmakers** to showcase excellence in film art.
 - Promotes **understanding and appreciation of diverse film cultures** in their social and cultural contexts.
 - Fosters friendship and cooperation among people worldwide.
- **Organizing Entities:**
 - Jointly organized by the **National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)**, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Government of Goa, and the **Indian Film Industry**.

Support to TRI Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the Minister for Tribal Affairs has directed the **Tribal Research Institute (TRI)** to **accelerate development activities** under the ambitious **"Support to TRI" scheme**.

Key Points

- **About Support to TRI scheme:**
 - The **Support to Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) scheme** is a **Ministry of Tribal Affairs program** that provides financial assistance to TRIs in states and union territories.
 - Its goal is to strengthen TRIs as knowledge hubs for tribal development by supporting research, documentation, training, and capacity building.
 - The Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides **100% grant-in-aid to TRIs on a need basis**.
 - The scheme supports various activities, including:
 - Preserving and promoting tribal languages and dialects
 - Documenting folklore and folktales
 - Collecting oral literature
 - Conducting conferences, seminars, workshops, and poetic symposiums
 - Organizing cultural festivals and exchange programs
 - Maintaining and preserving art and artifacts
 - Setting up tribal museums
- **Heritage Preservation:**
 - Proposed activities include robust research and documentation to record and **preserve the heritage and traditions of tribal communities** in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - TRI was asked to **initiate programs safeguarding tribal art, traditions, and languages** to ensure their continuity for future generations.
- **Capacity Building:**
 - TRI was instructed to conduct capacity-building programs to equip tribal communities with skills and resources to adapt to evolving socio-economic challenges.
- **Youth Empowerment:**
 - Measures aim to **close educational gaps and promote career readiness among tribal youth** through targeted interventions.
 - Directed activities focus on **skill development, livelihood enhancement, and educational support for tribal youth**.
 - Special emphasis is on **coaching for tribal students**, preparing for competitive exams and creating fellowship opportunities for action research proposals.

Note:

➤ Commitment to Holistic Development:

- The government reaffirmed its commitment to the **holistic development of the tribal population**, emphasizing TRI's crucial role in driving this mission.

Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs)

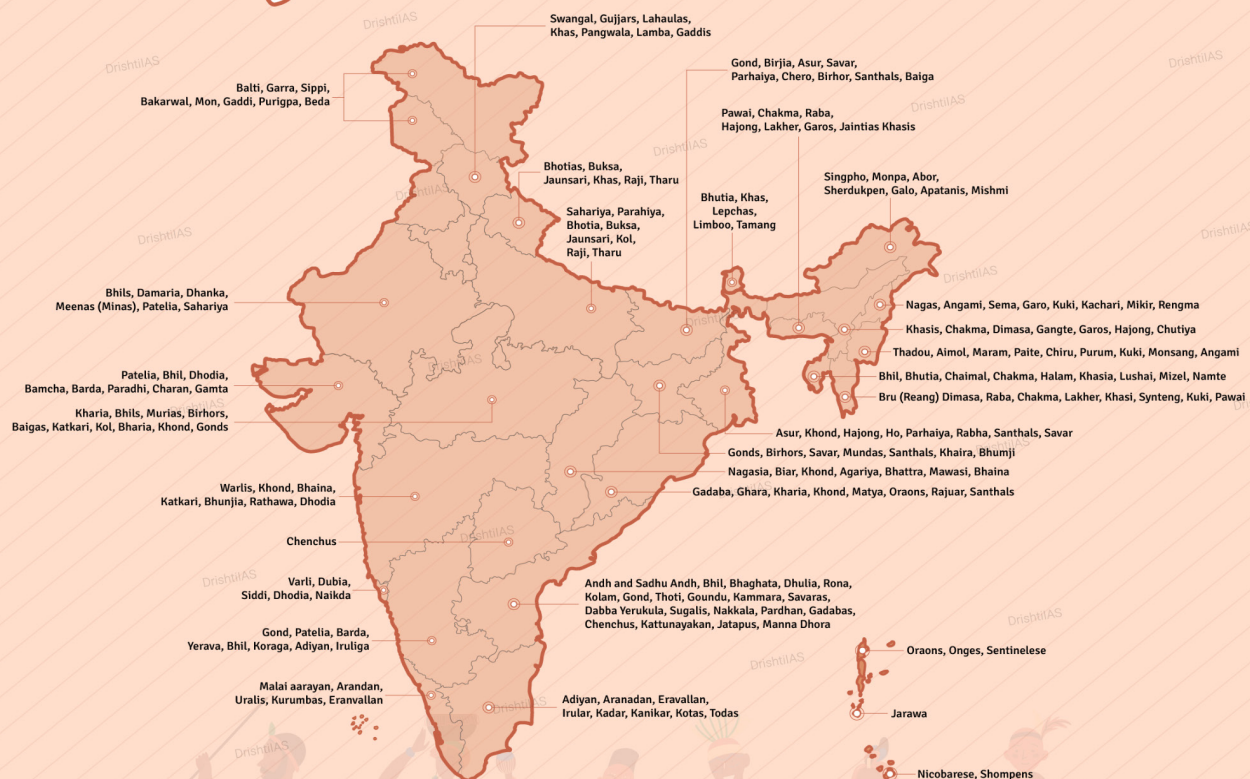
➤ About:

- TRIs serve as **research arms of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs at the state level**, with **27 institutes across India**.

➤ Core Responsibilities:

- Serve as **think tanks for tribal development and preservation of tribal cultural heritage**.
- Provide **evidence-based inputs** for state planning and formulation of appropriate legislations.
- Focus on **capacity building of tribal communities** and stakeholders involved in tribal affairs.
- Facilitate **dissemination of information and create awareness** about tribal issues and heritage.

Major Tribes in India



- STs constitute **8.6% of the population of India** (Census 2011). Draft National Tribal Policy, 2006 records **698 STs** in India.
- **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. Among the 75 listed PVTGs, the highest number is found in Odisha.
- **Bhil** is the largest tribal group (38% of the total scheduled tribal population of India) followed by the Gonds.
- **Madhya Pradesh** has the highest tribal population in India (Census 2011).
- The **Santhal** are the oldest tribes in India. The Santhal system of governance, known as **Manjhi-Paragana**, can be compared to local self-governance.
- According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes list (modification orders), 1956, the inhabitants of **Lakshadweep** who and both of whose parents were born in these islands are treated as STs.
- **Article 342** of the Constitution prescribes procedure to be followed for specification of STs.
- **Article 275** provides for the **grant of special funds** by the Union Government to the State Government for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with a better administration.

Note:

CRPF Cup Second Edition

Why in News?

Recently, the **second edition of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Cup Srinagar Sector**, a **cricket tournament** scheduled from 20th to 28th November 2024, was inaugurated. Its aim is to **establish maximum engagement with the youth of Kashmir**.

Key Points

- **Situation in Kashmir:**
 - A senior CRPF officer in Srinagar stated that the **situation in Kashmir is under control**, highlighting that all **security agencies are working in close coordination to ensure stability** in the region
- **Inauguration of CRPF Cup:**
 - The CRPF Inspector General inaugurated the second edition of the CRPF Cup at the **Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium in Srinagar**.
 - The tournament features **16 teams**, 12 from Srinagar district and two each from Budgam and Ganderbal districts.
- **Upcoming Sports Events:**
 - It was announced that a **football tournament is planned for December 2024** as part of ongoing youth engagement initiatives.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

- **Inception and Evolution:**
 - The CRPF was initially **established as the Crown Representatives Police in 1939** in response to political turmoil and unrest within the princely states.
 - The force was **renamed the Central Reserve Police Force in 1949**.
 - **Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel**, the then **Home Minister**, envisioned a multifaceted role for the CRPF, aligning its functions with the evolving needs of a newly independent nation.
- **Specialised Units:**
 - The CRPF has several specialised units, including **the Rapid Action Force (RAF), Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), VIP Security Wing, and Mahila Battalions**.

➤ **Achievements and Contributions:**

- The force has thwarted attacks on important national landmarks, **controlled militancy in Punjab and insurgency in Tripura**, and made significant contributions to **eradicating Naxalism**.

➤ **Honouring the Bravehearts:**

- The CRPF has paid a heavy price, with 2,255 of its **soldiers making the supreme sacrifice** and being honoured with decorations, including the **George Cross, Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra, Shaurya Chakra**, etc.

Tawi Riverfront Project

Why in News?

Recently, Jammu and Kashmir **Lieutenant Governor** Manoj Sinha conducted the on-site inspection and reviewed the progress of **Tawi Riverfront project**.

Key Points

➤ **Accelerating Project Completion:**

- The Lieutenant Governor (L-G) directed officers and implementing agencies to **expedite the completion of the prestigious Tawi Riverfront project** in a time-bound manner.

➤ **Timeline and Significance of the Project:**

- Interacting with mediapersons, the L-G announced that the first phase of the **flagship Tawi Riverfront project under Jammu Smart City is expected to be completed by January 2025**.
- The project **aims to enhance Jammu's tourism potential and provide recreational spaces** for residents and visitors.

➤ **Completed Tourism Initiatives:**

- Several initiatives to boost Jammu's tourism have already been completed, including the **Jambu Zoo, light and sound show, and the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Temple**.

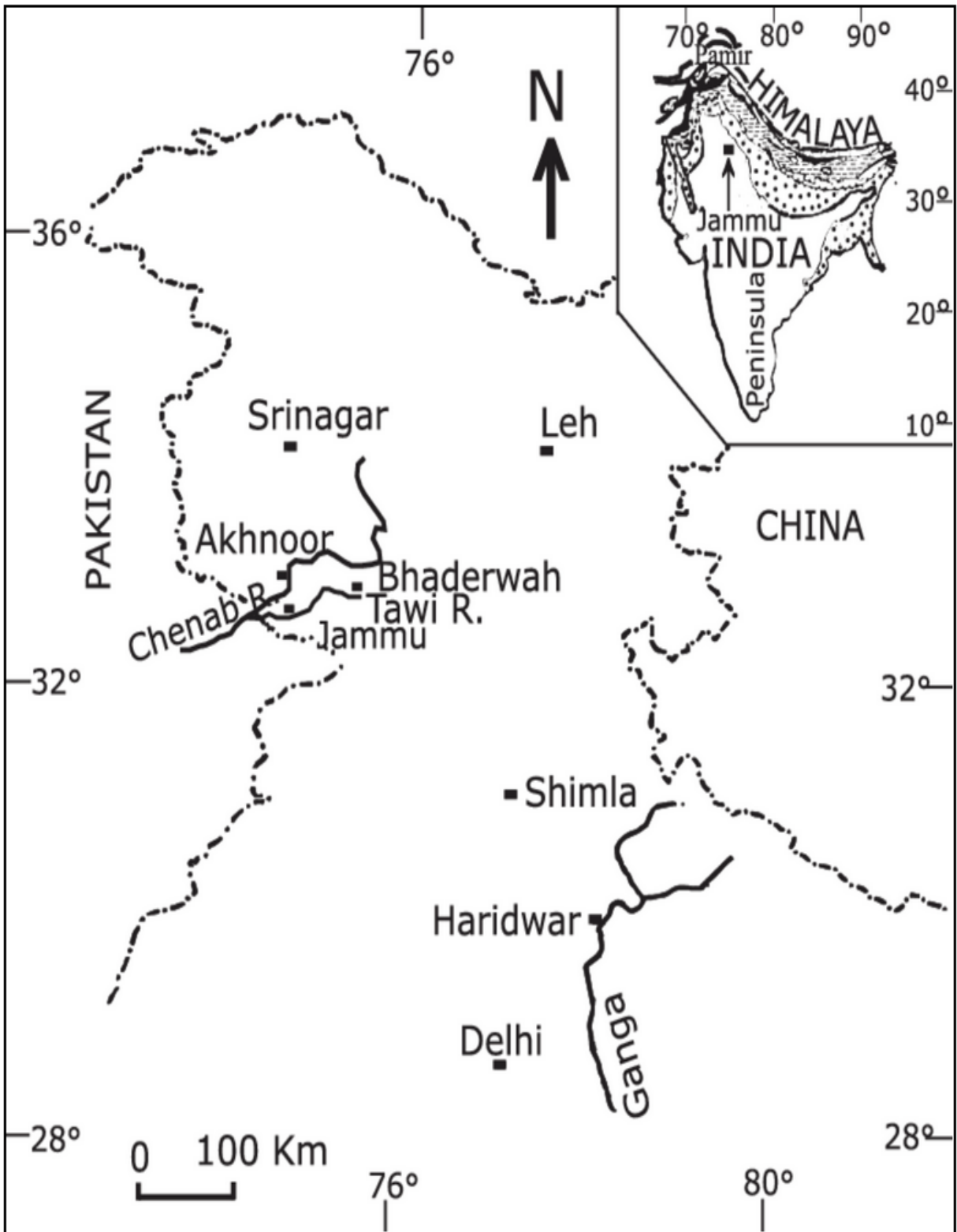
➤ **Future Plans for Tourism Development:**

- Efforts are underway to create additional tourist destinations in Jammu city and the wider region with the support of the Government of India.

Note:



Tawi River



Note:



- **Location:**
 - The Tawi River is a **major tributary of the Chenab River** in Jammu and Kashmir. It originates from the **Kali Kundi glacier** in the Doda district and flows through the city of Jammu. The river then crosses into Pakistan's Punjab province and merges with the Chenab River.
- **Significance:**
 - The Tawi River is an important river in the Jammu region and was once the **main source of drinking water for the city**. It is **also known as Surya Putri in ancient texts**.
- **Challenges:**
 - The quality of the Tawi River has **deteriorated due to pollution from solid waste and the dumping of sewage** into the river.
 - The **river's course also changes** throughout the year, causing erosion of fields and breaching embankments.
- **Catchment area:**
 - The Tawi River's **catchment area is 2,168 square kilometers** and falls within the **districts of Jammu, Udhampur, and a small part of Doda**.
- **Length:**
 - The Tawi River is about **141 kilometers long**.

Chinar Boat Race

Why in News?

Recently, the famous **Chinar boat race 2024** was organised in Jammu and Kashmir's **Dal Lake** by the Indian Army.

Key Points

- **About the Race:**
 - The **Indian Army**, in collaboration with **White Globe NGO** and the **Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA)**, successfully organised the **Chinar Boat Race 2024**.
 - A total of **60 boats competed enthusiastically**, reflecting the vibrant cultural traditions of Kashmir.
- **Winners and Awards:**
 - **First Prize:** Cash prize of Rs 10,000 and a trophy.
 - **Second Prize:** Rs 7,500.
 - **Third Prize:** Rs 5,000.
 - **Consolation Prizes:** Distributed to the top 20 participants to recognise their efforts.
- **Purpose and Message:**
 - The event celebrated the **rich culture and tradition of Kashmir**.
 - It highlighted the **importance of protecting Kashmir's water bodies**, especially **Dal Lake**.
 - Fostered a **sense of community through traditional sports**, promoting ecological health.
- **Army's Role in J&K:**
 - The Indian Army continues to organise sports and cultural events to **strengthen ties with the local population**.
 - These efforts **enable the Army to serve the community effectively** during **natural disasters** like **earthquakes and floods**.
 - Such events **inspire local youth to pursue honourable professions**, including joining the Army.

Note:



Dal Lake



- It is a lake in Srinagar, the capital of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).
- It is one of the world's largest natural lakes and the second largest lake in J&K.
- It is integral to tourism and recreation in Kashmir and is named the "Jewel in the crown of Kashmir" or "Srinagar's Jewel".
- It is also an important source for commercial operations in fishing and water plant harvesting.
- It covers an area of 18 square kilometres and is part of a natural wetland including its floating gardens.
 - The floating gardens, known as "Raad" in Kashmiri, blossom with lotus flowers during July and August.

Chinar Tree

- **About:**
 - The Chinar, also known as the **Oriental plane**, is a **large, deciduous tree** that is native to the **Western Himalayas and is a symbol of Kashmir**.
 - It is an important part of **Kashmiri culture and tradition**. There is a Chinar tree in almost every village in Kashmir, and the **oldest Chinar in Kashmir is over 600 years old**.
- **Appearance:**
 - The Chinar tree has **maple-like leaves** that are **deep green in the summer and change to red, amber, and yellow in the fall**. It has a spreading crown and flaking bark.
- **Uses:**
 - The leaves and bark of Chinar are used for **medicinal purposes**.
 - The wood, also known as lacewood, is used to make **fine furniture**.
 - Twigs and roots are used to make **fabric dye**.

Public Durbar in Kathua

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Minister of Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions** conducted a "Public Durbar" in block Marheen, **district Kathua of Jammu and Kashmir**.

- It is part of his outreach initiative, in which he **directly engaged with the public to address their issues and concerns**.

Key Points

- **Outcomes of the Public Durbar:**
 - Several **issues raised by individual citizens and delegations were resolved on the spot**.
 - Instructions for immediate action in several other cases were issued.
 - **This marked the third Public Durbar held in different parts of Kathua district** in recent months, showcasing sustained public engagement.
- **Commitment to Public Service:**
 - It was emphasized that **elected leaders must address genuine public needs** while reassuring citizens that their concerns are valued and heard.
 - Such events **bridge the gap between the public and administration**, fulfilling the government's promise to serve citizens effectively.
- **Focus of the Government:**
 - **Serving common citizens**.
 - Reducing public inconvenience.
 - **Delivering services at citizens' doorsteps** to enhance their ease of living.
 - **Rising above narrow considerations** of politics, caste, creed, and region.
- Guided by the motto of **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas**, Public Durbars are used as a **platform to connect with citizens**, ensuring their issues are addressed

Forest Fire & Landmine Explosions in Jammu and Kashmir

Why in News?

In Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, a **forest fire** along **the Line of Control (LoC)** triggered the explosion of nearly half a dozen landmines, which were part of an **anti-infiltration obstacle system**.

Note:

Key Points

- **Explosions Triggered by Forest Fire:**
 - The explosions were triggered by a forest fire that spread to Indian territory in the **Krishna Ghati sector, Mendhar sub-division**.
 - The fire began on the other side of the border before spreading to Indian forward areas.
 - Authorities are **investigating the cause, with speculation** of deliberate attempts from across the border to damage **India's anti-infiltration obstacle system**.
- **Casualties and Control Measures:**
 - No casualties have been reported and efforts to control the flames are actively ongoing.
- **Army Response:**
 - The Indian Army stationed along the LoC is on **high alert to prevent potential infiltration attempts by terrorists**.

Line of Control

- The Line of Control (LoC) emerged from the 1948 ceasefire line negotiated by the **United Nations (UN)** after the **Kashmir War**.
- It was designated as the LoC in 1972, following the Shimla Agreement between the two countries.
- LoC is demarcated upto the **Siachen Glacier** (Point NJ9842)- the world's highest battlefield.
- LoC is delineated on a map signed by the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) of both armies and has the international sanctity of a legal agreement.



Investigation into Allegations of "Ill-Treatment" of Civilians

Why in News?

The Army initiated an investigation into **allegations of "ill-treatment" of civilians** during search operations for militants in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district.

Key Points

- **Launch of Operation:**
 - The **Rashtriya Rifles** initiated an operation in the Kishtwar Sector, based on specific intelligence about terrorist movements.
 - The **White Knight Corps** confirmed the operation and ongoing monitoring of the terrorist group.
- **Allegations of Civilian Ill-Treatment:**
 - **Allegations surfaced regarding the ill-treatment of four men** from Kuath village, who were reportedly called to an Army camp.
 - Sources suggest the allegations include **accusations of torture in custody**.
- The Army announced an investigation to verify the claims and assured necessary follow-up actions.
- **Past Allegations:**
 - In **December 2023 three civilians were allegedly killed in custody** in connection with a terror attack in Poonch.
 - Following an inquiry, **lapses in personnel conduct were reported**, and the involved Army unit was relocated out of the district.
 - This situation underscores ongoing tensions and challenges in managing **counter-terrorism operations** while addressing allegations of **human rights violations**.

The Rashtriya Rifles

- It is a **counter-insurgency force** in India, formed in **1990**, to deal with **internal security** in the Jammu and Kashmir region.
- They maintain public order by drawing powers from the **Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990 (AFSPA)**.

Note:

- The force operates under **the Ministry of Defence**. The Indian Army describes RR as their “**specialist elite force to combat insurgency**”.
- The RR is headquartered at **Northern Command in Udhampur** and **commanded by an Additional Director General of Rashtriya Rifles (ADG RR)**.

NIA Conducts Raids to Investigate Militant Infiltration

Why in News?

The **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** conducted searches at multiple locations across **five districts of Jammu and Kashmir**. These searches were linked to a case involving **terrorist infiltration from across the border** and **recent attacks on security forces and civilians**.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - The NIA registered a case based on information about the infiltration of active terrorists belonging to **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)** and **Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM)** into Indian territory through the **International Border (IB)** and **Line of Control (LoC)**.
- **NIA Searches:**
 - **Locations:**
 - NIA teams conducted extensive searches at eight locations across the districts of Reasi, Udhampur, Doda, Ramban, and Kishtwar in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - **Outcomes:**
 - The searches resulted in the **seizure of materials linking banned terrorist outfits to overground workers (OGWs) and hybrid terrorists**.
 - The premises of sympathisers and cadres of banned organisations were also searched as part of the operation.
 - **Link to Banned Outfits:**
 - The suspected hybrid terrorists and OGWs were associated with new offshoots and affiliates of banned terrorist outfits such as **LeT** and **JeM**.

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- **About:**
 - The **NIA** is the **Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency of India** mandated to investigate all the **offences affecting the sovereignty, security and integrity of India**. It includes:
 - Friendly relations with foreign states.
 - Against atomic and nuclear facilities.
 - **Smuggling of arms, drugs and fake Indian currency** and infiltration from across the borders.
 - The offences under the **statutory laws enacted to implement international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions of the United Nations**, its agencies and other international organisations.
 - It was **constituted under the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008**.
 - The agency is empowered to deal with the investigation of terror related crimes across states **without special permission from the states under written proclamation from the Ministry of Home Affairs**.
 - **Headquarters:** New Delhi

Action Against Illegal Mining

Why in News?

Recently, the **Deputy Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir** chaired a **high-level meeting** to deliberate on the pressing issue of **illegal mining** across Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Points

- **Strict Measures Against Illegal Mining:**
 - The Deputy CM directed officials to **implement stringent measures to eradicate illegal mining**.
 - He stressed the **need for night-time vigilance and frequent inspections** to monitor activities.

Note:

- Emphasis was placed on **ensuring accountability at all levels of administration.**
- **Issues of mismatch** between field data and records on the **J&K Mining Web Portal** were also highlighted.
- **Data Management and Coordination:**
 - Officials were instructed to provide updated and comprehensive data on mining activities.
 - Consistent coordination with police was urged to enhance field-level monitoring.
- **Environmental Concerns and Sustainable Management:**
 - Concerns were raised over **pollution in water bodies** caused by illegal mining.
 - The need for concerted efforts to address ecological damage as part of **sustainable resource management** was emphasized.

Illegal Mining

- **About:**
 - Illegal mining is the extraction of minerals, ores, or other valuable resources from land or water bodies **without the necessary permits, licenses, or regulatory approvals** from government authorities.
 - It can also involve the violation of environmental, labor, and safety standards.
- **Issues:**
 - Environmental Degradation:
 - It can lead to deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution and can result in the **destruction of habitats for wildlife**, which can have serious ecological consequences.
 - Hazards:
 - Illegal mining often involves the **use of hazardous chemicals such as mercury and cyanide**, which can pose serious health risks to miners and nearby communities.
 - Loss of Revenue:
 - It can lead to a **loss of revenue for governments** as miners may not pay appropriate taxes and royalties.
 - This can have significant economic impacts, particularly in countries where natural resources are a major source of revenue.

- Human Rights Violations:
 - Illegal mining can also result in **human rights violations**, including forced labor, child labor, and exploitation of vulnerable populations.

BRO Clears Snow at Zojila Pass

Why in News?

Recently, the **Border Roads Organization (BRO)** conducted a snow clearance operation at **Zojila Pass**, following heavy **snowfall**, to restore connectivity and ensure safe travel in the area.

Key Points

- The Machil sector in **Kupwara district** experienced **fresh snowfall**, adding to the region's scenic beauty.
- **Zoji La Pass:**
 - Zoji La is a **high mountain pass located in the Kargil district of Ladakh.**
 - The pass links **Leh and Srinagar** and provides an important link between **Union Territories of Ladakh and Kashmir.**
 - Zoji La pass remains closed during winters due to heavy snowfall, **cutting off Ladakh region from Kashmir.**
 - In 2018, the **Zoji La tunnel project** was launched. The **tunnel is Asia's longest and strategic bi-directional tunnel**, which will provide all-weather connectivity between **Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.**

Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

- BRO was **conceived and raised in 1960** by **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru** for coordinating the **speedy development of a network of roads in the North and the North Eastern border regions** of the country.
- It works under the **administrative control of the Ministry of Defence.**
- It has diversified into a large spectrum of construction and development works **comprising airfields, building projects, defence works and tunneling** and has endeared itself to the people.

Note:

MAJOR PASSES IN INDIA



FACTS

- Umling La pass located in Eastern Ladakh has recently become the world's highest motorable pass (Project Himank).
- Lipu Lekh Pass is located close to the tri junction of Uttarakhand (India), China and Nepal.
- Nathu La (Sikkim) is situated on the Indo-Tibetan border. It is one of the three open trading passes between India and China (other two: Shipki La and Lipu Lekh Pass).
- Naku La, located in Sikkim, was recently in news due to the Indo-China face-off along the LAC at the pass.
- Zoji La links Leh with Srinagar and is known as the "Mountain Pass of Blizzards". The Zojila tunnel is Asia's longest tunnel.
- Dungri La (or Mana) Pass connects India and Tibet. It is located in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve of the Zaskar mountain range (Uttarakhand). Even Indian nationals need prior permits from the Army to travel through this pass.
- Rohtang Pass (Himachal Pradesh) is situated in the Pir Panjal Range of the great Himalayas and connects Kullu Valley with Lahaul and Spiti Valleys.
- The widest gap of Western Ghats is at Palakkad (or Pal Ghat) in Kerala adjoining Tamil Nadu.

Note:

Saffron Production Declines in Kashmir Valley

Why in News?

The **Kashmir Valley** has experienced a notable **decline in production of saffron** due to insufficient rainfall.

- The harvest, traditionally **carried out from mid-October to November**, is primarily concentrated in **South Kashmir's Pampore**, famously known as the **"Saffron Bowl of Kashmir."**

Key Points

- **Rainfall Deficit in Kashmir:**
 - Srinagar meteorological department reported a 79% **rainfall deficit** from 1st October to 14th November 2024, following a 26% deficit during the monsoon, **severely affecting agriculture**, including saffron.
- **Government Initiatives:**
 - The **National Mission on Saffron (NMS)**, launched in 2010–11, **aims to address challenges in saffron cultivation**.
 - In 2020, **Kashmiri saffron** received the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**, with efforts underway to position it as a globally recognized brand.
- **Farmers' Demands:**
 - Farmers emphasize the need for operational borewells and enhanced funding under NMS to ensure sustainable saffron cultivation and address ongoing challenges.
- **Saffron:**
 - Saffron is a **plant whose dried stigmas (thread-like parts of the flower)** are used to make **saffron spice**.
 - Saffron cultivation is believed to **have been introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants** around the 1st Century BCE.
 - It has been **associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine** and represents the rich cultural heritage of the region.
 - It is a **very precious and costly product**.
 - In ancient Sanskrit literature, **Saffron is referred to as 'Bahukam'**.
 - It is cultivated and harvested in the Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir.

Types:

- There are **three types** of saffron available in Kashmir **Lachha Saffron, Mongra Saffron and Guchhi Saffron**.

Importance:

- It **rejuvenates health and is used in cosmetics** and for medicinal purposes.
- It has been associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine and **represents the rich cultural heritage of the region**.

Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

- A GI tag is a **name or sign used on certain products** that correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.
- The GI tag ensures that only the **authorised users or those residing in the geographical territory** are allowed to use the popular product name.
 - It also protects the product from being copied or imitated by others.
- A registered GI is **valid for 10 years**.
- GI registration is overseen by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

Drive Launched to Curb Child Labour

Why in News?

Recently, the administration in **Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district** has intensified efforts to **combat child labor and begging** while taking measures to **address the challenges faced by children living on the streets**.

Key Points

- According to the officials, **collective efforts are essential to eradicate child exploitation** and create a safer environment for children.
- Authorities urged citizens to stay vigilant and **report any instances of child exploitation or violations**.
- **Anti-Beggary Drive in Katra:**
 - A joint **'Anti-Beggary and Children in Street Situations' drive** was conducted in Katra by the Child Helpline, in partnership with the Police and Health Departments.
 - During the drive, **11 children forced into beggary were rescued**.

Note:



➤ **Ongoing Rescue Initiatives:**

- The Social Welfare Department will continue similar drives across the district.
- The **objective is to rescue children from exploitation and ensure they lead a dignified life.**

Child Labour in India

- According to the last available **Census 2011**, there were 10.1 million child labourers in India.
- **India's biggest child labour employers** states are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **The Article 23** of the Indian Constitution prohibits human trafficking and begar (forced labour without payment) to protect the millions of underprivileged and deprived people of the country.
 - The right is available to **citizens of India as well as to non-citizens.**
 - The right provides against human trafficking in the form of:
 - Selling and buying of men, women and children.
 - Prostitution
 - **Devadasis**
 - Slavery.
 - The **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956** has been enacted to deal with violations of this fundamental right.
 - **Article 24** of the Indian Constitution forbids employment of children below the age of 14 years in hazardous work like factories and mines.
 - However, it did not prohibit their employment in any harmless or innocent work.
 - The **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986** (renamed as **Child & Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986** in 2016) specifically deals with the violations related to Prohibition of employment of children (below the age fourteen years) in factories, etc.

- The **2016 amendment** of this act completely prohibited employment of children below 14 years of age in all occupations and processes.
- It also **prohibited the employment of adolescents** (14-18 years of age) in hazardous occupations or processes.

- **Articles 39** states that, the State shall in particular, direct its policies towards securing:
 - Right to an adequate means of livelihood to all the citizens.
 - The ownership and control of material resources shall be organised in a manner to serve the common good.
 - The State shall avoid concentration of wealth in a few hands.
 - Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
 - The protection of the strength and health of the workers.
 - Childhood and youth shall not be exploited.

Delay Arrival of Migratory Birds in Kashmir Valley

Why in News?

Due to less rainfall in the **Kashmir Valley**, the **wetlands** are left severely dry adversely affecting the arrival of **migratory birds**.

Key Points

➤ **Decline in Migratory Birds:**

- Each year, by late September or October, lakhs of migratory birds from **Siberia, China, Central Asia, and Northern Europe** migrate to the **Kashmir Valley's wetlands**, with **Hokersar Wetland** being the most significant site.
- In 2024, it noted a sharp decline in bird arrivals compared to previous years.

➤ **Factors Contributing to Fewer Birds:**

- Experts attribute the decline to **global warming**, with prolonged summers delaying the onset of winter, resulting in a 10-15 day delay in bird arrivals.

Note:



- **Reduced rainfall and dry wetlands have worsened the situation**, contributing to fewer birds this November. However, experts expect numbers to rise as weather conditions improve.
- **Shrinking Wetlands and Habitat Loss:**
 - Experts have raised **concerns about the shrinking Hokersar wetland**, also known as the ‘Queen of Wetlands.’
 - From **1969 to 2008**, the wetland’s area reduced from **18.75 sq km to 13 sq km**, with a loss of 150 hectares of marshy land within it.
- **Future Threat to Migratory Birds:**
 - **Without proper action** to restore and protect these wetlands, the **future of both the habitats and the migratory birds** that depend on them **remains uncertain**.

Hokersar Wetland

- **Location:**
 - The Hokersar wetland, a **Ramsar site**, is situated in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. It is **also known as the ‘Queen Wetland of Kashmir’**.
- **Geographic Setting:**
 - It is a natural, perennial **wetland that is part of the Jhelum basin** and is located in the **northwest Himalayan biogeographic province of Kashmir**, at the foot of the snow-draped **Pir Panchal range**.
- **Water Source:**
 - The wetland receives water from the **Doodhganga River, a tributary of the Jhelum**.
- **Flora and Fauna:**
 - **It is home to the last remaining reedbeds of Kashmir** and serves as a **critical pathway for 68 waterfowl species**.
 - These birds, **migrating from regions like Siberia, China, Central Asia, and Europe**, include species such as the **little cormorant, common shelduck, large egret, and great crested grebe**.
 - The wetland is **vital for local biodiversity**, offering food sources, spawning grounds, and nurseries for fish, along with breeding habitats for various species.

Policy for Premature Release of Convicts

Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court** directed the **Government of Jammu and Kashmir** to draft a **policy for the premature release of convicts** based on the duration of their imprisonment.

Key Points

- **About the Case:**
 - A Supreme Court Bench addressed a petition filed by former **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** personnel **sentenced to life imprisonment**.
 - He was **convicted for killing three CRPF personnel** after being publicly reprimanded over a leave-related issue.
 - The accused has **served over 18 years in prison and is seeking premature release**.
 - The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir **opposed the petition, citing the absence of a policy for premature release** based on incarceration duration.
- **Court’s Observation and Direction:**
 - The Bench remarked that the **lack of a policy is not a valid ground for denial**, as policy formulation falls under the state’s domain.

Note:

- The Bench emphasized the need for an appropriate policy and directed submission of a compliance report by the state counsel.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

➤ About:

- The CRPF was initially established as the Crown Representatives Police in 1939 in response to political turmoil and unrest within the princely states.
- The force was renamed the Central Reserve Police Force in 1949.
- **Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel**, the then Home Minister, envisioned a multifaceted role for the CRPF, aligning its functions with the evolving needs of a newly independent nation.

➤ Specialised Units:

- The CRPF has several specialised units, including the **Rapid Action Force (RAF)**, **Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA)**, VIP Security Wing, and Mahila Battalions.

➤ Key Roles and Responsibilities:



Impact of PMUY in Jammu and Kashmir

Why in News?

A study was conducted to assess the impact of **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** in Jammu and Kashmir.

- Under the scheme the government has distributed 10.3 crore **Liquified Petroleum Gas** connections.

Key Points

➤ Methodology and Aim of the Study:

- The study collected primary data from 820 households across 48 villages in Kulgam and Rajouri, two relatively disadvantaged districts in J&K.

Note:



- This study investigates the **PMUY's impact on clean cooking fuel adoption in the districts**, focusing on socio-economic and health outcomes, barriers to exclusive LPG use, and the role of awareness.
- The sample includes representation from various economic groups:
 - **Above Poverty Line (APL), Below Poverty Line (BPL), and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** households.
- **Findings of the Study:**
 - LPG Connection Adoption:
 - In rural J&K, 85.07% of households have official LPG connections, with **68% of these obtained through the PMUY**.
 - Only 4.41% of rural households, primarily in hilly areas like Rajouri, lack access to LPG, while 10.53% rely on unofficial connections.
 - Despite increased LPG availability, **traditional cooking methods** remain common:
 - **92% of households still use traditional chulhas**, and 85% engage in fuel stacking by using both solid fuels and LPG.
 - Health Benefits for PMUY Beneficiaries:
 - PMUY adoption has led to **significant health improvements for women**, by reducing exposure to smoke from traditional fuels.
 - Among **BPL households**, **respiratory issues were reduced**.
 - **AAY households** also saw **reduced health issues** from 13% among non-beneficiaries to 10% for beneficiaries.
 - Barriers to Exclusive LPG Usage:
 - **Lack of awareness** remains a barrier, with 47% of households unaware of solid fuel health risks.
 - The **cost of LPG refills is prohibitive for many, leading to fuel stacking** with cheaper solid fuels.
 - Fuel stacking remains common in 85% of households, highlighting the need for additional financial support.
 - Recommendations:
 - Expanding the **LPG distribution network in rural areas** and providing additional financial support for refills can further promote clean fuel adoption and reduce reliance on solid fuels.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

➤ About:

- The **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**, introduced the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana' (PMUY) as a flagship scheme with the objective of making **clean cooking fuel such as LPG available to the rural and deprived households** which were otherwise using traditional cooking fuels such as firewood, coal, cow-dung cakes etc.
 - Usage of traditional cooking fuels had detrimental impacts on the health of rural women as well as on the environment.

➤ Objectives:

- Empowering women and protecting their health.
- Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
- Preventing young children from a significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning **fossil fuel**.

➤ Features:

- The scheme provides a **financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL households**.
- Along with a deposit-free LPG connection, **Ujjwala 2.0** will provide the first refill and a Stove, free of cost to the beneficiaries.

Earthquake in Jammu and Kashmir

Why in News?

Recently, an **earthquake** with a magnitude of 5.2 struck Jammu and Kashmir, but **no loss of life or damage to property was reported**.

- The earthquake **originated in the Afghanistan region**, with its tremors reaching the Kashmir Valley.

Key Points

- An earthquake is a natural phenomenon characterised by a **sudden shaking of the ground caused by the passage of seismic waves** through Earth's rocks.
- The vibrations called **seismic waves are generated from earthquakes** that travel through the Earth and are recorded on instruments called **seismographs**.
 - The **location below the earth's surface where the earthquake starts** is called the **hypocenter**, and the **location directly above it** on the surface of the earth is called the **epicenter**.

Note:

EARTHQUAKE



ABOUT

- Shaking of the earth; caused due to release of energy, generating **seismic waves in all directions**

HYPOCENTER

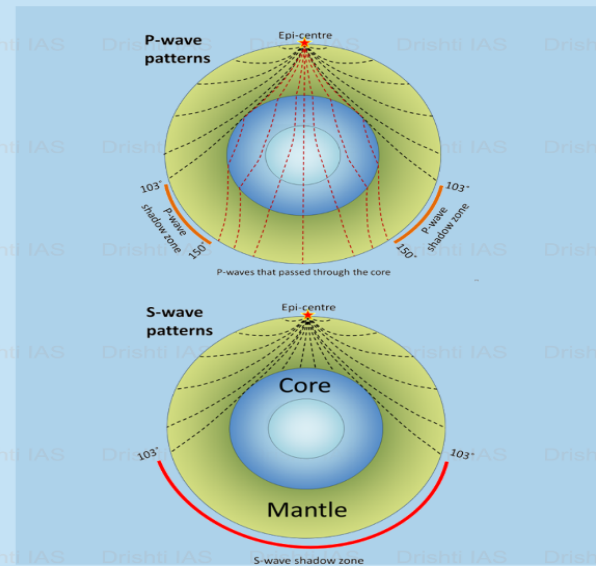
- Location where the earthquake starts (below earth's surface)

EPICENTER

- Location right above the Hypocenter (on the earth's surface)

EARTHQUAKE WAVES

- Body Waves:** Move in all directions travelling through the body of the earth
 - P Waves:** Move faster, First to arrive at surface, Similar to sound waves, Travel through gaseous, liquid and solid materials
 - S Waves:** Arrive at surface with some time lag, Travel only through solid materials
- Surface Waves:** Last to report on seismographs, More destructive, Cause displacement of rocks
 - Love Waves:** Same motion as S-waves (horizontal) without vertical displacement, Sideways motion perpendicular to the direction of propagation, Faster than Rayleigh waves
 - Rayleigh Waves:** Cause the ground to shake in an elliptical pattern, Spread out the most of all seismic waves, Move vertically and horizontally in a vertical plane



CAUSES OF EARTHQUAKES

- Release of energy along a **Fault/Fault Zones** (break in the crustal rocks)
- Movement of **tectonic plates** (most common)
- Volcanic eruption** (stress changes in rock-injection/withdrawal of magma)
- Human activities** (mining, explosion of chemical/nuclear devices etc.)

EARTHQUAKE IN INDIA

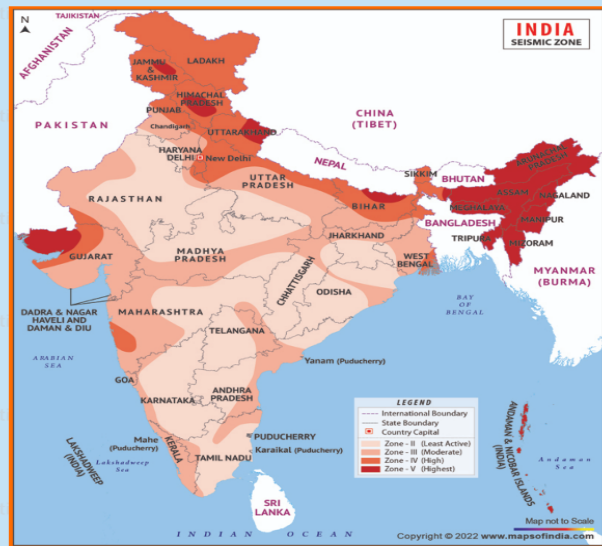
- India is one of the highly earthquake affected countries due to the presence of technically active mountains - the Himalayas.
- India has been divided into **4 seismic zones** (II, III, IV, and V)

MEASURING EARTHQUAKE

- Seismometers** - Measures seismic waves
- Richter Scale** - Measures magnitude (energy released; range: 0-10)
- Mercalli** - Measures intensity (visible damage; range: 1-12)

DISTRIBUTION

- Circum-Pacific Belt** - 81% of earthquakes
- Alpine Earthquake Belt** - 17% of the largest earthquakes
- Mid-Atlantic Ridge** - Mostly submerged underwater



Note:

Hokersar Wetland

Why in News?

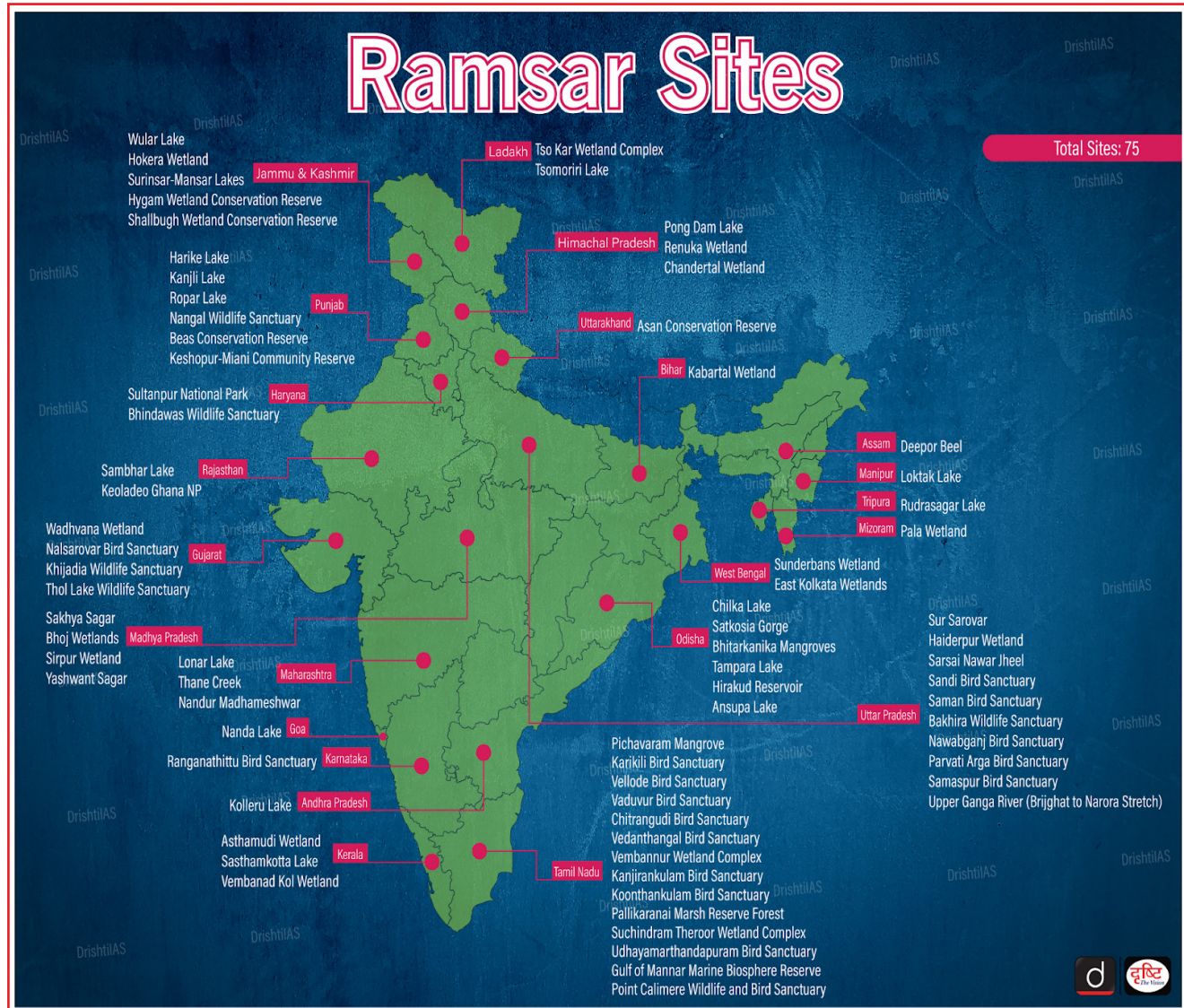
In recent years, a significant shortage of water caused by **deficient rainfall** at the **Hokersar wetland** in the **Kashmir Valley** has adversely affected the arrival of **migratory bird** populations in the area.

Key Points

➤ Hokersar Wetland:

○ Location:

- The Hokersar wetland, a **Ramsar site**, is situated in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. It is also known as the 'Queen Wetland of Kashmir'.



○ Geographic Setting:

- It is a natural, perennial wetland that is part of the **Jhelum basin** and is located in the northwest Himalayan biogeographic province of Kashmir, at the foot of the snow-draped **Pir Panchal range**.

Note:

- **Water Source:**
 - The wetland receives water from the **Doodhganga River, a tributary of the Jhelum.**
- **Flora and Fauna:**
 - It is **home to the last remaining reedbeds of Kashmir** and serves as a **critical pathway for 68 waterfowl species.**
 - These birds, **migrating from regions like Siberia, China, Central Asia, and Europe,** include species such as the **little cormorant, common shelduck, large egret, and great crested grebe.**
- The wetland is **vital for local biodiversity,** offering food sources, spawning grounds, and nurseries for fish, along with breeding habitats for various species.
- **Impact of Rainfall Deficit on the Wetland:**
 - According to the **India Meteorological Department (IMD),** the region is experiencing an **81% rainfall deficit.**
 - Experts suggest that the **lack of rainfall is not the sole reason for the reduced bird arrival.** Typically, over one lakh birds arrive by this time, with numbers reaching millions by the season's end in March and April.
 - However, **this season, only around 500 birds have arrived,** marking the lowest number since 2016.
- **Additional Factors:**
 - **Illegal sand mining, habitat degradation, and encroachment** have compounded the impact of rainfall deficit.
 - Reduced water from upstream sources like **Doodhganga and Sukhnag Nallah,** along with **mining activities,** have exacerbated the situation, draining the wetland's water.
- **Urgent Need for Conservation:**
 - Experts and activists stress the **urgent need for conservation efforts** to protect the wetland, highlighting its **crucial role for both wildlife and local livelihoods.**
 - **Sustainable practices must be prioritized** to restore the wetland's health and ensure its continued ecological function.

Survival Threat to Markhor

Why in News?

Markhor, the largest **wild goat** in the world, is **battling for survival in Jammu and Kashmir.** It is known for its **thick fur, flowing beard and corkscrew horns.**



Key Points

- **Legal Protection and Species Status:**
 - Markhor, scientifically known as *Capra falconeri*, is classified as **"Near Threatened"** by the **IUCN** and protected under **Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.**
- **Threats to Survival:**
 - Primary threats include habitat loss from fencing, illegal grazing, **poaching,** and **encroachment.** **Climate change** is also affecting food resources, driving Markhor closer to human settlements.
- **Global Recognition and Initiatives:**
 - Recognizing its ecological importance, the **UN General Assembly** designated **24th May as the International Day of the Markhor** to encourage conservation efforts.
- **Significance as a Flagship Species:**
 - Markhor serves as a flagship species for conservation in J&K, helping protect other regional wildlife, such as **Musk Deer** and **Brown Bear.**
- **Distribution and Habitat:**
 - The endangered Markhor inhabits **moist to semi-arid mountain regions** across **Pakistan, India (Jammu & Kashmir), Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.**

Note:



- In J&K, it's found in areas like **Shopian, the Pir Panjal range, and Kazinag Uri**, but its population is fragmented due to human interference and habitat loss from projects like **the Mughal Road**.
- **Impact of Mughal Road and Conservation Measures:**
 - The construction of Mughal Road, despite wildlife department opposition, disrupted Markhor habitats.
 - Following a Supreme Court directive, **5% of the road's project cost was allocated for Markhor habitat restoration**.
- **Markhor Recovery Program:**
 - **Initiated in 2004** by the **Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)** and the Wildlife Department, the program focuses on fencing sanctuaries, tracking habitat usage, and studying competition between Markhor and livestock.
- **Community Involvement and Awareness:**
 - The Wildlife Department **collaborates with Gujjar and Bakerwal herders** to educate them on conservation practices, especially in areas with livestock that compete with Markhor for space and resources.
- **Government Support and Directives:**
 - The Forest and Environment Minister recently urged the Wildlife Department to assess the impact of human activities on Markhor habitats, emphasizing soil conservation and afforestation efforts.
- **Need for Global Collaboration:**
 - Conservation efforts call for international expertise and local engagement to boost Markhor populations and preserve this unique species for future generations.



Note:

