



AFSPA and Northeast

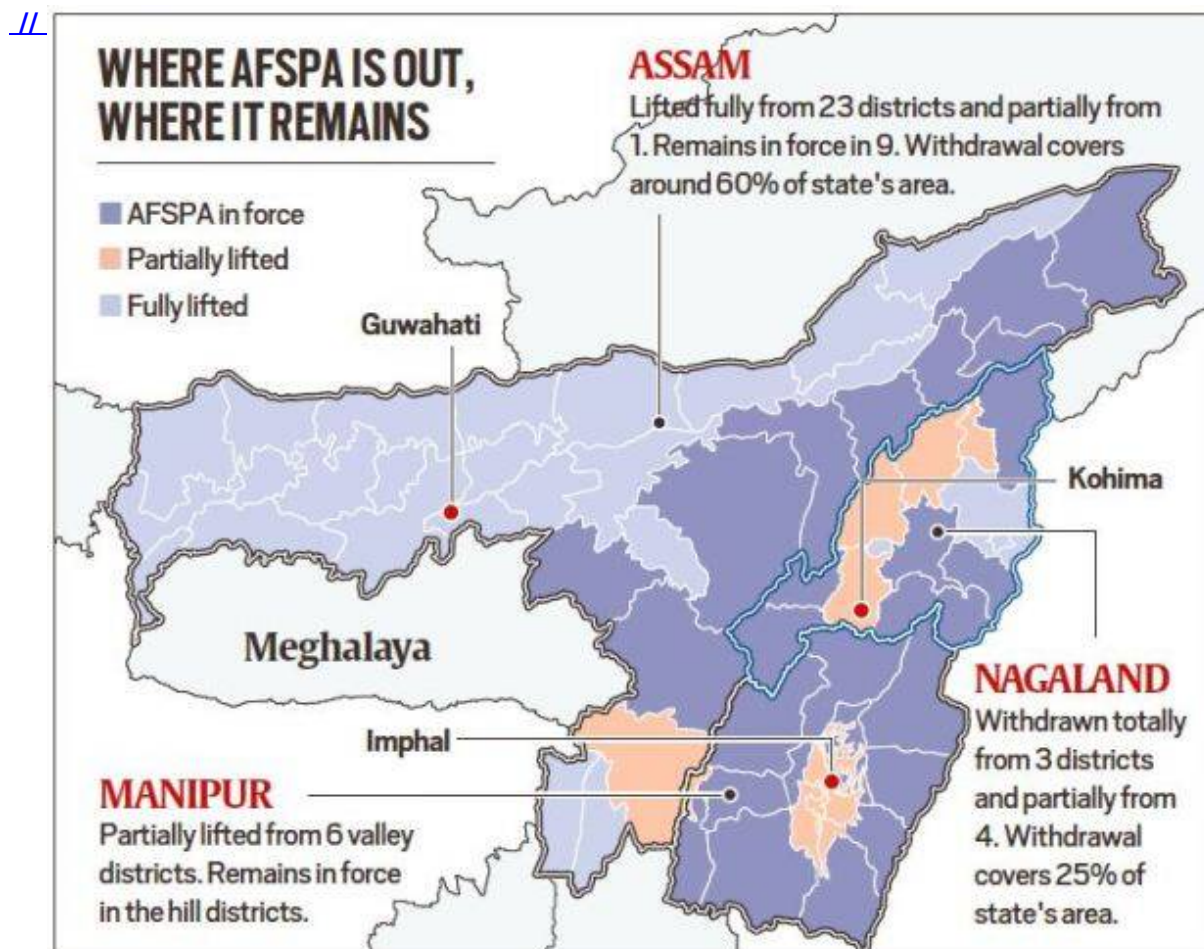
For Prelims: Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

For Mains: Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958, North East Insurgency.

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Government has partially withdrawn the [Armed Forces Special Powers Act \(AFSPA\), 1958](#) from parts of **three Northeast states— Assam, Nagaland and Manipur**.

- Currently, AFSPA remains in force in parts of these **three states as well as in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir**.



What is AFSPA?

- Background:
 - The British colonial government had on 15th August, 1942, **promulgated the Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance to suppress the [Quit India movement](#).**
 - It was the foundation for four ordinances, including **one for the “Assam disturbed areas” invoked in 1947** to deal with Partition-induced internal security challenges.
 - The **Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958, followed the Assam Disturbed Areas Act of 1955** to deal with the uprising in the Naga Hills and adjoining areas.
 - The Act was **replaced by the AFSPA for wider application**. A **similar Act specific to Jammu and Kashmir** was enacted in 1990.
- About:
 - AFSPA 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**.
 - Also, it gives them powers to **arrest individuals without warrants**, on the basis of **“reasonable suspicion”**, and **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**.
 - The Act was amended in 1972 and the powers to **declare an area as “disturbed”** were conferred concurrently **upon the Central government along with the States**.
 - Currently, the Union Home Ministry issues periodic **“disturbed area” notification to extend AFSPA only for Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh**.
 - The notification for Manipur and Assam is issued by the State governments.
 - **Tripura revoked the Act in 2015 and Meghalaya was under AFSPA for 27 years, until it was revoked by the MHA from 1st April 2018.**

What is the Role of State Governments Vis-a-Vis AFSPA?

- **Informal Consultation with State:** While the **Act gives powers to the central government to unilaterally take the decision** to impose AFSPA, this is usually done **informally in consonance with the state government**.
 - The Centre takes its decision after having **received a recommendation from the state government**.
- **Coordination with Local Police:** While the Act gives powers to security forces to open fire, this cannot be done **without prior warning given to the suspect**.
 - According to the act, after the apprehension of suspects, the **security forces have to hand them over to the local police station within 24 hours**.
 - It says the armed forces must act in cooperation with the district administration and **not as an independent body**.

Why has AFSPA been withdrawn now and Its Impact?

- **Withdrawal:** Reduction in areas under AFSPA is a result of the **improved security situation and fast-tracked development** due to the consistent efforts and several **agreements to end insurgency** and bring lasting peace in the North-East by the Indian government.
 - For example, 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.
- **Impact:** 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 move is expected to help **demilitarise the region, it will lift restrictions on movements through checkpoints and frisking of residents**.

Why was AFSPA imposed on the Northeast in the first place?

- **Naga Insurgency:** When the Naga nationalist movement kicked off in the 1950s with the setting up of the [Naga National Council \(NNC\)](#), the Assam police forces allegedly used force to quell

the movement.

- As an armed movement took root in Nagaland, **AFSPA was passed in Parliament, and subsequently imposed on the entire state.**
- In Manipur, too, it was imposed in 1958 in the three Naga-dominated districts of Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul, where the NNC was active.
- **Secessionist and Nationalist Movements:** As secessionist and nationalist movements started sprouting in other Northeastern states, AFSPA started being extended and imposed.

What has made AFSPA unpopular among the people?

- **Furtherance of Feeling of Alienation:** According to leaders of the Naga nationalist movement, the **use of force and AFSPA furthered the feeling of alienation of the Naga people, solidifying Naga nationalism.**
- **Draconian Law & Fake Encounters:** Various incidents of violence have been recorded in the Northeastern states, as AFSPA gives **sweeping powers to security forces.**
 - In a writ petition filed in the [Supreme Court in 2012](#), the families of victims of extra-judicial killings alleged **1,528 fake encounters had taken place in the state from May 1979 to May 2012.**
 - The Supreme Court set up a commission to **scrutinize six of these cases, and the commission found all six to be fake encounters.**
- **Bypassing State:** There have been instances where the Centre has overruled the state, such as the imposition of AFSPA in Tripura in 1972.

What attempts have been made to repeal AFSPA or reduce its area of operation in the past?

- **Protest by Irom Sharmila:** In 2000, the activist Irom Sharmila began a hunger strike that would continue for 16 years against AFSPA in Manipur.
- **Justice Jeevan Reddy:** In 2004, the then central government set up a five-member committee under former Supreme Court Justice Jeevan Reddy.
 - The committee recommended the repeal of AFSPA and called it “highly undesirable”, and held that it had become a symbol of oppression.
- **Second Administrative Reforms Commission Recommendation:** Subsequently, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by **Veerapa Moily, endorsed these recommendations.**

Way Forward

- The government and the security forces should abide by the guidelines set out by the Supreme Court, Jeevan Reddy Commission, and the [National Human Rights Commission \(NHRC\).](#)

[Source: IE](#)

Genome Editing

For Prelims: Site Directed Nuclease, Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, Deoxy-Ribonucleic Acid, GMO, Genome Editing.

For Mains: Genetic Engineering.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Government has allowed genome-edited plants without the cumbersome GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms) regulation at the [Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee \(GEAC\)](#).**

- The government has **exempted Site Directed Nuclease (SDN) 1 and 2 genomes from Rules 7-11 of the Environment Protection Act**, thus allowing it to avoid a long process for approval of GM crops through the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).
- The **Institutional BioSafety Committee (IBSC)** under the Environment Protection Act would now be entrusted to certify that the genome edited crop is devoid of any foreign DNA.

What is the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee?

- **It functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).**
- It is responsible for the appraisal of activities involving large-scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.
- The committee is also responsible for the appraisal of proposals relating to the release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials.
- GEAC is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of MoEF&CC and co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

What is Genome Editing?

- Genome editing (also called **gene editing**) is a group of technologies that give scientists the ability to change an organism's **Deoxy-Ribonucleic Acid (DNA)**.
- These technologies allow genetic material to be added, removed, or altered at particular locations in the genome.



- Advanced research has **allowed scientists to develop the highly effective [Clustered Regularly Interspaced Palindromic Repeat \(CRISPR\)](#) -associated proteins based systems.** This system allows for **targeted intervention at the genome sequence.**

- This tool has opened up various possibilities in plant breeding. Using this tool, agricultural scientists can now edit the genome to insert specific traits in the gene sequence.
- Depending on the nature of the edit that is carried out, the **process is divided into three categories – SDN 1, SDN 2 and SDN 3.**
 - **Site Directed Nuclease (SDN) 1 introduces** changes in the host genome's DNA through small insertions/deletions without introduction of foreign genetic material.
 - **In SDN 2**, the edit involves using a small DNA template to generate specific changes. Both these processes **do not involve alien genetic material** and the end result is indistinguishable from conventionally bred crop varieties.
 - **The SDN3 process involves larger DNA elements or full length genes of foreign origin** which makes it similar to Genetically modified organisms (GMO) development.

How is Gene Editing different from GMO development?

- Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) involves **modification of the genetic material of the host by introduction of a foreign genetic material.**
- In the case of agriculture, soil bacteria is the best mining source for such genes which are then inserted into the host genome using genetic engineering.
 - For example, in case of cotton, introduction of genes cry1Ac and cry2Ab mined from the soil bacterium Bacillus Thuringiensis (BT) allow the native cotton plant to generate endotoxins to fight pink bollworm naturally.
 - **BT Cotton** uses this advantage to help farmers naturally fight pink bollworm which is the most common pest for cotton farmers.
- The basic difference between genome editing and genetic engineering is that while the former does not involve the introduction of foreign genetic material, the latter does.
- In the case of agriculture, **both the techniques aim to generate variants which are better yielding and more resistant to biotic and abiotic stress.**
- Before the advent of genetic engineering, such variety improvement was done through selective breeding which involved carefully crossing plants with specific traits to produce the desired trait in the offspring.
- Genetic engineering has not only made this work more accurate but has also allowed scientists to have greater control on trait development.

What are the Regulatory Issues Preventing the Technique?

- Across the world, GM crops have been a topic of debate, with many environmentalists **opposing it on the grounds of bio safety and incomplete data.** In India, the introduction of GM crops is a laborious process which involves multiple levels of checks.
 - Till date the only crop which has crossed the regulatory red tape is Bt cotton.
- Scientists both in India and across the world have been quick to draw the line between GM crops and genome edited crops. The latter, they have pointed out, has no foreign genetic material in them which makes them indistinguishable from traditional hybrids.
 - Globally, **European Union** countries have bracketed genome edited crops with GM crops. Countries like Argentina, Israel, US, Canada, etc have liberal regulations for genome edited crops.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. What is Cas9 protein that is often mentioned in news? (2019)

- (a) A molecular scissors used in targeted gene editing
- (b) A biosensor used in the accurate detection of pathogens in patients
- (c) A gene that makes plants pest-resistant
- (d) A herbicidal substance synthesized in genetically modified crops

Ans: (a)

EXP:

- CRISPR-Cas9 is a unique technology that enables geneticists and medical researchers to edit parts of the genome by removing, adding or altering sections of the DNA sequence.

[Source: IE](#)

RAMP Scheme for MSMEs

For Prelims: RAMP Scheme, KV Kamath Committee, PMEAC, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME)

For Mains: Importance of MSME in the Indian Economy and related Schemes

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the “**Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance**” (RAMP) scheme which would commence in FY 2022-23.

- It is in line with the **recommendations made by U K Sinha Committee, [KV Kamath Committee](#) and [Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister \(PMEAC\)](#).**
 - The [Reserve Bank of India](#) had constituted an ‘**Expert Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**’ under the Chairmanship of Shri U K Sinha in 2019 to **suggest long-term measures for the economic and financial sustainability** of the MSME sector.
- The scheme was announced by the finance minister in the [Union Budget 2022-23](#).

What is the RAMP Scheme?

- **About:**
 - It is a [World Bank](#) assisted **Central Sector Scheme**, supporting various [CoronaVirus Disease 2019 \(Covid\) Resilience and Recovery Interventions](#) of the [Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises \(MoMSME\)](#).
- **Aimed at:**
 - Improving access to market and credit
 - Strengthening institutions and governance at the Centre and State
 - Improving Centre-State linkages and partnerships
 - Addressing issues of **delayed payments and greening of MSMEs**
- **Components:**
 - Important component of RAMP is **preparation of Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs)**, in which all states/UTs will be invited.
 - The SIPs would **include an outreach plan for identification and mobilisation of MSMEs under RAMP**, identify key constraints and gaps, set milestones and project the required budgets for interventions in priority sectors including [renewable energy](#), rural & non-farm business, wholesale and retail trade, village and cottage industries, women enterprises etc.
 - The overall monitoring and policy overview of RAMP would be done by an **apex National MSME Council**.

- The council will be **headed by the Minister for MSME**, including representation from various Ministries and supported by a secretariat.

▪ **Funding:**

- The total outlay for the scheme is **Rs. 6,062.45** crore out of which **Rs. 3750 crore would be a loan from the World Bank** and the remaining Rs. 2312.45 crore would be funded by India.

▪ **Implementation Strategy:**

- **Funds would flow through RAMP** into the Ministry's budget against **Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs)** to support ongoing MoMSME programmes, focusing on improving market access and competitiveness.
- The disbursement of funds from World Bank towards RAMP would be made on fulfilling the following **Disbursement Linked Indicators:**
 - Implementing the National MSME Reform Agenda
 - Accelerating MSME Sector Centre-State collaboration
 - Enhancing effectiveness of Technology Upgradation Scheme (CLCS-TUS)
 - Strengthening Receivable Financing Market for MSMEs
 - Enhancing Effectiveness of Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) and "Greening and Gender" delivery
 - Reducing the incidence of delayed payments

How will this Scheme be Beneficial?

▪ **Address Challenges in the MSME Sector:**

- The RAMP programme will **address the generic and Covid related challenges in the MSME sector** by way of impact enhancement of existing MSME schemes, especially, on the competitiveness front.

▪ **Address inadequately Addressed Blocks in MSME:**

- The programme will **bolster the inadequately addressed blocks of capacity building, handholding, [skill development](#)**, quality enrichment, technological upgradation, digitization, outreach and marketing promotion, amongst other things.

▪ **Generate Employment:**

- RAMP programme, through enhanced collaboration with States, will be a **job-enabler, market promoter, finance facilitator**, and will support vulnerable sections and greening initiatives.

▪ **Usher in Larger Formalization:**

- In States where the presence of MSMEs is on the lower side, the programme will **usher in larger formalization resulting from the higher impact of the schemes** covered under RAMP.
- The SIPs developed by these States would **act as a roadmap for the development of an improved MSME sector.**

▪ **Complement the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission:**

- RAMP will **complement the [Atmanirbhar Bharat mission](#) by fostering innovation and enhancement in industry standards**, practices and providing the necessary technological inputs to the MSMEs.

What is the Significance of MSMEs in the Indian Economy?

▪ **About:**

- They are the **growth accelerators of the Indian economy**, contributing about 30% of the country's **[Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#)**.
- In terms of exports, they are an integral part of the supply chain and **contribute about 48% of the overall exports.**
- MSMEs also **play an important role in employment generation**, as they employ about 110 million people across the country.
- Interestingly, **MSMEs are intertwined with the rural economy as well**, as more than half of the MSMEs operate in rural India.

▪ **Related Schemes:**

- **[MSME Innovative Scheme](#)**
- **[Prime Minister's Employment Generation programme \(PMEGP\)](#)**

- [Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries \(SFURTI\)](#)
- [A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship \(ASPIRE\)](#)
- [Interest Subvention Scheme for Incremental Credit to MSMEs](#)
- [Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises](#)
- [CHAMPIONS portal](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. Which of the following can aid in furthering the Government's objective of inclusive growth? (2011)

1. Promoting Self-Help Groups
2. Promoting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
3. Implementing the Right to Education Act

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Ans: (d)

- Inclusive growth is a concept that advances equitable opportunities for economic participants during economic growth with benefits reaching every section of society.
- Promoting Self-Help Groups, MSMEs, and implementation of the Right to Education Act, all aid in furthering inclusive growth.

Source: PIB

Merger of Film Bodies under National Film Development Corporation

For Prelims: NFDC, Public Sector Undertaking, Central Board of Film Certification.

For Mains: Issues with the merger of the Film Bodies under National Film Development Corporation.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** announced the **merger of four film media units**, including the Films Division, Directorate of Film Festivals, National Film Archive of India, and Children's Film Society of India **with the National Film Development Corporation**.

- The decision is in line with **Bimal Julka-led expert committee's (2020) report** on rationalisation, closure and merger of film media units.

What are the Key Points?

- **About the Four Film Media Units:**
 - **Films Division:**
 - It was **established in 1948** and is the **oldest of the four units**.
 - It was **created primarily to produce documentaries and news magazines** as publicity for government programmes and to keep a cinematic record of Indian history.
 - **Directorate of Film Festivals:**
 - Set up under the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in 1973 by the Government of India, it is entrusted with the **objective of promoting Indian films**.
 - DFF also strives to promote inter-cultural understanding through film-based cultural exchanges.
 - **National Film Archives of India:**
 - The National Film Archives of India was established in 1964 with the primary objective of acquiring and preserving Indian cinematic heritage.
 - **Children's Film Society of India:**
 - CFSI started functioning in 1955 as an **autonomous body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.
 - CFSI **promotes films that provide healthy and wholesome entertainment** for children to broaden their perspective and encourage them to reflect on the world around.
- **About NFDC:**
 - **National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)** is a **Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)** working under the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** which was **established in 1975 with a view to promote and organize an integrated development** of the Indian Film Industry and to foster excellence in cinema.
 - It is currently headed by **Ravinder Bhakar**, who is also the chief executive officer of the **Central Board of Film Certification**.

What will be the Significance of the Merger?

- **Better Coordination:**
 - Bringing all these activities under a single management will **reduce the overlap of various activities and ensure better utilisation of public resources**.
- **Give Strong Impetus to the Production of Films:**
 - It will give a **strong impetus to the production of films** of all genres including feature films, documentaries, children films and animation films, promotion of films through participation in different international festivals and organizing various domestic festivals, preservation of filmic content, digitization and restoration of films, and distribution and outreach activities.
 - The **ownership of the assets available** with these units will, however, remain with the Government of India.

What are the issues with the Merger?

- **National Film Development Corporation is a loss Making Corporation:**
 - The four public-funded bodies are being merged with a loss-making corporation.
- **No Concrete Plan on Merging:**
 - There is **no concrete plan on how the transfer of archives will be carried out** as celluloid ('used for cinematographic film) is fragile and inflammable material.
 - There may be a case of **disinvestment** if NFDC will not generate profit. In that case if our archives do not remain autonomous public institutions, they will undoubtedly be tampered with, damaged, or destroyed forever.

What is the State of India's Film Industry?

- India is the **largest producer of movies** globally with an industry that is led by the private sector and produces more than 3000 films in a year.
- The **value of the film industry in India in the financial year 2020** was about 183 billion Indian rupees.

[Source: IE](#)

Two New Geological Heritage Sites

Why in News?

Recently, [Geological Survey of India \(GSI\)](#) has identified **two geological heritage sites in the Indian Himalayan Region of India.**

- The sites identified are **Siwalik Fossil Park, Himachal Pradesh** and **Stromatolite bearing Dolomite / Limestone of Buxa Formation of Buxa Formation, Sikkim.**
- With inclusion of these two sites, there are **34 Geological Heritage Sites in India.**
- Earlier, the GSI [identified certain geological sites across the Northeast](#) for promotion of geo-tourism.

What are the Key Points?

- **Siwalik Fossil Park (Himachal Pradesh):** The Siwalik Fossil park displays a rich collection of vertebrate fossils recovered from the Siwalik rocks of the area of Plio-Pleistocene age **(2.6 million to 11,700 years ago).**
 - The deposition of Siwalik sediments took place in the narrow linear depression, called the 'fore deep', which started developing in front of the Himalayas since the inception of its uplift in the middle **Miocene (23 million years to 2.6 million years ago).**
- **Stromatolite bearing Dolomite / Limestone of Buxa Formation of Buxa Formation (Sikkim):** This Geoheritage site at Mamley exposes lithounits of Buxa Formation, Daling Group of Proterozoic age **(2.5 billion years to 541 million years ago).**
 - The dolostones (sedimentary rock) are profusely stromatolitic (Precambrian algal structures). This site provides one of the rare examples of early life in Sikkim Himalaya.
 - The Precambrian is the **earliest of the geologic ages**, which are marked by different layers of sedimentary rock.

What are Geo-heritage Sites?

- Geo-heritage refers to the geological features which are inherently or culturally **significant offering insight to earth's evolution or history to earth science** or that can be utilized for education.
- **Geological Survey of India (GSI) is the parent body** which is making efforts towards identification and protection of geo-heritage sites/national geological monuments in the country.

Geological heritage site /National geological

ANDHRA PRADESH

- Volcanogenic bedded Barytes, Mangampeta, Cuddapah Dist.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eparchaeon Unconformity, Chittor Dist. ▪ Natural Geological Arch, Tirumala Hills, Chittor Dist. ▪ Erra Matti Dibbalu- the dissected and stabilized coastal red sedimentary rocks, Chittor Dist.
KERALA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Laterite near Angadipuram PWD rest house premises, Malapuram Dist. ▪ Varkala Cliff Section, Thiruvananthapuram Dist.
TAMILNADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fossil wood near Tiruvakkarai, South Arcot Dist. ▪ National fossil wood park, Sattanur, Tiruchirappalli Dist. ▪ Charnockite, St. Thomas Mount, Madras. ▪ Badlands of Karai Formation with Cretaceous fossils along Karai - Kumbakonam Road, Thanjavur Dist.
MAHARASHTRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lonar Lake, Buldana Dist.
GUJARAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sedimentary Structures - Eddy Markings, Kadan Dam, Panch Mahals Dist.
RAJASTHAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sendra Granite, Pali Dist. ▪ Barr Conglomerate, Pali Dist. ▪ Stromatolite Fossil Park, Jharmarkotra Rock Phosphate deposit, Udaipur Dist. ▪ Gossan in Rajpura-Dariba Mineralised belt, Udaipur Dist. ▪ Stromatolite Park near Bhojunda, Chittaurgarh Dist. ▪ Akal Fossil Wood Park, Jaisalmer Dist. ▪ Kishangarh Nepheline Syenite, Ajmer Dist. ▪ Welded Tuff, Jodhpur Dist. ▪ Jodhpur Group - Malani Igneous Suite Contact, Jodhpur Dist. ▪ Great Boundary Fault at Satur, Bundi Dist.
KARNATAKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Columnar Lava, St Mary Island Udupi Dist. ▪ Pillow lavas near Mardihalli, Chitradurga Dist. ▪ Peninsular Gneiss, Lalbagh, Bangalore ▪ Pyroclastics & Pillow lavas, Kolar Gold fields, Kolar Dist.
CHATTISGARH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Permian Marine bed at Manendragarh, Surguja Dist.
HIMACHAL PRADESH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Siwalik Fossil Park, Saketi, Sirmour dt.,
ODISHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pillow Lava in Iron ore belt at Nomira, Keonjhar dist.
JHARKHAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plant Fossil bearing Inter-trappean beds of Rajmahal Formation, upper part, West Singhbhum Dist.
NAGALAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nagahill Ophiolite Site near Pungro,
SIKKIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stromatolite bearing Dolomite / Limestone of Buxa Formation at Marangpuk, Darjeeling Dist.

What are UNESCO Global Geoparks?

- These are **single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance** are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.
- While there are **169 UNESCO Global geoparks** spread across 44 countries, India is yet to have one of its own.

What is the Geological Survey of India?

- It was **set up in 1851** primarily to find coal deposits for the Railways. Presently, GSI is **an attached office to the Ministry of Mines**.
- The main functions of the GSI relate to creation and updation of national geo-scientific information and mineral resource assessment.
- It is **headquartered in Kolkata**.

Source: PIB

Dolphin Population in Chilika Lake

Why in News?

The dolphin population along **Odisha's coast and in its water bodies** has increased but the number of Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika lake has fallen.

- A total of **six species of dolphins — Irrawaddy, bottlenose, humpback, striped, finless and spinner dolphins** — have been recorded.

What are Different Species of Dolphins?

▪ About Irrawaddy Dolphins:

- **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.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
 - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

▪ About Indo- Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins:

- **Habitat:** Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins generally occur in shallow coastal waters of the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and Australia.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
 - **CITES:** Appendix II

▪ About Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphins:

- **Habitat:** The Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin occurs within the Indian Ocean from South Africa to India.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
 - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

▪ About Striped Dolphins:

- **Habitat:** The striped dolphin inhabits temperate or tropical, off-shore waters.
 - It is found in abundance in the North and South Atlantic Oceans, including the Mediterranean and Gulf of Mexico, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
 - **CITES:** Appendix II

▪ About Finless Dolphins:

- **Habitat:** The finless porpoise originally inhabited salt water niches along the coast of the Indo-Pacific Ocean.
- **Conservation Status:**

- **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered
- **CITES:** Appendix I

▪ **About Spinner Dolphin:**

- **Habitat:** The spinner dolphin is a small dolphin found in off-shore tropical waters around the world.
 - It is famous for its acrobatic displays in which it rotates around its longitudinal axis as it leaps through the air.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
 - **CITES:** Appendix II

Chilika Lake

- Chilika is **Asia's largest and world's second largest lagoon.**
- It **lies on the east coast of India in the state of Odisha**, separated from the mighty Bay of Bengal by a small strip of sand.
- It spreads over Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha on the east coast of India, at the mouth of the Daya River, flowing into the Bay of Bengal, covering an area of over 1,100 square kilometers.
- It is the **largest wintering ground for migratory birds** on the Indian sub-continent and is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the **first Indian wetland of international importance** under the [Ramsar Convention](#).
- Major attraction at Chilika is **Irrawaddy dolphins** which are often spotted off Satapada Island.
- The **large Nalabana Island (Forest of Reeds)** covering about 16 sq km in the lagoon area was declared a **bird sanctuary** in 1987.
- **Kalijai Temple** - Located on an island in the Chilika Lake.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. Consider the following pairs (2019)

Wildlife Naturally found in

1. Blue-finned Mahseer : Cauvery River
2. Irrawaddy Dolphin : Chambal River
3. Rusty-spotted Cat : Eastern Ghats

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

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

Ans: (c)

[Source:TH](#)

Digital Platform FASTER

Why in News?

Recently, [Chief Justice of India \(CJI\)](#) launched the digital platform **FASTER (Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records)**.

- The Supreme Court has also launched other programmes **involving technology** like [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) based portal 'SUPACE'](#) in the judicial system aimed at assisting judges with legal research.
- **eCourts Mission Mode Project** is a pan-India Project, monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, for the District Courts across the country.
 - The objective of the project is to provide designated services to litigants, lawyers and the judiciary through ICT enablement of courts.

What is a FASTER Digital Platform?

▪ About:

- It is a **digital platform to communicate interim orders, stay orders, bail orders etc.**, of the [Supreme Court](#) to authorities concerned through a secured electronic communication channel.

▪ Need:

- There have been **cases where jail inmates are not released despite bail orders** passed by the Supreme Court due to delay in communication of such orders.
- So, **it was needed to utilise information and communication technology tools** for efficient transmission of court's orders.

▪ Significance:

- **Ensure timely Release of Undertrials:**
 - **Ensure that undertrials are not made to wait for days** on end behind bars to be released because the certified hard copies of their bail orders took time to reach the prison.
 - **Undertrials are the people who are yet to be found guilty** of the crimes they have been accused of.
- **Prevent Unnecessary Arrests:**
 - It will help in **preventing unnecessary arrests and custody of people** even after the court had already granted them its protection.
- **Ensure Fundamental Rights of Prisoners:**
 - Ensure **fundamental rights** of personal liberty, life and dignity of the prisoners which is given under **Article 21 of Constitution of India**.

▪ Challenges:

- The **availability of internet connection in jails** across the nation as without this facility transmission of such orders to prisons will not be possible.

[Source: IE](#)

VARUNA 2022

Why in News ?

The 20th edition of the Indian and French Navy bilateral exercise 'VARUNA-2022' is being conducted in the Arabian Sea.

- It has become a vital part of the [India-France](#) strategic bilateral relationship.



What are the Key Points?

- **About:**
 - The Indian and French Navies **have been conducting bilateral maritime exercises since 1993**. Since 2001, these exercises have been called 'VARUNA'. This is an annual event.
 - These interactions further underscore the shared values as partner navies, in ensuring freedom of seas and commitment to an open, inclusive [Indo-Pacific](#) and a rules-based international order.
- **Other Indo-French Joint Exercises:**
 - Desert Knight-21 and Garuda (Air exercise)
 - Shakti (Army exercise)

Source: PIB