



Human Wildlife Conflict

Human Rights Watch's World Report 2023

For Prelims: UDHR, India's Initiatives to strengthen Human Rights, Helsinki Accords

For Mains: India's various initiatives for Human Rights and the contradictory instance of human rights violation in the country in recent years.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Human Rights Watch in its World Report 2023** (33rd edition) said that Indian authorities had **"intensified and broadened" their crackdown on activist groups** and the media throughout year 2022.

- It also claimed that the current Central ruling party used **abusive and discriminatory policies to repress minorities.**

What are Human Rights?

- **Human Rights** are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.
 - These include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.
- The **National Human Right Commission (NHRC)** of India defines Human Rights as rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual **guaranteed by the Constitution** or **embodied in the International Covenants** and **enforceable by courts in India.**

What is the Human Rights Watch?

- **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** is an **international non-governmental organisation** founded in 1978 as “**Helsinki Watch**,” initially aimed at investigating rights abuses in countries that signed the **Helsinki Accords**.
 - Currently, its ambit has expanded to **about 100 countries worldwide**.
 - It is headquartered in New York City.
- **Helsinki Accords (1975)** was a major diplomatic agreement signed in Helsinki, Finland, at the conclusion of the **first Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe** (now [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#)).
 - Primarily an effort to **reduce tension between the Soviet and Western blocs**, they were signed by all the countries of Europe, the US and Canada.
 - The agreement made the **35 signatory nations pledge to respect human rights** and fundamental freedoms.

What are the World Report 2023's Findings about India?

- **Violation of Human Rights by Government:**
 - The report found the **Central govt. promoting Hindu majoritarian ideology**, provoking authorities and supporters to engage in discriminatory and at times violent actions against religious minorities.
 - It highlighted the **government's discriminatory stance toward minority communities** in cases of violence against women (**release of [Bilkis Bano rape convicts](#)**).
 - Even after 3 years of [removal of Article 370](#) and subsequent [creation of two UTs \(J&K and Ladakh\)](#), “the government continued to restrict free expression and peaceful assembly” in the two UTs.
 - Authorities also invoked the [J&K Public Safety Act](#) and [Unlawful Activities Prevention Act \(UAPA\), 1967](#) to “arbitrarily” detain journalists and activists.
 - It also referred to suspected **militant attacks on minority Hindu and Sikh communities** in the Kashmir Valley.
- **Welcoming of Various SC Rulings:**
 - HRW appreciated the **increasingly liberal steps taken by the Supreme Court** of India such as the ruling to **halt all use of the colonial-era [Sedition law](#)**.
 - It also referred to the **SC's ruling on extending abortion rights to all women** regardless of marital status and widening the definition of a family to include same-sex couples, single parents, and other households.
 - It also took note of the **SC's banning of the [two-finger tests](#)** in a step to protect survivors of sexual assault.
 - However, the **SC did not reach a verdict on the [rights of Muslim female students of wearing a hijab](#) in educational institutions**.

What are India's Initiatives for Human Rights?

- **Provisions in the Constitution:**
 - **Fundamental Rights:** [Articles 14 to 32](#)
 - **Directive Principles of State Policy:** Including the right to social security, right to work, to free choice of employment, and protection against unemployment, right to equal pay for equal work, right to existence worthy of human dignity, right to free & compulsory education, equal justice & free legal aid etc.
- **Statutory Support:**
 - **[Protection of Human Rights Act \(PHRA\), 1993](#)** (amended in 2019). **NHRC was established under this Act.**
- **Role in International Convention:**
 - India took an active part in drafting of the **[Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#)**.
 - India has also ratified the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** and **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**

What are Other Similar Reports?

- [Human Rights Report on India 2021](#) (by US State Department).
- [Freedom in the World 2021 Report](#) (by US based Freedom House).
- [Democracy Report 2022](#) (by V-Dem Institute at University of Gothenburg, Sweden).

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Other than the Fundamental Rights, which of the following parts of the Constitution of India reflect/ reflects the principles and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)? (2020)

1. Preamble
2. Directive Principles of State Policy
3. Fundamental Duties

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (d)

Mains

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

Source: TH

India-US Trade Policy Forum

For Prelims: India-US Trade Relations, IPEF

For Mains: India-US Trade Relations - Significance, Challenges

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry of India and the US Trade Representative Ambassador co-chaired the **13th Ministerial-level meeting of [India – US Trade Policy Forum \(TPF\)](#)** in **Washington D.C.**

What is the India-US TPF?

▪ About:

- The India-US TPF aims to activate its working groups in the fields of **agriculture, non-agriculture goods, services, investment, and intellectual property** to meet frequently and address issues of mutual concern in a mutually beneficial manner.
- The idea is to **deliver tangible benefits to both countries by resolving outstanding market access issues.**

▪ Highlights of the Meeting:

- While the two sides appreciated the **rise in bilateral trade in goods** and services (which reached **~160 billion USD in 2021**), they also recognised that for economies of their size, **significant potential still remains unfulfilled.**
- The US welcomed India's participation in the **[Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity \(IPEF\)](#).**
 - Both the countries have **like-minded views about the efficiency of IPEF for continued growth**, peace, and prosperity in the **[Indo-Pacific region](#).**
- The Ministers welcomed the finalization of the **Turtle Excluder Device (TED)** design with the technical support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
 - The TED will help in minimizing the **impact of fishing on sea-turtle populations.**
- A **new TPF Working Group on Resilient Trade was launched** to help the officials deepen bilateral dialogue on a range of issues. Till the next TPF Ministerial meeting, it will focus on:
 - **Trade facilitation**
 - Promotion of **labour rights and workforce development**
 - **[Circular economy](#)**; role of trade in environment protection

How are India's Trade Ties with the US?

- India-US bilateral partnership today encompasses a whole host of issues including the response to **[Covid-19](#)**, economic recovery post-pandemic, the **[climate crisis](#)** and **[sustainable development](#)**, critical and emerging technologies, **[supply chain resilience](#)**, education, the **[diaspora](#)**, and **[defence and security](#).**
- The **US is India's largest trading partner** and most important export market. It is **one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus**. In 2021-22, India had a **trade surplus of USD 32.8 billion** with the US.
- Although India and the US have quite contradictory responses towards the **[Russia-Ukraine crisis](#)**, the two have underscored their commitment to continue to build on the momentum of recent years and **not lose sight of the larger strategic picture.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India's National self-esteem and ambitions'. Explain with suitable examples. **(2019)**

[Source: PIB](#)

Ganga Vilas Cruise

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India **flagged off the world's longest river cruise, MV Ganga Vilas in Varanasi.**

- During the event, the Prime Minister **also inaugurated Tent City in Varanasi and laid the foundation stones for several other [inland waterways projects.](#)**

Ganga Vilas Cruise: What You Need to Know?

▪ About:

- The cruise will be **managed by private operators, the [Inland Waterways Authority of India \(IWAI\)](#)**, under the Ministry of Shipping, Ports and Waterways (MoPSW) has supported the project.
- It will **explore forty historic sites** on the banks of the river Ganga including, **[Mahabodhi temple](#)**, Hazarduari Palace, Katra Masjid, Bodh Gaya, Chandanagar church, Char Bangla Temple and more.
- Besides connecting **National Waterway 1 (NW-1) which includes [Ganga](#) and National Waterway 2 (NW-2) on Brahmaputra**, the cruise will cross 27 river systems.
 - The Ganga - Bhagirathi-Hooghly River system between Haldia (Sagar) and Allahabad (1620 km) **was declared as NW-1 in 1986.**
- The **51 days cruise is planned with visits to 50 tourist spots** including [World Heritage Sites](#), [National Parks](#), River Ghats, and major cities like Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam.

▪ Significance:

- The sector **would generate employment opportunities in the hinterland.**
- The project **will boost river cruise [tourism](#)** and bring about a new age of tourism for India. The cruise has been **curated to showcase the best of India to the world.**
- The journey will give **foreign tourists an opportunity to embark upon an experiential voyage** and indulge in the art, culture, history, and spirituality of India and Bangladesh.

What is the Inland Waterways Authority of India?

- It **came into existence on 27th October 1986** for the development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- It primarily **undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure on national waterways** through grants received from the Ministry of Shipping.
- It is **headquartered in Noida** with regional offices at Patna (Bihar), Kolkata (West Bengal), Guwahati (Assam) and Kochi (Kerala) and **sub-offices at other places throughout India.**

FSSAI Standards for Basmati Rice

Why in News?

For the first time in India, the [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) has **specified the identity standards for [Basmati Rice](#)** which will be enforced with effect from 01 August 2023.

What are the Characteristics of Basmati Rice?

- **Basmati has its origin from India** (and some parts of Pakistan); it is a premium variety of rice **cultivated in the Himalayan foothills** of the Indian subcontinent.
 - It is universally known for its **long grain size, fluffy texture and unique inherent aroma** and flavour.
- It is cultivated in **Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, UT of Jammu and Kashmir and western Uttar Pradesh**.
 - Agro-climatic conditions of the areas where Basmati rice is grown; as well as the method of harvesting, processing and ageing of the rice contribute to the uniqueness of Basmati rice.
- Basmati is widely consumed both domestically and globally and **India accounts for 2/3rd of its global supply**.
 - Being a premium quality rice and fetching a price higher than the non-basmati varieties, **Basmati rice is prone to various types of adulteration** for economic gains such as **undeclared blending of other non-basmati varieties of rice**.

What are the Standards for Basmati Rice?

- The standards have been notified under **Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) First Amendment Regulations, 2023**.
 - They are aimed at **establishing fair practices in the trade of Basmati rice** and protecting consumer interest, both domestically and globally.
- **Standards:**
 - Basmati rice **shall possess the natural fragrance characteristic** of basmati rice
 - Basmati rice has a unique fragrance and flavour due to the presence of a chemical called **2-acetyl-1-pyrroline**.
 - It should be **free from artificial colouring, polishing agents and artificial fragrances**.
 - Further, these standards **also specify the average size of Basmati grains** and their **elongation ratio after cooking; maximum limits of moisture**, amylose content, uric acid, defective/damaged grains and incidental presence of other non-basmati rice etc.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 replaced the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954.
2. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is under the charge of Director General of Health Services in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GoI. It has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts and orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- The **Food Standards and Safety Act, 2006 replaced several Acts and Orders like the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954**; Fruit Products Order, 1955; etc. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- FSSAI is headed by a non-executive Chairperson, appointed by the Central Government, either holding or have held a position not below the rank of Secretary to the GoI. It is **not under the charge of Director General of Health Services. Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- FSSAI has been created for laying down science-based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to human consumption.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

[Source: PIB](#)

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

Progress in LAC Infra Development

As per the [Army Chief General of India](#), there has been **significant improvement in the infrastructure near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).**

From creating 6,000 km of border roads to improving all-weather connectivity in regions of Ladakh and Kameng, the **Army has greatly expanded the country's infrastructure on India's side of the LAC with China. For example**, in Ladakh, the [Zojila tunnel](#) and the [Z-Morh tunnel](#), and in Arunachal Pradesh [Sela tunnel](#) are currently under construction.

The **army is being undertaken across five key domains** -- restructuring and optimisation, modernisation and technology infusion, Human Resource management like the [Agnipath scheme](#), Jointness and integration, and refining and improving systems and processes.

Currently, the **Army is seeking to enlist female officers into the Regiment of Artillery, which would mark women in combat arms.**

Read More: [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#)

Peru Anti-government Protests

Recently, **protests and road blockades against President** and in favor of former President **were observed in 41 provinces, mainly in Peru's south.**

As a result of protests that began a month ago, 48 people have **died across the Andean country, with new clashes reported in Cusco.**

The protest, mainly in rural areas of the country which are in favour of the former President, are **seeking immediate elections and the resignation of the present President.**

Read More: [Human Rights](#)

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) Foundation Day

Recently, the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, which was set up in 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 celebrated its 18th Foundation Day on 12th January.**

To fully dedicate this occasion to the children, **a Quiz was launched by the Commission on the occasion of National Youth Day (Swami Vivekananda Jayanti) to create awareness among children about child rights.** It is a **platform to empower children for their rights.**

Read More: [National Commission for Protection of Child Rights \(NCPCR\)](#), [National Youth Day](#)

NOTAM

Recently, **thousands of flights were grounded in the US after a major glitch in the computer system.** The flights were grounded **due to the failure of a key pilot notification system called Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM).**

In India, NOTAM or **Notice to Airmen are notices distributed by means of telecommunication** containing information concerning the establishment, condition or change in any aeronautical facility, service, procedure or hazard, the **timely knowledge of which is essential to personnel concerned with flight operations.**

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