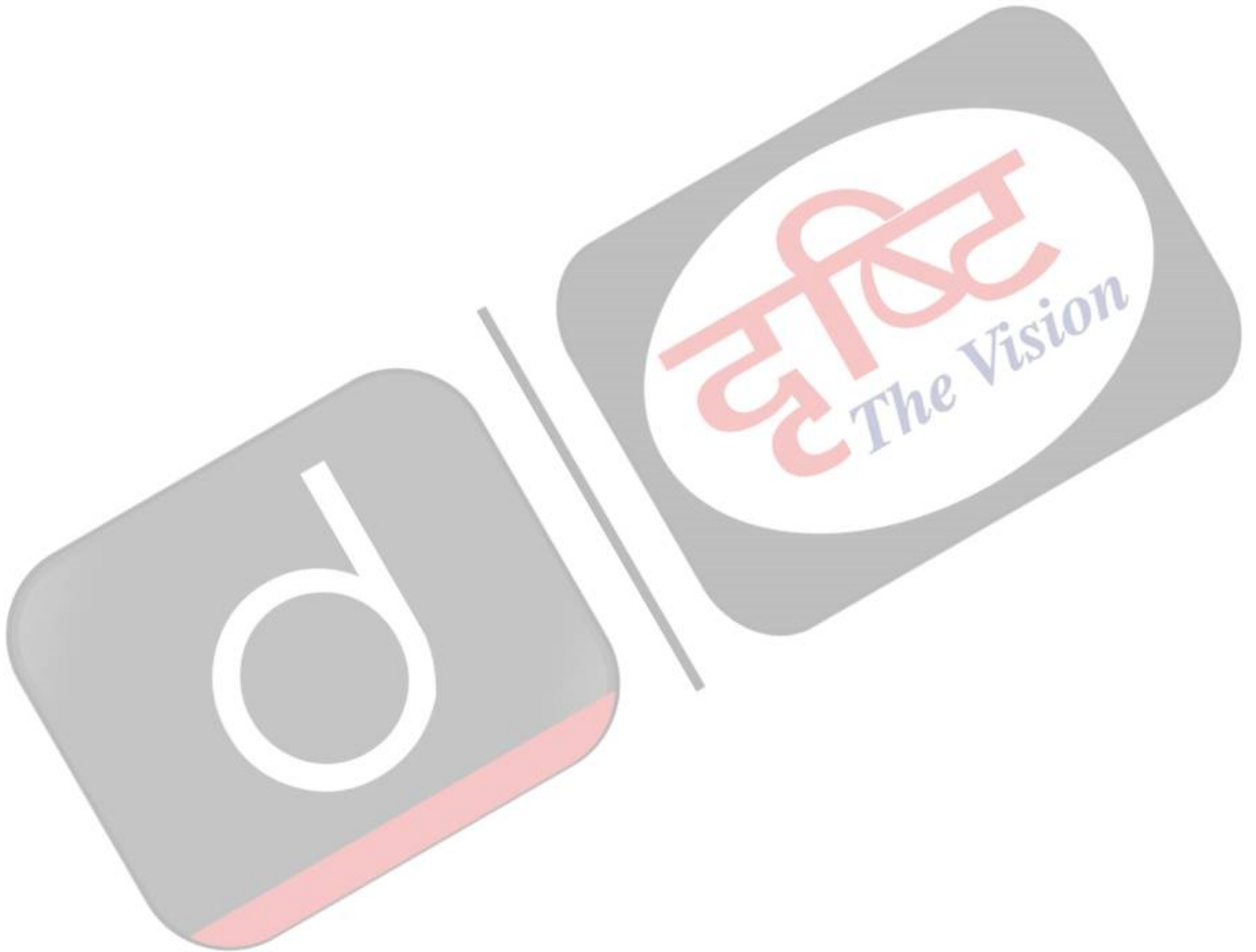




Israel-Palestine Conflict

//



ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a long-standing geopolitical dispute over territory and self-determination in the Middle East.

BEGINNING

- UN adopted **Resolution 181** – the Partition Plan in 1947
- State of Israel created in 1948, sparking the **first Arab-Israeli War** (Israel won)
 - ▶ Palestinians displaced
 - ▶ Division of territory into – State of Israel, West Bank and Gaza Strip

INITIAL TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS (1956-1979)

- Suez Crisis** and Israeli **invasion of Sinai Peninsula** in 1956
- Six-Day War (1967)** – Israel gained control over Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights

Controversy over Jerusalem as Capital

- **Israel view:** Complete and united Jerusalem
- **Palestinians view:** East Jerusalem future capital

- Yom Kippur War (1973)** – Surprise attack by Egypt and Syria
- Camp David Accords (1979)** b/w Egypt and Israel

Intifada (Arabic for 'shake off')

- **First Intifada** – 1987 to 1993
 - ◆ Led to the foundation of Hamas (1987) – a Palestinian political party designated as a foreign terrorist org by US
 - ◆ Response – **Madrid Conference 1991** (chaired by the US and Russia)
- **Second Intifada** – 2000-2005
- The latest escalation (2023) is being called the beginning of “Third Intifada”

OSLO ACCORDS (MEDIATED BY US)

- First (1993)**
 - ▶ Estd framework for **Palestinian self-governance** in West Bank and Gaza
 - ▶ Enabled mutual recognition between Israel and Palestine

Second (1995)

- ▶ Expanded on Oslo I Accords
- ▶ Mandated **complete Israeli withdrawal** from several cities and towns **in West Bank**

POST 2000 CONFLICT AND RESPONSES

- 2013** – US-led peace process began
- 2014-18** – Gaza Conflict (2014)
 - ▶ Palestine announced break from territorial divisions under Oslo Accords (2015)
- 2018-20** – US Cancelled funding for Palestinian refugees under UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)
 - ▶ US proposed **"Peace to Prosperity"** plan
- 2020** – **Abraham Accords**
- 2022-2023:**
 - ▶ Israel raids on **Jenin refugee camp**
 - ▶ Hamas launched **"Operation Al-Aqsa Flood"** and Israel launched **"Operation Iron Swords"** (both in 2023)
 - ◆ Israel declared a **State of War**
 - ▶ **India's Stand:**
 - ◆ Supports a **Two State solution** for Israel and Palestine
 - ◆ **Condemned the recent attack** by Hamas on Israel



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Coral Reef Breakthrough

For Prelims: Coral Reef Breakthrough, Global Fund for Coral Reefs , [Coral Reefs](#)

For Mains: Importance of Coral Reefs, Prevention & Control of Pollution & Degradation

[Source: ICRI](#)

Why in News?

The **International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)**, has launched the **Coral Reef Breakthrough** in partnership with the **Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR)** and the **High-Level Climate Champions (HLCC)**.

- The Initiative was launched at the **37th ICRI General Meeting, 2023**.

What is the Coral Reef Breakthrough?

- The Coral Reef Breakthrough is a science-based initiative with clear goals for the state and non-state actors to collectively conserve, protect, and restore [coral reefs](#), safeguarding their vital contributions to humanity's future.
- The Coral Reef Breakthrough aims to secure the future of at least **125,000 km² of shallow-water tropical coral reefs** with investments of **at least USD 12 billion** to support the resilience of more than half a billion people globally **by 2030**.
- The initiative is based on **four action points**:
 - **Action point 1:**
 - Mitigate **local drivers of loss** including land-based sources of pollution, destructive coastal development, and overfishing.
 - **Action point 2:**
 - **Double the area of coral reefs under effective protection:** Bolster resilience-based coral reef conservation efforts by aligning with and transcending global coastal protection targets including **30by30**.
 - 30 by 30 is a global initiative to **protect at least 30% of the Earth's land and ocean area by 2030**. It was proposed during the [UNCCD Conference of Parties \(COP15\)](#).
 - **Action point 3:**
 - Assist the development and implementation of innovative solutions at scale and climate-smart designs that support coral adaptation to impact 30% of degraded reefs by **2030**.
 - **Action point 4:**
 - Secure investments of at least USD 12 billion by 2030 from public and private sources to conserve and restore these crucial ecosystems.
- Meeting the targets of the Coral Breakthrough will be instrumental in achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), particularly **SDG14, Life Below Water**.

International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

- It is a global partnership between Nations and organizations that strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems around the world.
- The Initiative was founded in **1994 by eight governments: Australia, France, Japan, Jamaica, the Philippines, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America**.
 - It was announced at the **First Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 1994**.
- ICRI has **101 members, including 45 countries (India is one of them)**.

High-Level Climate Champions (HLCC)

- They are appointed by the **United Nations** to facilitate and enhance the engagement of non-state actors such as businesses, cities, regions, and investors in supporting the goals of the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#).

Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR)

- The GFCR is a blended finance instrument to mobilise action and resources to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems.
 - It provides grant funding and private capital to support sustainable interventions to save coral reefs and the communities that rely on them.
- UN Agencies, nations, philanthropies, private investors and organisations have joined the Global Fund for Coral Reefs Coalition to deliver on ecological, social and economic resilience.



Coral Reefs

(Rainforests of the seas)



About

- ✦ **Large underwater structures** – made of skeletons of **colonial marine invertebrates** ‘**coral**’ – individually called **polyp**
- ✦ **Symbiotic Relationship with algae** ‘**zooxanthellae**’ (responsible for beautiful colours of corals)
- ✦ Support over 25% of marine biodiversity

Hard Corals vs Soft Corals

- ✦ **Hard Corals** - Rigid skeleton **made of CaCO_3** - **reef-building** corals
- ✦ **Soft Corals** - Non reef-building

Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

- ✦ Largest Coral Reef in the World
- ✦ World Heritage Site (1981)
- ✦ Endures Mass Coral Bleaching



Corals in India

- ✦ Present in the areas of Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep Islands and Malvan



Significance

- ✦ Coral reefs **protect coastlines from storms/erosion**, provide jobs, offer opportunities for recreation
- ✦ Source of **food/medicines**

Threats

- ✦ **Natural:** Temperature, Sediment Deposition, Salinity, pH, etc.
- ✦ **Anthropogenic:** Mining, Bottom Fishing, Tourism, pollution, etc.

Coral Bleaching

- ✦ Corals under stress - expel algae – thus turning white (bleached)
- ✦ Bleached corals - not dead – but, more risk of starvation/disease



Initiatives to Protect Corals

Technology

- ✦ **Cyromesh:** Storage of the coral larvae at (-196°C) - Can be later reintroduced to the wild
- ✦ **Biorock:** Creating artificial reefs on which coral can grow rapidly



Global

- ✦ International Coral Reef Initiative
- ✦ The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform

Indian

National Coastal Mission Programme



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. 1 "Biorock technology" is talked about in which one of the following situations?

- (a) Restoration of damaged coral reefs
- (b) Development of building materials using plant residue
- (c) Identification of areas for exploration/extraction of shale gas
- (d) Providing salt licks for wild animals in forests/protected areas

Ans: (a)

Q.2 Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. Most of the world's coral reefs are in tropical waters.
2. More than one-third of the world's coral reefs are located in the territories of Australia, Indonesia and Philippines.
3. Coral reefs host far more number of animal phyla than those hosted by tropical rainforests.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (d)

Q.3 Which of the following have coral reefs? (2014)

1. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
2. Gulf of Kachchh
3. Gulf of Mannar
4. Sunderbans

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. Assess the impact of global warming on the coral life system with examples. (2019)

Amphibians Threatened by Climate Change

For Prelims: Amphibians Threatened by Climate Change, [Amphibians](#), [Climate Change](#), [International](#)

[Union for Conservation of Nature's \(IUCN\).](#)

For Mains: Amphibians Threatened by Climate Change, Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation, Environmental impact assessment.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the study titled '**Ongoing declines for the world's amphibians in the face of emerging threats**' published in the Nature journal reveals significant threats to Amphibians worldwide particularly from [Climate Change](#).

- The study is based on the second global amphibian assessment coordinated by the Amphibian Red List Authority, a branch of the Amphibian Specialist Group of the [International Union for Conservation of Nature's \(IUCN\)](#) Species Survival Commission.
- The assessment evaluated the extinction risk of more than 8,000 amphibian species from all over the world, including 2,286 species evaluated for the first time

What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- **Extinction Risk:**
 - Two out of every five amphibian species are threatened with extinction.
 - 40.7% of the species being globally threatened – highest for any species. This is compared to **26.5% of mammals**, 21.4% of reptiles and 12.9% of birds.
 - Between 2004 and 2022, over 300 amphibian species have **moved closer to extinction**, with climate change identified as the primary threat for 39% of these species.
 - Amphibians are particularly sensitive to environmental changes, making them vulnerable to the effects of climate change.
- **Amphibians Gone Extinct:**
 - Four amphibian species were documented as having gone **extinct since 2004** — the Chiriquí harlequin toad (**Atelopus chiriquiensis**) from Costa Rica, the sharp-snouted day frog (**Taudactylus acutirostris**) from Australia, Craugastor myllomyllon and the Jalpa false brook salamander (**Pseudoeurycea exspectata**), both from Guatemala.
- **Greatest Concentration of Threatened Amphibians:**
 - The greatest concentrations of threatened amphibians were found to be in the Caribbean islands, **Mexico and Central America, the tropical Andes region, India's Western Ghats**, Sri Lanka, Cameroon, Nigeria and Madagascar.
- **Human Impact:**
 - Habitat destruction and degradation due to activities such as agriculture, infrastructure development, and other industries remain the most common threats to amphibians, **affecting 93% of all threatened species.**
- **Disease and Overexploitation:**
 - Disease caused by **the chytrid fungus** and overexploitation continue to contribute to amphibian declines.
 - Disease and habitat **loss drove 91 %** of status deteriorations **between 1980 and 2004.**
 - Ongoing and projected climate change effects are **now of increasing concern, driving 39%** of status deterioration since 2004, followed by habitat loss amounting to 37%.
- **Salamander Threat:**
 - Three out of **every five salamander species** are threatened with extinction, primarily due to habitat destruction and climate change.
 - Salamanders are identified as the world's **most threatened group of amphibians.**
 - Amphibians first **appeared more than 300 million years ago.** Three orders of amphibians exist today:
 - Salamanders and newts (60% threatened with extinction); frogs and toads (39%); and the limbless and serpentine caecilians (16%).

▪ **Conservation Action:**

- Conservationists plan to **use the study's findings** to develop a global conservation action plan, prioritize conservation efforts, secure additional resources, and influence policies to reverse the negative trend for amphibians.

What are Amphibians?

▪ **About:**

- They fall under the Chordata phylum of the **kingdom Animalia, Eg., Frogs, Toads, Salamanders , newts, caecilians etc.**
- These are multicellular vertebrates that live both on land and water.
- They are the first cold-blooded animals to have appeared on land.
 - **Cold-blooded animals** can be defined as the animals which cannot regulate their internal body temperature with the change in the environment.
- They respire through the lungs and skin.
- They have three chambered hearts.

▪ **Significance:**

- Meanwhile, from an **ecological perspective**, amphibians are regarded as vital **ecological indicators**. Due to a high degree of sensitivity, they are studied and indicate habitat fragmentation, ecosystem stress, the impact of pesticides, and various anthropogenic activities.
 - They are **important biological indicators** and important for the wider health of the ecosystems.
- They play a significant role **both as a predator and prey**. Amphibians eat pests, which is beneficial for agriculture, and in **controlling diseases like malaria** and more.
- Amphibians are important **from a medical point of view**. The skin of amphibians contains **different types of peptides** and offers the possibility of medical cures for several human diseases.
 - At present, they are also used in some painkillers.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to India's biodiversity, Ceylon frogmouth, Coppersmith barbet, Gray-chinned minivet and White-throated redstart are (2020)

- (a) Birds
- (b) Primates
- (c) Reptiles
- (d) Amphibians

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- These all are part of the Avian ecology.
- Ceylon Frogmouth
 - It is a grey-brown nocturnal bird species that is found in the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka's forested habitats.
- Coppersmith Barbet
 - Also called crimson-breasted barbet and coppersmith, it is an Asian barbet with crimson forehead and throat, known for its metronomic call that sounds similar to a coppersmith striking metal with a hammer.
 - It is a resident bird in the Indian subcontinent and parts of Southeast Asia.
- White-throated Redstart

- It is a species of bird in the Muscicapidae family. It is found in Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, and Nepal.
- Grey-Chinned Minivet
 - It is a species of bird in the Campephagidae family.
 - It is found in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.
 - Its natural habitat is subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Q. With reference to the evolution of living organisms, which one of the following sequences is correct? (2009)

- (a) Octopus – Dolphin – Shark
- (b) Pangolin – Tortoise – Hawk
- (c) Salamander – Python – Kangaroo
- (d) Frog – Crab – Prawn

Ans: (c)

- Sequence of Evolutionary Stages: Single celled → Multi cellular → Fishes → Amphibians → Reptiles → Birds → Mammals.
 - Octopus (Mollusc); Dolphins and Whales (Mammals); Shark (Fish)
 - Pangolin (Mammal); Tortoise (Reptile); Hawk (Bird).
 - **Salamander (Amphibian) – Python (Reptile) – Kangaroo (Mammal). This sequence follows the correct sequence of evolutionary stages.**
 - Frog (Amphibian); Crab (Crustaceans); Prawn (Crustaceans).
- **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer**

Monetary Policy Committee Decisions: RBI

For Prelims: [Monetary Policy Committee](#) Decisions, [Reserve Bank of India](#), Repo Rate, [Gross Domestic Product](#), Inflation, Open Market Operations.

For Mains: Monetary Policy Committee Decisions: RBI, Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment, Inclusive growth and issues arising from it, Government Budgeting.

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#) in its bimonthly [Monetary Policy Committee \(MPC\)](#) Meeting has retained **benchmark interest rates unchanged** for the 4th time in a row.

- The MPC kept the policy **Repo Rate** Unchanged at 6.50%.

What are the Key Highlights of the MPC Meeting?

- **Repo Rate Unchanged:**

- The RBI decided unanimously to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5% to **balance economic growth and inflation control.**
- **GDP Growth and Inflation:**
 - The RBI retained its real **GDP (Gross Domestic Product)** growth forecast for 2023-24 at 6.5% and the average CPI inflation forecast for the current fiscal year FY24 at 5.4%.
 - However, the MPC raised its **headline inflation projection for the second quarter to 6.4%.**
 - The RBI Governor stressed the **commitment to the 4% inflation target** and highlighted the importance of being prepared to take timely actions to prevent spillovers from food and fuel price shocks to underlying inflation trends.
- **Liquidity Management and Financial Stability:**
 - Liquidity in the system will be actively managed in line with the monetary policy stance.
 - The RBI will undertake **Open Market Operations (OMO)** sales as necessary. Financial stability is essential for price stability and growth.
- **Gold Loan under Bullet Repayment Scheme:**
 - The RBI announced **doubling the lending limits for Gold Loans** under the Bullet Repayment Scheme (BRS) for **urban cooperative banks to Rs 4 lakh.**
 - It has been decided in respect of **Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)** who have met the overall target and sub-targets under the **Priority Sector Lending (PSL)** as on 31st March, 2023.
 - A **BRS** is one where a **borrower repays interest** and the principal amount at the end of a loan tenure **without worrying about repayment during the loan tenure.**
- **Accommodative Stance:**
 - The RBI has **focused on its stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation'** until all risks to inflation dissipate.
 - An **Accommodative Stance** means the central bank is prepared to expand the **money supply to boost economic growth.**
 - Withdrawal of accommodation will mean reducing the money supply in the system which will rein in inflation further. .

What are the Reasons for Keeping Benchmark Rates Unchanged?

- **Resilient Economic Activity:**
 - The Indian economy has **displayed resilience despite the uncertainties** and challenges posed by various factors.
 - This has led **to the decision to maintain benchmark rates**, reflecting confidence in the **economy's ability to** withstand potential shocks.
- **Previous Policy Repo Rate Hikes:**
 - The MPC considered the cumulative impact of previous policy repo rate hikes, totaling 250 basis points.
 - Given the time needed for these rate hikes to fully work through the economy, the **committee opted to hold the rates steady in the current meeting.**
 - The MPC acknowledged that the previous policy repo rate hikes are still in the process of influencing the economy.
- **Inflation Risk Management:**
 - The MPC remains committed to aligning inflation **with the 4% target on a durable basis.**
 - And the existing policy stance is needed to **achieve this objective** without the need for an immediate rate change.
 - The MPC expressed concerns about the **potential recurrence of food price** shocks affecting headline inflation.
 - Keeping rates unchanged might be a precautionary measure to closely monitor the situation and be ready to act promptly in case inflationary pressures escalate.

What are the Concerns Flagged by the RBI in its MPC Meeting?

- **High Inflation:**
 - The RBI views high **inflation as a major risk to both macroeconomic stability** and

sustainable growth.

- Despite declining core inflation (excluding food and fuel components), uncertainties **cloud the overall inflation outlook.**
 - Factors such as reduced kharif sowing for essential crops, low reservoir levels, and fluctuations in global food and energy **prices contribute to this uncertainty.**
- **Geopolitical and Economic Risks:**
 - The RBI flagged various **headwinds, including geopolitical tensions**, geoeconomic fragmentation, volatility in global financial markets, and a global economic slowdown.
 - These external factors pose risks to the economic outlook and require careful consideration.
- **Financial Stability and Surveillance:**
 - The RBI underscored the importance of financial stability, calling it fundamental to price stability and growth. The financial sector's robust balance sheet was acknowledged, but vigilance and strengthened internal surveillance mechanisms, especially concerning the rise in personal loans, were advised.

Note

- **CRR:** Cash Reserve Ratio, a percentage of Net Demand and Time Liabilities, banks must keep with the central bank (RBI) to control liquidity.
 - **Incremental CRR:** Additional requirement imposed by RBI on banks' liabilities to manage excess liquidity and stabilize the economy.
- **Repo Rate:** It is the interest rate set by the RBI for short-term loans to commercial banks. It's a tool used to control inflation and stimulate economic growth.
- **Inflation:** It refers to the sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy over a period of time, leading to a decrease in the purchasing power of money.
 - **Headline Inflation:** It is the total inflation for the period, comprising a basket of commodities.
 - The food and fuel inflation form one of the components of headline inflation in India.
 - **Core Inflation:** It excludes volatile goods from the basket of commodities tracking Headline Inflation. These volatile commodities mainly comprise food and beverages (including vegetables) and fuel and light (crude oil).
 - **Core inflation = Headline inflation - (Food and Fuel) inflation.**
- **Inflation Targeting:** It is a monetary policy framework aimed at maintaining a specific target range for inflation.
 - The **Urjit Patel Committee** recommended **CPI (Consumer Price Index) over WPI (Wholesale Price Index)** as a measure for inflation targeting.
 - The current inflation target also aligns with the committee's recommendation to establish a target inflation rate of 4%, accompanied by an acceptable range of deviation of +/- 2%.
 - The central government, in consultation with the RBI, sets an inflation target, and an upper and lower tolerance level for retail inflation.
- **Liquidity** refers to the ease with which an asset or security can be quickly bought or sold in the market without significantly affecting its price.
 - It signifies the availability of cash or liquid assets to meet financial obligations or make investments. In simpler terms, liquidity is to get your money whenever you need it.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)? (2017)

1. It decides the RBI's benchmark interest rates.
2. It is a 12-member body including the Governor of RBI and is reconstituted every year.
3. It functions under the chairmanship of the Union Finance Minister.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

Q. If the RBI decides to adopt an expansionist monetary policy, which of the following would it not do? (2020)

1. Cut and optimize the Statutory Liquidity Ratio
2. Increase the Marginal Standing Facility Rate
3. Cut the Bank Rate and Repo Rate

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: (b)

Mains

Q. Do you agree with the view that steady GDP growth and low inflation have left the Indian economy in good shape? Give reasons in support of your arguments. (2019)

World Mental Health Day

For Prelims: [World Mental Health Day](#), National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, [National Mental Health Programme](#), [Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres](#), [National Tele Mental Health Programme](#)

For Mains: Status of Mental Healthcare in India, Government Initiatives Related to Mental Health, Population and associated issues

Source: TH

Why in News?

10th October marks [World Mental Health Day](#), a global initiative aimed at raising awareness about **[mental health issues](#)** and rallying support for mental health care worldwide.

- In the context of India, this day **serves as a crucial reminder of the urgent need to address the mental health challenges** faced by the country's burgeoning **adolescent population** (aged 10-19 years) which plays a pivotal role in its future prosperity and development.
- **Theme for World Mental Health Day 2023:** Mental health is a universal human right.

Note: World Mental Health Day was established on **10th October, 1992** by the **World Federation for Mental Health**. Since then, it has been observed every year.

What is the Status of Mental Healthcare in India?

- **About:**
 - Mental health refers to a **person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being**, encompassing their overall mental and emotional state.
 - It involves a person's ability to cope with **stress, manage their emotions**, maintain healthy relationships, work productively, and make rational decisions.
 - Mental health is an integral part of overall health and well-being, **just as important as physical health**.
- **Status in India:**
 - In India, according to **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences** data, more than **80% of people do not access care services** for a multitude of reasons, ranging from **lack of knowledge, stigma and high cost of care**.
 - The economic loss due to mental health conditions, between 2012-2030, is estimated at **USD 1.03 trillion (WHO)**.
- **Government Initiatives Related to Mental Health:**
 - **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)**
 - **Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWC)**
 - **National Tele Mental Health Programme**
 - **Kiran Helpline**
 - **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram**
 - **Yuva Spandana Yojana (Karnataka)**
- **Issues Surrounding Mental Health in India:**
 - **Limited Accessibility to Mental Healthcare:** There is a shortage of mental health professionals in India, particularly in rural areas.
 - This scarcity results in **unequal access to mental health services**, with urban areas having more resources than rural ones.
 - **Stigma and Lack of Awareness:** Mental health issues in India are often stigmatized and misunderstood.
 - Many individuals and families **hesitate to seek help due to fear of societal discrimination** and lack of awareness about mental health conditions.
 - **Vulnerability of Adolescents to Mental Health Challenges:** Adolescence marks the **transition from childhood to adulthood**, laden with unique challenges, including **body image issues and societal expectations**.
 - **Academic pressure, peer influence, and concerns** about the future can significantly affect mental health during adolescence.
 - In India, adolescents with a reported prevalence of severe mental illness stands at 7.3%.
 - **Gender Disparities:** Gender plays a significant role in mental health disparities.
 - **Women in India** may face higher rates of **depression, anxiety, and domestic violence**, and they often have limited autonomy in seeking help.
 - According to recent report of NCRB, **housewives constituted 50% of total suicides** in India in 2021.
 - **Economic Factors: Poverty and economic inequality** can exacerbate mental health issues.
 - The stress of financial instability and limited educational opportunities can contribute to mental health problems.

- **Online and Social Media Influences:** The influence of social media and online content on mental health is a growing concern.
 - [Cyberbullying](#), **social comparison**, and **the spread of misinformation** can negatively impact mental well-being.
- **Aging Population and Geriatric Mental Health:** India's **aging population** is growing, and there is a need for better **mental health support for the elderly**.
 - **Loneliness, depression, and dementia** are common concerns among older adults.
- **Disaster and Trauma:** Natural disasters and other traumatic events can have lasting effects on mental health.
 - India is prone to disasters like [floods](#) and [earthquakes](#), which can lead to trauma and **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.

Way Forward

- **Shift to Convergent Model of Mental Health:** Policymakers should move from the **medical model to a convergent model of mental health** that considers various factors influencing well-being throughout an individual's life.
 - For example, the successful implementation of the **'Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child'** model in the US, which embraces a holistic approach to children's well-being by considering factors such as nutrition, physical activity, and emotional health within the school environment.
- **Increased Mental Healthcare Infrastructure:** Invest in building more mental health clinics and facilities, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
 - Train and recruit more mental health professionals, including **psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors**.
 - Promote telemedicine and online mental health services to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas and increase accessibility.
- **Integration with Primary Healthcare:** There is a need to integrate mental health services into the existing primary healthcare system to ensure early detection and treatment.
 - Also, **training primary care providers** to identify and manage common mental health issues is equally important.
- **Inclusion of Mental Health in Education:** There is a need to incorporate mental health education into school curricula to promote **early awareness and destigmatization**.
- **Mental Health Insurance Coverage:** There is a need to expand mental health coverage under health insurance policies in a phase wise manner to make **treatment more affordable and accessible**.
 - Also, there is a need to implement policies that ensure insurance parity for mental health services.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Mains

Q. Why suicide among young women is increasing in Indian society? (2023)

Krishna Water Dispute

For Prelims: Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II), [ISRWD \(Inter State River Water Disputes\) Act, 1956](#), Krishna River, [Article 262 of the Indian Constitution](#).

For Mains: Krishna Water Dispute, Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II, Inter-state Water Disputes.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has approved the issue of further **Terms of Reference (ToR)** to the existing **Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II)** under the [ISRWD \(Inter State River Water Disputes\) Act, 1956](#) for its adjudication between the States of **Telangana** and Andhra Pradesh (AP).

What is the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II)?

- Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II was constituted by the Centre in April 2004 under Section 3 of the ISRWD Act, 1956 to **adjudicate and resolve water-sharing disputes** related to the Krishna River.
- It was constituted to address the **allocation of Krishna River waters among the riparian states** of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.
- KWDT-II **made recommendations and allocations of Krishna River waters** based on the availability of water, the demands of the states, and other relevant factors. It provided specific quantities of water to each state, outlining the share they were entitled to receive.

What is Krishna Water Dispute?

- **About:**
 - The Krishna Water Dispute **centers on the equitable sharing of Krishna River** waters among the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.
 - The Krishna River flows through these states, and disputes arise due to differing needs, historical disagreements, and changes in the political and administrative landscape.
- **Background:**
 - **Point of Contention:** The Srisailem reservoir, situated on the Krishna River in Andhra Pradesh, is a **major point of contention**. Andhra Pradesh contested Telangana's use of Srisailem reservoir water for power generation.
 - **Dispute Background:** Disputes trace back to the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956 and were addressed through the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT) in 1973. A second KWDT was set up in 2004 to reallocate Krishna water.
 - **KWDT Allocation (2010):** The second KWDT delivered its report in 2010, which made allocations of the Krishna water at **65% dependability and for surplus flows as follows:**
 - 81 TMC for Maharashtra, 177 TMC for Karnataka, and 190 TMC for Andhra Pradesh.
 - **Andhra Pradesh's Challenges:** In 2011, Andhra Pradesh challenged the KWDT's allocation through legal proceedings, including a Special Leave Petition before the Supreme Court.
 - In 2013, the **KWDT issued a 'further report'**, which was again **challenged by Andhra Pradesh** in the [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#) in 2014.
 - After the creation of Telangana, in 2014, Andhra Pradesh demanded a review of Krishna water allocations among four states.
 - Maharashtra and Karnataka argued that **Telangana was created following the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh**. Therefore, allocation of water should be from Andhra Pradesh's share which was approved by the tribunal.
- **Constitutional Framework:**
 - [Article 262](#) of the Indian Constitution provides for the adjudication of inter-state water disputes, allowing Parliament to create laws for this purpose.
 - The [Inter-State Water Disputes Act \(1956\)](#) empowers the Central government to establish ad hoc tribunals for resolving water disputes between states.
- **Current Status:**
 - KWDT will provide new terms of reference under which the tribunal will divide the water of the Krishna River among both states, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, in the future.

- It will allocate water on a project-wise basis for the proposed projects in both states that are intended for developmental or future purposes.

Krishna River

- **Source:** It originates near Mahabaleshwar (Satara) in Maharashtra. It is the second biggest river in peninsular India after the Godavari River.
- **Drainage:** It runs from four states Maharashtra (303 km), North Karnataka (480 km) and the rest of its 1300 km journey in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh before it empties into the Bay of Bengal.
- **Tributaries:**
 - **Right Bank Tributaries:** The Ghatprabha, the Malprabha and the Tungabhadra.
 - **Left Bank Tributaries:** The Bhima, the Musi and the Munneru



- **Hydropower Development:**
 - The major Hydro Power stations in the basin are Koyna, Tungabhadra, SriSailam, Nagarjuna Sagar, Almatti, Naryanpur, Bhadra.
- **Mythology:**
 - Krishna is a **mighty east flowing river of peninsular India**. It is the same river as Krsnavena in the Puranas or Krsnaveni in the Yoginitantra.
 - It is also known as **Kanhapenna in Jatakas and Kanhapena** in the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela.

Arunachal Pradesh Gets GI Tags for Three Products

[Source: TOI](#)

Why in News?

Arunachal Pradesh has recently received the [Geographical Indication \(GI\)](#) tag for **Arunachal Yak Churpi, Khaw Tai (Khamti rice), and Tangsa textile**.

What Sets Arunachal Yak Churpi, Khaw Tai and Tangsa Textiles Apart?

- **Arunachal Yak Churpi:**
 - **Origin:** Arunachal Yak Churpi is derived from the **milk of the Arunachali yak**, a rare breed found primarily in the **West Kameng and Tawang districts** of Arunachal Pradesh.
 - **Tribal Yak Pastoralists:** This milk is obtained from yaks reared by **Brokpas**, a tribal community known for their expertise in yak husbandry.
 - These pastoralists practice seasonal migration, taking their yaks to higher altitudes during summers and descending to mid-altitude mountainous regions in winters, as **yaks cannot survive at lower altitudes during summer**.

- **Health Benefits and Usage:** Churpi is rich in proteins and serves as a vital source of nutrition in the vegetation-scarce, cold, and hilly mountainous regions of Arunachal Pradesh.



- **Khaw Tai (Khamti Rice):**

- Khaw Tai, a chewy sticky rice variety, hails from the **Namsai region** and is cultivated by traditional **Khampti tribal farmers**.

- **Tangsa Textile:**

- The Tangsa Textile products crafted by the **Tangsa tribe of Changlang district** are renowned for their **exotic designs and vibrant colors**.
 - This traditional craftsmanship reflects the cultural richness of the region.



What is a GI Tag?

- A **geographical indication (GI)** tag is a name or sign used on certain products that correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.
 - **For example**, Darjeeling Tea, Kanchipuram Silk, etc.
- Geographical indications are recognized as a part of [intellectual property rights \(IPRs\)](#) under **Articles 1(2) and 10** of the **Paris Convention** and also under Articles 22 to 24 of the [Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights \(TRIPS\) Agreement](#)
 - India, as a [World Trade Organisation \(WTO\)](#) member, implemented the **Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999**, which became effective on September 15, 2003, to protect such indications.
 - A registered GI is valid for 10 years. It can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q1. Which of the following has/have been accorded 'Geographical Indication' status? (2015)

1. Banaras Brocades and Sarees
2. Rajasthani Daal-Bati-Churma
3. Tirupathi Laddu

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (c)

Q2. India enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 in order to comply with the obligations to (2018)

- (a) ILO
- (b) IMF
- (c) UNCTAD
- (d) WTO

Ans: (d)

Indian Ocean Rim Association

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

[Sri Lanka](#) is set to take over the chairmanship of the [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#) during the **23rd Council of Ministers' Meeting** scheduled for **11th October, 2023**, in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It will hold the chairmanship of the association from 2023 to 2025.

- Bangladesh held the chairmanship from **November 2021 - November 2023**.

What is the Indian Ocean Rim Association?

- **About:**

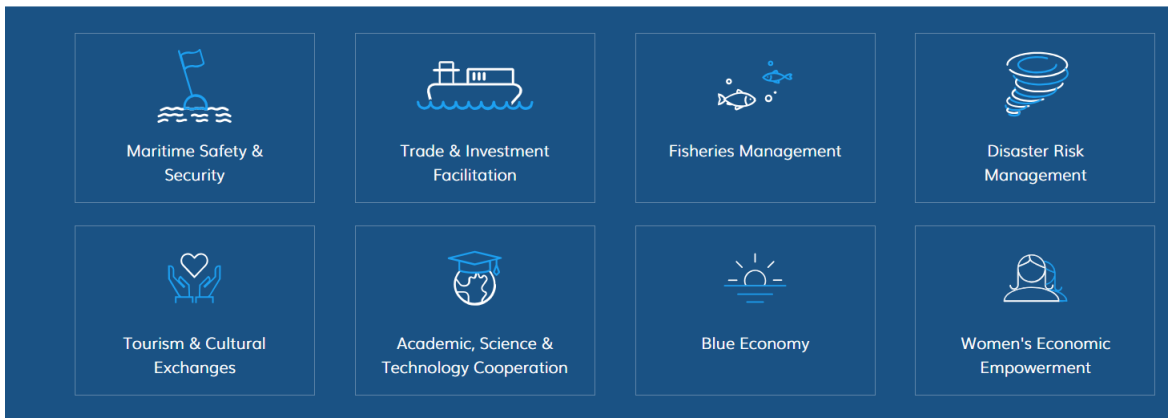
- The vision for IORA originated during a visit by the then **President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela** of South Africa to India in **1995**, where he said: **“the natural urge of the facts of history and geography should broaden itself to include the concept of an Indian Ocean rim for socio-economic co-operation.”**
- It underpinned the **Indian Ocean Rim Initiative in March 1995**, and the creation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (**then known as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation**) in March 1997.

- **Members:**

- Currently, IORA has **23 Member States** and 11 Dialogue Partners.
 - **Members:** Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, **India**, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.
 - **Dialogue Partners:** China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the **United States of America**.

- **Secretariat:** Mauritius.

- **Six Priority and Two Focus Areas:**



▪ **Indian Ocean:**

- As the third largest ocean woven together by trade routes, commands control of major sea-lanes carrying half of the world's container ships, one third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two thirds of the world's oil shipments, the Indian Ocean remains an important lifeline to international trade and transport.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

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

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

Which of the statements given above is/ are correct?

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

Ans: (d)

World Cotton Day 2023

Source: PIB

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Textiles** hosted a conference for **World Cotton Day (7th October , 2023)** in collaboration with **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** and EU-Resource Efficiency Initiative which discussed best practices and sustainable methods in the cotton value chain.

- Conference led to the Introduction of the "**Bale Identification and Traceability System (BITS)**" using **Blockchain Technology**.
- It also led to the launch of the Kasturi **Cotton program** for quality cotton with traceability.

Note

On October 7, 2019, the [World Trade Organisation \(WTO\)](#) organized the first World Cotton Day, initiated by the Cotton-4 nations, which are Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali.

What is Bale Identification and Traceability System (BITS) and Kasturi Cotton Program ?

- **Bale Identification and Traceability System (BITS):**
 - The BITS is a technological initiative in the cotton industry that utilizes [Blockchain Technology](#) to assign **unique QR codes to cotton bales**.
- **Objective:**
 - BITS was introduced to ensure that key information about cotton bales, such as their quality, variety, origin, and processing details, is transparent and easily accessible to both domestic and international buyers.
- **Traceability:**
 - By scanning the QR code, stakeholders, including cotton buyers, textile manufacturers, and others, **can trace the entire journey** of the cotton bale from its origin to the final product.
- **Implementation:**
 - BITS is implemented by the **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders **such as State Governments**.
- **Kasturi Cotton Program:**
 - The [Kasturi Cotton Program](#) is an initiative introduced by the **Ministry of Textiles** in India to promote the production and availability of premium quality cotton with traceability.
 - TEXPROCIL, in collaboration with CCI on behalf of the Ministry of Textiles, is overseeing the implementation of this program.
 - **Certified Quality:**
 - **Kasturi Cotton is not just any cotton;** it is certified to meet certain quality standards, which may include **fiber length, strength, color, and other characteristics** that make it suitable for premium textile products.

What are the Key Facts about Cotton?

- **About:** Kharif Crop which requires 6 to 8 months to mature.
 - Drought - resistant crops which are ideal for arid climates.
 - Occupies 2.1% of the world's arable land, meets 27% of the world's textiles needs.
- **Temperature:** Between 21-30°C.
- **Rainfall:** Around 50-100 cm.
- **Soil Type:** Well-drained [black cotton soil \(Regur Soil\)](#) (E.g. Soil of Deccan Plateau)
- **Products:** fiber, oil and animal feed.
- **Top Cotton Producing Countries:** India > China > US
- **Top Cotton Producing States in India:** Gujarat > Maharashtra > Telangana > Andhra Pradesh > Rajasthan.
- **Four cultivated species of cotton:** *Gossypium arboreum*, *G. herbaceum*, *G. hirsutum* and *G. barbadense*.
 - **Gossypium arboreum and G. herbaceum** are known as old-world cotton or Asiatic cotton.
 - **G. hirsutum** is also known as American cotton or upland cotton and *G. barbadense* as Egyptian cotton. These are both new world cotton species.
- **Hybrid Cotton:** Cotton made by **crossing two parent strains** that have different genetic characters. Hybrids are often spontaneously and randomly created in nature when open-pollinated plants naturally cross-pollinate with other related varieties.
- **Bt Cotton:** It is a [genetically modified organism](#) or genetically modified pest-resistant variety of cotton.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. The black cotton soil of India has been formed due to the weathering of (2011)

- (a) brown forest soil
- (b) fissure volcanic rock
- (c) granite and schist
- (d) shale and limestone

Ans: (b)

Q2. A state in India has the following characteristics: (2011)

1. Its northern part is arid and semi-arid.
2. Its central part produces cotton.
3. Cultivation of cash crops is predominant over food crops.

Which one of the following states has all of the above characteristics?

- (a) Andhra Pradesh
- (b) Gujarat
- (c) Karnataka
- (d) Tamil Nadu

Ans: (b)

Q3. With reference to the cultivation of Kharif crops in India in the last five years, consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Area under rice cultivation is the highest.
2. Area under cultivation of jowar is more than that of oilseeds.
3. Area of cotton cultivation is more than that of sugarcane.
4. Area under sugarcane cultivation has steadily decreased.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

Coexistence of Tiger and Asiatic Wild Dog

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

In a recent study titled '*Do dholes segregate themselves from their sympatrids? Habitat use and carnivore co-existence in the tropical forest,*' researchers have unveiled fascinating insights into the **coexistence dynamics between dhole or Asiatic wild dog (*Cuon alpinus*), and tigers** within

Assam's Manas National Park.

- This study delves into the factors that shape this unique carnivore relationship, providing valuable insights into their interactions and habitat preferences.

What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- The study conducted in Assam's Manas National Park revealed a **surprising positive relationship between [dholes \(Asiatic wild dogs\)](#) and [tigers](#)**, challenging previous assumptions of **antagonistic interactions**.
- The positive association between dholes and tigers may be attributed to overlapping **prey availability or habitat suitability**, suggesting a more complex ecological dynamic at play and prompting the need for further research.
 - The research found that the activity of dholes had the highest temporal overlap with **[leopards](#)** and the lowest with **[clouded leopards](#)** (*Neofelis nebulosa*).
- This study highlights the **Manas National Park's conservation significance**, as dhole populations face fragmentation due to habitat loss, declining prey availability, persecution, disease, and competition with other species.

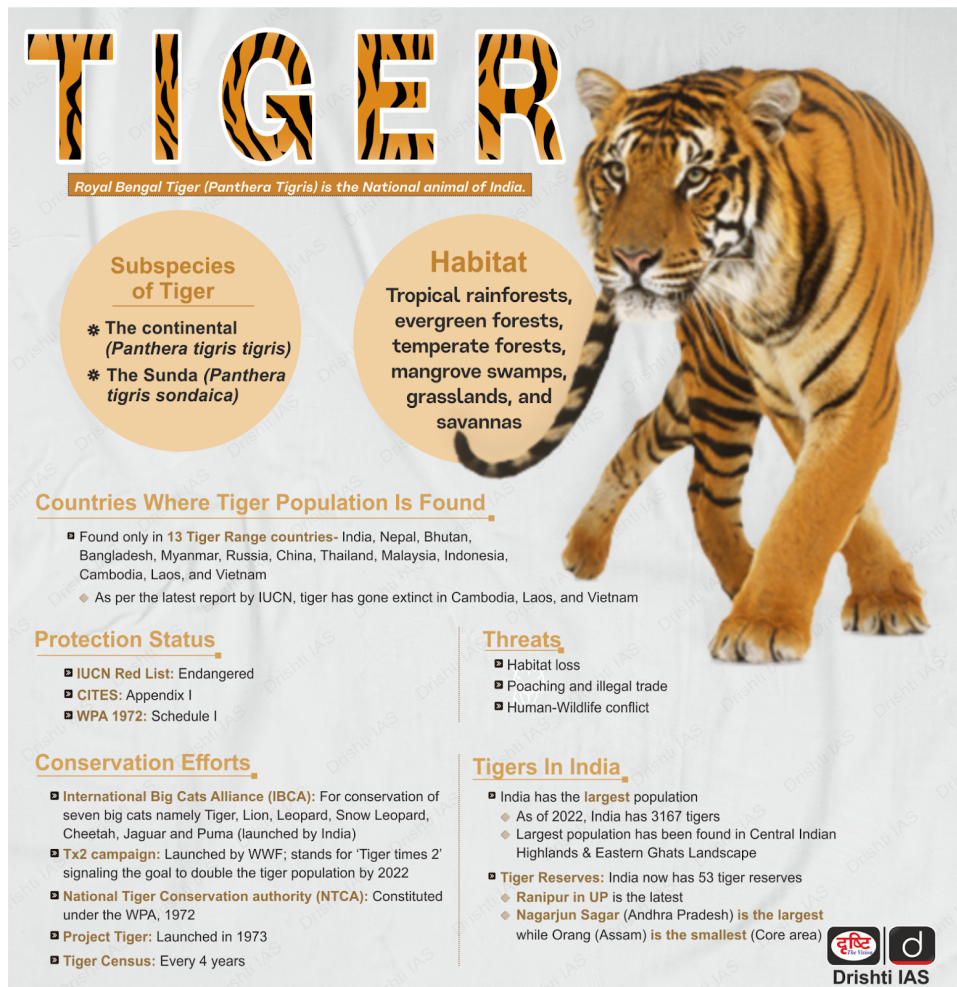
Dhole



- **About:**
 - Dhole (*Cuon alpinus*) is a wild carnivorous animal and is a member of the family Canidae and the class Mammalia.
- **Habitat:**
 - Dholes, historically widespread across **southern Russia to southeast Asia**, are now mainly found in **south and southeast Asia**, with northern populations in China.
 - In India, they are clustered in the **Western and Eastern Ghats, central India, and northeast India**, with Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh playing a crucial role in their conservation, according to a 2020 study.
- **Conservation:**
 - [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#): **Schedule 2.**
 - [International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List](#): **Endangered.**
 - [The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#): **Appendix II.**
 - The creation of reserves under **Project Tiger** provided some protection for dhole populations sympatric with tigers.
 - In 2014, the Indian government sanctioned its first **dhole conservation breeding center** at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) in Visakhapatnam.

Manas National Park

- It is a national park, **Project Tiger Reserve**, an **elephant reserve** and a **biosphere reserve** in Assam, India. It borders the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.
- It was declared a **national park in 1990** and earned the badge of [UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988](#).
- Manas National Park is home to a varied species of Fauna of the likes of the [Indian One Horned Rhinoceros](#), [Asiatic Elephants](#), Tigers, Clouded Leopards, [Hoolock Gibbons](#), etc.



TIGER

Royal Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) is the National animal of India.

Subspecies of Tiger

- * The continental (*Panthera tigris tigris*)
- * The Sunda (*Panthera tigris sondaica*)

Habitat

Tropical rainforests, evergreen forests, temperate forests, mangrove swamps, grasslands, and savannas

Countries Where Tiger Population Is Found

- Found only in 13 Tiger Range countries- India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Russia, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam
- As per the latest report by IUCN, tiger has gone extinct in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam

Protection Status

- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I
- WPA 1972: Schedule I

Threats


- Habitat loss
- Poaching and illegal trade
- Human-Wildlife conflict

Conservation Efforts

- International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA):** For conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma (launched by India)
- Tx2 campaign:** Launched by WWF; stands for 'Tiger times 2' signaling the goal to double the tiger population by 2022
- National Tiger Conservation authority (NTCA):** Constituted under the WPA, 1972
- Project Tiger:** Launched in 1973
- Tiger Census:** Every 4 years

Tigers In India

- India has the **largest** population
 - As of 2022, India has 3167 tigers
 - Largest population has been found in Central Indian Highlands & Eastern Ghats Landscape
- Tiger Reserves:** India now has 53 tiger reserves
 - Ranipur in UP is the latest
 - Nagarjun Sagar (Andhra Pradesh) is the largest while Orang (Assam) is the smallest (Core area)

 Drishti IAS

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. Consider the following protected areas: (2012)

- Bandipur
- Bhitarkanika
- Manas
- Sunderbans

Which of the above are declared Tiger Reserves?

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

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

International Day of the Girl 2023

Recently, a 21 year old woman from Chennai got the chance to **live a day in the shoes of a diplomat** after winning a competition held by the British High Commission to commemorate the [International Day of the Girl](#) 2023.

- International Day of the Girl Child, observed annually on **11th October** was first celebrated in **2012**.
- The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995**, proposed an action plan to advance the rights of girls.
- In 2011, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) adopted Resolution 66/170 to declare **11th October as the International Day of the Girl Child**.
 - The day aims to focus on the **importance of girls' education, their rights, and promoting gender equality**.
 - It urges the global community to move beyond reaffirming commitments and invest boldly in the action needed to make changes that could empower girls.
- **Theme of International Day of the Girl 2023:** "Invest in Girls' Rights: Our Leadership, Our Well-being."

Read more: [International Girl Child Day](#)

Tele MANAS Seva

On World Mental Health Day, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare highlighted the success of [Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States \(Tele MANAS\) Seva](#).

- Tele-MANAS Seva is a mental health counseling service launched on [World Mental Health Day 2022](#).
- The aim of Tele-MANAS is to provide universal access to equitable, accessible, **affordable and quality mental health care through 24X7 tele-mental health services** as a digital component of the **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)** across all Indian States and UTs with assured linkages.
- The Tele MANAS helpline offers toll-free access with **audio calling and an auto-call back system**. Trained counselors **provide care, referring to specialists when needed, including audio and video options**.
 - For urgent in-person care, referrals to health centers are arranged via [eSanjeevani](#), from Health and Wellness Centers to tertiary care centers.
- Tele-MANAS has counseled more than **3,50,000 people till 11th October 2023** and more than **1,000 calls are being received on this helpline every day**.

Read more: [World Mental Health Day 2022, National Telemedicine Service of India: eSanjeevani](#)

The Optical Phenomenon of Rainbows

[Rainbows](#), a meteorological marvel gracing the sky with their **radiant hues post-rainfall**, owe their existence to the **intricacies of light refraction and reflection**. After a substantial downpour, these optical phenomena can extend across the horizon, appearing as though **they touch the Earth's**

surface.

- The underlying cause can be attributed to the **bending and separation of sunlight's rays as they interact with raindrops.**
 - Each raindrop essentially acts as a **miniature prism**, refracting and dispersing light into its constituent colors.
 - The angles at which these colors reach an observer's eye remain constant.
- The rainbow's location in the sky is determined by the sun's height.
 - **Raindrops**, oriented opposite to the sun at specific angles, can create a full circle, but from ground level, we see an arc due to the horizon.
 - But, under special conditions like a setting sun, **observers from high vantage points, such as mountain tops or hot-air balloons**, can experience the full circular display of this optical marvel.

Read more: [Rainbows](#)

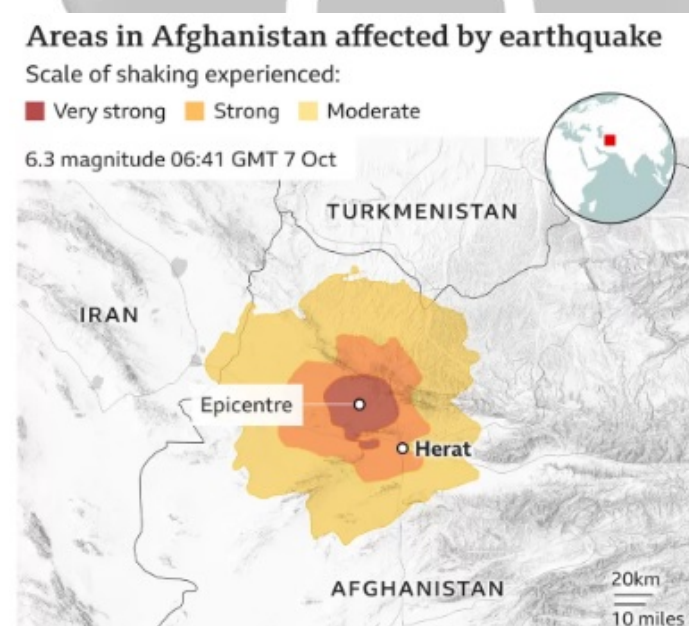
National Waterways 44(Ichamati River)

The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways** has initiated a significant **dredging project on National Waterways 44**, which includes the **Ichamati River in West Bengal**. This project aims to **increase the navigational depth of the Ichamati River**, ultimately boosting its capacity to manage tidal influences.

- The Ichamati River, serving as a **boundary between India and Bangladesh**, flows through both countries and has three distinct sections. Additionally, in the North 24-Parganas district in West Bengal, **it forms an oxbow lake complex.**
 - However, the river faces challenges such as **silt accumulation leading to reduced flow in dry seasons and flooding during the rainy season.**
- **National Waterways** like Ichamati are essential for transportation, with **India boasting 111 such inland waterways spanning a total of 14,500 kilometers.**
 - The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** oversees their development and regulation, facilitating the movement of around **55 million tonnes of cargo annually through Inland Water Transport (IWT).**

Read more: [Inland Waterways Authority of India](#)

Earthquake Strikes Northwestern Afghanistan



Recently, an **earthquake** with a magnitude of **6.3 hit northwestern Afghanistan**, causing widespread

devastation.

- This devastating earthquake has left residents in a state of desperation, struggling to recover and rebuild their lives in the face of ongoing adversity.
- An earthquake is a **sudden and violent shaking of the ground**. These movements can result in the release of energy in the form of [seismic waves](#), which propagate through the Earth, causing the ground to shake.
 - The point on the Earth's surface directly above where the earthquake originates is called the **epicenter**, and the location within the Earth where the earthquake's energy is released is known as the **hypocenter or focus**.

Read more: [Earthquake](#)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/11-10-2023/print>

