



## Global Buddhist Summit 2023

**For Prelims:** Global Buddhist Summit 2023, [IBC](#), [Buddhism](#), [Terrorism](#), [Climate Change](#), Noble Eightfold Path, Noble Truths, [ICCR](#).

**For Mains:** Role of Buddhism in India's Soft Power Strategy.

### Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Culture in partnership with [International Buddhist Confederation \(IBC\)](#) has organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Buddhist Summit 2023, which aims to enhance cultural and diplomatic relations with other countries.

### What is the IBC?

- IBC is the **biggest religious Buddhist confederation**.
- The purpose of this body is to create a **role for Buddhism on the global stage so as to help to preserve heritage**, share knowledge, and promote values and to represent a united front for Buddhism to enjoy meaningful participation in the global discourse.
- In November 2011, New Delhi was host to **Global Buddhist Congregation (GBC)**, where the attendees unanimously adopted a resolution to form an international umbrella body - the **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)**.
- **HQ:** Delhi, India.

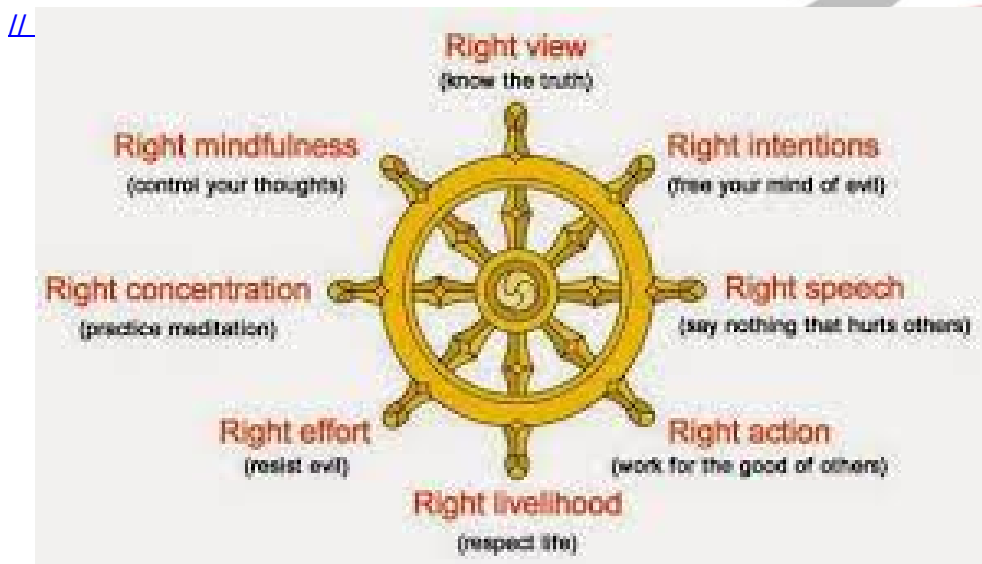
### What is the Global Buddhist Summit 2023?

- **About:**
  - Buddhist monks from various countries took part in the two-day Summit.
  - Eminent scholars, Sangha leaders and **Dharma practitioners from all over the world attended** the conference.
    - There are 173 international participants comprising 84 Sangha member and 151 Indian delegates comprising 46 Sangha members, 40 nuns and 65 laity from outside Delhi.
- **Theme:** Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis.
  - **Sub Themes:**
    - Buddha Dhamma and Peace
    - Buddha Dhamma: Environmental Crisis, Health and Sustainability
    - Preservation of Nalanda Buddhist Tradition
    - Buddha Dhamma Pilgrimage, Living heritage and Buddha Relics: a resilient foundation to India's centuries-old cultural links to countries in South, Southeast and East Asia.
- **Objectives:**
  - The summit aims to discuss today's pressing global issues and look for answers in the Buddha Dhamma that is based on universal values.

- The aim is to set up a forum for the lay **Buddhist scholars and Dharma Masters**.
  - It seeks to delve into **Buddha's message for Peace, Compassion and Harmony** with the objective of working towards **Universal Peace and Harmony**, in accordance with the **core values of Dharma** and produce a document for further academic research, to study its viability for use as a [tool for the conduct of international relations on the global stage](#).
- **Significance for India:**
- This global Summit will mark the significance and importance of India in Buddhism, as **Buddhism was born in India**.
  - This summit will also be a medium to enhance the cultural and diplomatic relationships with other countries, especially with the countries which embrace the Buddhist Ethos.

## How can the Buddha's Teachings help Address today's Global Challenges?

- The key teachings of Buddha include the **Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path**.
- **Four noble truths:**
    - Suffering (dukkha) is the essence of the world.
    - Every suffering has a cause – Samudya.
    - Suffering could be extinguished – Nirodha.
    - It can be achieved by following the Atthanga Magga (Eight-Fold Path).
  - **Noble Eightfold Path:**



- The world is facing the most challenging times of the century due to war, economic crisis, **terrorism** and **climate change**, and all these contemporary global challenges can be addressed through the teachings of Lord Buddha.
- These teachings of Buddha can provide **solutions to global problems in several ways**. For example, the teachings on compassion, non-violence, and interdependence can help address **conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence**.
- Teachings on ethical conduct, social responsibility, and generosity can help address issues of **inequality and promote social justice**.
- The teachings on mindfulness, simplicity, and non-harming can help address **environmental degradation and promote sustainable living**.

## What is the Role of Buddhism in India's Soft Power Strategy?

- **Cultural Diplomacy:**
- One of the ways in which Buddhism has been used in India's soft power strategy is

**through cultural diplomacy.**

- This involves promoting Indian culture, including Buddhism, through various channels such as art, music, films, literature, and festivals.
- For example, the [Indian Council for Cultural Relations \(ICCR\)](#) has organized several cultural events in Buddhist countries, such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, and Bhutan, to showcase India's cultural heritage and strengthen cultural ties.
- **Education and Capacity-Building:**
  - Another way in which Buddhism can be used in India's soft power strategy is through education and capacity-building.
  - India has established **several Buddhist institutions and centers of excellence**, such as the Nalanda University and the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, to promote **Buddhist studies and research**.
  - In 2022, the foundation stone for the [Dhamma Dipa International Buddhist University \(DDIBU\)](#) in Tripura was laid,
    - DDIBU is the first **Buddhist-run university in India to offer Buddhist education** along with courses in other disciplines of modern education as well.
  - India also offers scholarships and training programs to Buddhist students and monks from other countries, such as Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Nepal, to enhance their knowledge and skills.
- **Bilateral Exchanges and Initiatives:**
  - In terms of bilateral relations, India has sought to deepen its ties with Buddhist countries, such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Bhutan, through various initiatives.
  - India has signed several agreements with Sri Lanka, such as the **Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA)**, to boost economic cooperation.
    - India has also provided assistance to Buddhist countries for the restoration and preservation of their cultural heritage sites, such as the Bagan temples in Myanmar and the Stupa in Nepal.
  - India and Mongolia also renewed the [Cultural Exchange Program](#) until 2023 under which **10 dedicated ICCR scholarships for studying 'Tibetan Buddhism'** have been allocated for Mongolians to study in specialized institutes of CIBS, Leh and CUTS, Varanasi.

**UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Prelims**

**Q. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements: (2020)**

1. Sthaviravadins belong to Mahayana Buddhism.
2. Lokottaravadin sect was an offshoot of Mahasanghika sect of Buddhism.
3. The deification of Buddha by Mahasanghikas fostered the Mahayana Buddhism.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: (b)**

**Q. With reference to the religious practices in India, the "Sthanakvasi" sect belongs to (2018)**

- (a) Buddhism
- (b) Jainism
- (c) Vaishnavism
- (d) Shaivism

**Ans: (b)**

**Q. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements: (2016)**

1. The concept of Bodhisattva is central to Hinayana sect of Buddhism.
2. Bodhisattva is a compassionate one on his way to Enlightenment.
3. Bodhisattva delays achieving his own salvation to help all sentient beings on their path to it.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: (b)**

### **Mains**

**Q. Pala period is the most significant phase in the history of Buddhism in India. Enumerate. (2020)**

**Source: PIB**

## **Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement**

**For Prelims:** [Vinoba Bhave](#), [Mahatma Gandhi](#), [Freedom Struggle](#), [Philosophy of non-violence](#), [Self-governance](#).

**For Mains:** Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement and its Post Independence Impact.

### **Why in News?**

Recently, a village in Maharashtra moved to the Bombay High Court, demanding the implementation of the Gramdan Act.

### **What is Gramdan?**

▪ **Bhoodan Movement:**

◦ **Background:**

- It was a **socio-political movement** started by [Vinoba Bhave](#) in 1951 in India.
- Vinoba Bhave was **a disciple of [Mahatma Gandhi](#)** who **chose him as the first individual Satyagrahi** and had actively participated in [India's Freedom Struggle](#).
- After independence, he realized that the issue of landlessness was a major problem faced by rural India and in 1951, he started the [Bhoodan Movement or the land gift movement](#).

◦ **Objectives:**

- It aimed to **persuade wealthy landowners to donate a portion of their land** to landless peasants.

- The movement gained momentum when Bhave walked from village to village, requesting **landowners to donate their land**.
- Bhave's approach was **rooted in the [philosophy of non-violence](#)** and the idea that the landowners should donate their land out of compassion and empathy for the poor.

#### ▪ **Gramdan Movement:**

- The next phase of the Bhoodan movement was the Gramdan Movement or the village gift movement.
- It aimed to create **self-sufficient villages by bringing about collective ownership of land**.
- The Gramdan movement **urged villagers to donate their land to a village council**, which would then manage and distribute the land to the villagers.
- This movement gained **support from many political leaders** and was seen as a solution to the problem of unequal distribution of land in rural India.

#### ▪ **Significance of the Movement:**

- The movement was successful in many parts of India, **with thousands of acres of land being donated** by landowners.
- The Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement had a **significant impact on Indian society and politics**; it helped in reducing landlessness, bringing about a more equitable distribution of land and empowerment of rural communities along with promoting self-sufficiency.
- It paved the way for the **protection of natural resources** by giving everyone in the community equal rights and responsibilities towards them and empowering the communities to move **towards [self-governance](#)**.

#### ▪ **Drawbacks:**

- Sometimes, the **land donated was either unfertile or under litigation**.
  - Hence, large areas of land were collected but little was distributed among the landless.
- It was **not successful in areas where there was disparity** in landholdings.
- Also, the movement also **failed to realize its revolutionary potential**.

## What is the Current Scenario of the Gramdan Act?

#### ▪ **Gramdan Act in Different States:**

- Today, seven states in India have **3,660 Gramdan villages**, the highest being in Odisha (1309).
  - The other six are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- In September 2022, the Assam government repealed the **Assam Gramdan Act, 1961 and Assam Bhoodan Act, 1965**, by passing The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2022 to counter encroachment on donated lands in the state.
  - Till that time, Assam had 312 Gramdan villages.

#### ▪ **Some Common Features of Gramdan Act:**

- At least 75% of the landowners in the village should surrender land ownership to the village community. Such land should be at least 60% of the village land.
- 5% of the surrendered land is distributed to the landless in the village for cultivation.
  - Recipients of such land **cannot transfer the same without the permission** of the community.
- The rest remains with the donors; they and their descendants can work on it and reap the benefits.
  - However, they cannot sell it outside the village or to one in the village who has not joined Gramdan.
- All the cultivators who have joined Gramdan should contribute 2.5% of their income to the community.

#### ▪ **Concerns:**

- The act has lost its relevance in many villages mainly due to **poor implementation of the law**.
- In some villages, the descendants of those who had given their land under Gramdan are frustrated that they cannot sell their land outside the village and **call the act 'anti-development'**.

## How is the Act Significant for Forest Conservation?

- The Gramdan Act can help ensure community forest rights by **empowering local communities to take control of their natural resources**, including forests.
- Under the Gramdan Act, land and other resources are vested in the community, which means that the **community has the power to make decisions about** how these resources are used and managed thus giving them a say in forests management and the benefits from their sustainable use.
- In the context of community forest rights, the Gramdan Act can provide a **legal framework for communities to assert their rights** over forest land and resources.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

**Q. In the 'Individual Satyagraha', Vinoba Bhave was chosen as the first Satyagrahi. Who was the second? (2009)**

- (a) Dr. Rajendra Prasad
- (b) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
- (c) C. Rajagopalachari
- (d) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

**Ans: (b)**

### Mains

**Q. Critically discuss the objectives of Bhoodan and Gramdan movements initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and their success. (2013)**

**Source: DTE**

## Translocation of Elephants

**For Prelims:** Asian elephants, Natural Heritage, Convention of the Migratory species (CMS), Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, Project Elephant, Elephant reserves.

**For Mains:** Issues Related to Relocation of Wild Animals in India.

## Why in News?

The [Supreme Court](#) recently dismissed the **Kerala government's appeal** against the order of the **Kerala HC directing the relocation of Arikomban ([Wild Elephant](#))**, the "rice tusker" of Munnar, to

the [Parambikulam tiger reserve](#).

## What are the Arguments in Favour of Elephant Translocation?

- The **Kerala High Court** highlighted that the availability of **natural food and water resources** in the relocation site would **deter the elephant from foraging in human settlements**.
- The court also emphasised that the elephant will be **radio-collared**, and its **movements monitored by forest/wildlife officials**, which would effectively remove the surprise element of any conflict situation.

## What are the Arguments Against Elephant Translocation?

- India's first **radio-telemetry study of a translocated problem elephant** was conducted in **2006** on a large male shifted from the **cropland of West Midnapore in South Bengal to the [Mahananda Sanctuary](#)** in Darjeeling district.
  - Almost immediately, the elephant started **damaging houses and raiding crops** in villages and Army areas.
- A study on **translocated problem [Asian elephants](#)** was conducted in **2012**, in which a team of biologists monitored **12 male elephants translocated 16 times to different national parks in Sri Lanka**.
  - The study found: Translocation caused **wider propagation and intensification of human-elephant conflict, and increased elephant mortality**.
- **Vinayaga**, a bull that **gained notoriety as a crop raider**, was **translocated from Coimbatore to the Mudumalai-Bandipur landscape in December 2018**.
  - It soon started using **gaps in the elephant-proof trench to raid crops**, until he was driven back.



# HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT



When encounters between humans and wildlife lead to negative results, such as loss of property, livelihoods, and even life

## Causes of HWC

- Agricultural Expansion
- Urbanization
- Infrastructure Development
- Climate Change
- Wildlife Populations Growth and Range Expansion

## Impacts of HWC

- Grave injuries, Loss of life
- Damage to farms and crops
- ↑ violence against animals

WWF India during 2003-2004 developed the Sonitpur Model by which community members were connected with Assam Forest Dept and given training on how to drive elephants away from crop fields and human habitations safely.

In 2020, the SC upheld Madras HC's decision on the Nilgiris elephant corridor, affirming the right of passage of the animals and closure of resorts in the area.

## Data on HWC

- Tigers killed 125 humans between 2019 and 2021
- Death of 329 tigers due to poaching, natural and unnatural causes.
- Elephants killed 1,579 humans in three years
- Death of 307 elephants due to poaching, electrocution, poisoning and train accidents

## Advisory for HWC Management (Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife)

- Gram Panchayats empowered to deal with problematic wild animals (WPA 1972)
- Compensation against crop damage due to HWC (PM Fasal Bima Yojna)
- Local/State depts. to adopt early warning systems and create barriers
- Paying a part of ex-gratia as interim relief within 24 hours of the incident to the victim/family

## State – Specific Initiatives

- **UP** - Man-animal conflict under **listed disasters** (in State Disaster Response Fund)
- **Uttarakhand** - **Bio-fencing** carried out by growing various species of plants in areas
- **Odisha** - Casting **seed balls** inside different forests to **enrich food stock for wild elephants**



## Elephant

### ■ About:

- Elephant is the **Natural Heritage Animal of India**.
- Elephants are considered a "**Keystone Species**" as they play a critical role in maintaining the balance and health of forest ecosystems.
  - They are **known for their exceptional intelligence**, boasting the largest brain size of any land animal.

### ■ Significance in Ecosystem:

- Elephants are very **important grazers and browsers**, eating vast amounts of **vegetation every day, spreading seeds around as they go**.
  - They also help **shape the often-thick vegetation of the Asian landscape**.
  - For example, in forests, **elephants create clearings and gaps in the trees that let sunlight in to reach new seedlings**, helping plants grow and the forest to regenerate naturally.
- Elephants will also dig for water when there is not any surface water – **opening water access for other creatures as well as themselves**.

### ■ Elephants in India:

- India has the **largest number of wild Asian Elephants**, estimated at **29,964 according to the 2017 census by Project Elephant**.
  - It is about 60% of the species' global population.
- **Karnataka** has the highest number of elephants, followed by **Assam** and **Kerala**.

### ■ Conservation Status:



- **Convention of the Migratory species (CMS):** Appendix I
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of threatened species:**
  - **Asian Elephant- Endangered**
  - African Forest Elephant- Critically Endangered
  - African Savanna Elephant- Endangered
- **Other Conservative Efforts:**
  - **India:**
    - **Project Elephant** was initiated by the Indian government in 1992 to safeguard elephants and their natural habitat in India.
      - There are also **33 elephant reserves in India** aimed at conservation efforts.
  - **Worldwide**
    - **World Elephant Day:** It is observed annually on **August 12th** to raise awareness about the urgent need to protect and conserve elephants.
      - The day was **established in 2012 to highlight the critical plight of both Asian and African elephants.**
    - **Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme:** It is an international collaboration that **measures the levels, trends and causes of elephant mortality**, thereby providing an information base to support international decision-making related to conservation of **elephants in Asia and Africa.**

## Way Forward

- **Relocation Impact Assessment:**
  - It is important to carefully consider the **specific circumstances and characteristics** of each problem elephant and its **potential relocation site.**
    - Thorough **research and analysis should be conducted to assess the availability of natural food and water resources**, habitat suitability, and potential risks and challenges of translocation.
- **Monitoring and Management:**
  - Proper monitoring and management plans should also be in place, including **post-relocation monitoring** and measures to mitigate any potential conflicts.
  - While translocation of problem elephants may be considered as a strategy to **mitigate human-elephant conflicts**, it should be approached with caution and based on **sound scientific research, community engagement, and comprehensive management plans** to minimise potential risks and ensure the well-being of both elephants and local communities.
- **Alternative to Translocation of Elephants:**
  - **Capturing and transforming wild elephants** with the help of 'kunkis'(a trained elephant used to capture wild ones) presents a promising approach for translocation.
  - This method can offer several benefits, including **increased safety during capture operations**, reduced stress on translocated elephants due to familiarization with trained 'kunkis', and improved success rates of translocation efforts.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. With reference to Indian elephants, consider the following statements: (2020)**

1. The leader of an elephant group is a female.
2. The maximum gestation period can be 22 months.
3. An elephant can normally go on calving till the age of 40 years only.
4. Among the States in India, the highest elephant population is in Kerala.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

Source: IE

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## Settlement of Border Dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

**For Prelims:** [Survey of India](#), [Belagavi](#), [States Reorganisation Act of 1956](#), [Mahajan Commission](#), [Lushai Hills](#), [Khasi and Jaintia Hills](#), [Article 131 of the Constitution of India](#),

**For Mains:** Border Disputes Between States in India, [Inter-state Council](#).

### Why in News?

Recently, the **border dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh**, which was going on since 1972 has **been resolved permanently**.

- Assam and Arunachal Pradesh share an 804-km long boundary.

### What are the Major Highlights of the Agreement?

- The agreement is expected to settle the dispute relating to **123 villages covering over 700 kilometres of the border between the two states**, taking into account **historical perspective, demographic profile, administrative convenience, proximity to the border**, and aspirations of the residents.
  - This will be final agreement **neither of states will make any new claim in future** relating to any area or village
- A detailed survey will be conducted by the [Survey of India](#) in the presence of representatives from both state governments to **determine the boundaries after the agreement**.

### What are the Other Border Disputes Between States in India?

- **Karnataka-Maharashtra:**
  - The border dispute over [Belagavi](#), [Karwar](#) and [Nipani](#) in **North Karnataka** is long-standing. When state boundaries were redrawn on linguistic lines as per the [States Reorganisation Act of 1956](#), Belagavi became part of the erstwhile Mysore state.
    - The **Act was based on the findings of the Justice Fazal Ali Commission** which was appointed in 1953 and submitted its report two years later.
    - **Maharashtra claims that parts of Belagavi**, where Marathi is the dominant language, should remain in Maharashtra.

- In October 1966, the **Centre set up the [Mahajan Commission](#)** to resolve the border dispute in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala.
  - The Commission recommended that **Belgaum and 247 villages remain with Karnataka**. Maharashtra rejected the report, and in 2004, moved the Supreme Court.
- **Assam-Mizoram:**
  - The border dispute between **Assam and Mizoram is a legacy of two British-era notifications of 1875 and 1933**, when Mizoram was called [Lushai Hills](#), a district in Assam.
    - The **1875 notification differentiated Lushai Hills from the plains of Cachar** and the other demarcated boundary between Lushai Hills and Manipur.
  - While **Mizoram became a state only in 1987** following years of insurgency, it **still insists on the boundary decided in 1875**.
    - Assam, on the other hand, wants the **boundary demarcated in 1986 (based on the 1933 notification)**.
- **Haryana-Himachal Pradesh:**
  - The [Parwanoo region](#) has had the spotlight over the border dispute between the two states.
  - It is next to the **Panchkula district of Haryana** and the state has claimed parts of the land in **Himachal Pradesh** as its own.
- **Himachal Pradesh-Ladakh:**
  - **Himachal and Ladakh lay claim to Sarchu**, an area on the route between **Leh and Manali**.
  - It is considered a major point where travellers stop when travelling between the two cities.
    - Sarchu is in between **Himachal's Lahul and Spiti district and Leh district in Ladakh**.
- **Meghalaya-Assam:**
  - The problem between **Assam and Meghalaya started when the latter challenged the [North-Eastern Areas \(Reorganisation\) Act, 1971](#)**, which gave Blocks I and II of the **Mikir Hills or present-day Karbi Anglong district to Assam**.
  - Meghalaya contends that both these blocks formed part of the erstwhile **United [Khasi and Jaintia Hills](#) district when it was notified in 1835**.
- **Assam-Nagaland:**
  - It began **soon after Nagaland became a state in 1963**.
  - The **Nagaland State Act of 1962** had defined the state's borders according to a 1925 notification when **Naga Hills and Tuensang Area (NHTA)** were integrated into a new administrative unit.
  - Nagaland, however, does not accept the boundary delineation and has **demand that the new state should also have all Naga-dominated areas** in North Cachar and Nagaon districts. S
  - Tensions between **Assam and Nagaland** flared up soon after the latter was formed, resulting in the first border clashes in 1965.
    - This was followed by major clashes between the two states along the border in **1968, 1979, 1985, 2007 and 2014**.

## Border wars



### What are the Other Methods of Resolution of Border Disputes in India?

- **Through Exclusive Original Jurisdiction of SC:**
  - The Supreme Court has exclusive original jurisdiction as per [Article 131 of the Constitution of India](#), which means no other court can hear these cases:
    - It can hear disputes between the Government of India and one or more States.
    - It can hear disputes between the Government of India and any State(s) on one side, and one or more other State(s) on the other.
    - It can hear disputes between two or more States if the dispute involves a question of law or fact on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends.
  - **Limitations on Jurisdiction:** The Supreme Court's jurisdiction does not extend to **disputes arising out of treaties, agreements, covenants, engagements**, or similar instruments entered into **before the commencement of the Constitution and continuing in operation**, or if the instrument provides that the jurisdiction shall not extend to such disputes.
- **Through Inter-State Council:**
  - **Article 263** of the Constitution empowers the President to establish an [Inter-state](#)

**Council** if it appears that the **public interests would be served by such a Council.**

- It serves as a **forum for discussion and resolution of disputes between states**, as well as for investigating and discussing subjects of common interest among states or between the Union and one or more states.
- In 1990, **the Inter-state Council was established through a Presidential Order.**
  - In 2021, the **Council was reconstituted.**

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.** Constitutional mechanisms to resolve the inter-state water disputes have failed to address and solve the problems. Is the failure due to structural or process inadequacy or both? Discuss. **(2013)**

[Source: PIB](#)

## India-Thailand Relations

**For Prelims:** 8<sup>th</sup> India-Thailand Defence Dialogue, [ASEAN](#), [BIMSTEC](#), [Exercise MAITREE](#), Exercise SIAM BHARAT, [India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol](#).

**For Mains:** India-Thailand Relations.

## Why in News?

The **8<sup>th</sup> India-Thailand Defence Dialogue** was held in Bangkok, Thailand, during which both sides expressed satisfaction at the ongoing bilateral defense cooperation.



## What are the Key Highlights of the Dialogue?

- The progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives was reviewed.
- The co-chairs identified **means to enhance existing areas of collaboration**, especially in the field of defence industry, maritime security and multinational cooperation.
  - Thailand expressed confidence in the capability of the Indian defence industry.
- The two chairs also **articulated steps in the direction of emerging areas of cooperation** and issues pertaining to global commons.

## How have India's Relations been with Thailand?

- **Diplomatic Relations:**
  - Thailand and India have a **longstanding diplomatic relationship that dates back to 1947**.
  - The relationship is built on a foundation of **economic and cultural ties that have existed for more than 2000 years**.
  - India's '**Look East**' policy (since 1993) and **Thailand's 'Look West' policy** (since 1996) which has now metamorphosed into **India's 'Act East'** and **Thailand's 'Act West'** are strongly contributing to consolidating bilateral relations including economic & commercial linkages.
- **Economic And Commercial Relations:**
  - Bilateral trade was USD 12.12 billion in 2019 and it reached USD 9.76 billion in 2020 despite the pandemic situation.
    - Thailand exports to India amounted to USD 7.60 billion, while Indian exports to Thailand were worth **USD 4.86 billion in 2018**.
  - Bilateral trade between India and Thailand reached an all-time high of around **USD 15 billion in 2021-22**.
  - In the **ASEAN region**, **Thailand ranks as India's 5<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner** after Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.
    - Currently, **Thai goods have benefited from tax reduction** under **ASEAN-India FTA** in Goods, which came into effect in January 2010.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
  - The bilateral defence engagements have expanded over time and include Defence Dialogue meetings, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity-building and training programs, and the annual joint military exercises.
  - **Defense Exercises:**
    - **Exercise MAITREE** (Army).
    - **Exercise SIAM BHARAT** (Air Force).
    - **India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol** (Navy).
- **Connectivity:**
  - In 2019, approximately 1.9 million Indian tourists visited Thailand, while around 160,000 Thai tourists visited India mainly for **Buddhist pilgrimage sites**.
  - India and Thailand are working together to improve regional connectivity also under the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** framework.
  - The most awaited **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** is expected to expand land connectivity through Northeast India and Southeast Asia, becoming the first-ever cross border facilitation agreement between South and Southeast Asia.
- **Cultural Cooperation:**
  - India and Thailand have a strong cultural exchange program with regular visits of Indian cultural troupes, festivals, and events.
  - An Indian Cultural Centre, now known as the **Swami Vivekananda Culture Centre**, was established in Bangkok in 2009.
  - The 550<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was also celebrated in Thailand with various events and a grand Nagar Kirtan procession in Bangkok.
  - The Thai language translation of the Constitution of India was launched in Thailand.

## Way Forward

- Both should address issues regarding **trade barriers and reducing import duty charges through bilateral engagements** to expand trade and investments.
- Collaboration opportunities between India's start-up ecosystem and Thailand should also be explored.
- The two countries can work together to bridge supply chain gaps by investing in each other's markets.
- It is also essential to continue to strengthen strategic and security cooperation through defense engagements, military-to-military exchanges, and joint exercises.

[Source: PIB](#)

## Protests in Chhattisgarh Over Coal Mining

**For Prelims:** [Coal Mines](#), Coal Reserves, Classification of coal

**For Mains:** Coal Mining and its Impacts on Environment and local Communities.

### Why in News?

Recently, the **Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL) coal mining project** in Chhattisgarh has sparked a controversy due to its impact on the environment and local communities.

- AEL has been mining coal in the **Parsa East and Kente Basan coal blocks of Chhattisgarh's Surguja district for over a decade now.**
- For more than a year now, locals, largely from the [Gond tribe](#), in Hariharpur, Ghatbarra, and Fattepur villages of Chhattisgarh, have been holding a sit-in at the entrance to Hariharpur against mining.

### What are the Impacts of the Mining Operations?

- **Impact on the Environment:**
  - Mining in the region will lead to the loss of about 8 lakh trees of the Sal forests in **Hasdeo Aranya**. This will end up affecting the catchment of the **Hasdeo river**.
  - Around the time that mining was beginning, there had been an attempt to save the trees. [The National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#), in 2014, stayed the mining licenses, ordering studies on the environmental impact of the mines. However, the [Supreme Court](#) set the NGT order aside, and mining began.
- **Impact on Locals:**
  - The mining project has adversely affected the lives of locals. As the mine has consumed forest land.
    - ['Save Hasdeo Campaign'](#) is also being run to save the **forests of Hasdeo**.
  - The mines have **destroyed grazing land for cattle, affected the groundwater level, and the blasting has loosened the earth around borewells**, and tube wells people had been using for minor farming.
  - The stream next to Hariharpur, once used to have water and fish throughout the year, has turned into a muddy stream since the digging has affected the catchment area.

### What is Coal?

- **About:**

- It is a type of fossil fuel found in the form of **sedimentary rocks and is often known as 'Black Gold'**.
- It is a conventional source of energy and is widely available. It is used as a domestic fuel, in industries such as iron and steel, steam engines and to generate electricity. Electricity from **coal is called thermal power**.
- The leading coal producers of the world include **China, US, Australia, Indonesia, India**.
- **Distribution of Coal in India:**
  - **Gondwana Coal Fields (250 million years old):**
    - Gondwana coal makes up to 98% of the total reserves and 99 % of the production of coal in India.
    - It forms **India's metallurgical grade as well as superior quality coal and has a high ash content**.
    - It is found in Damodar (Jharkhand-West Bengal), Mahanadi (Chhattisgarh-Odisha), Godavari (Maharashtra), and Narmada valleys.
  - **Tertiary Coal Fields (15 - 60 million years old):**
    - Carbon content is **very low but is rich in moisture and sulphur**.
    - Tertiary coalfields are mainly confined to extra-peninsular regions.
    - **Important areas** include Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himalayan foothills of Darjeeling in West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala.
- **Classification:**
  - **Anthracite** (80 - 95% carbon content, found in small quantities in J&K).
  - **Bituminous** (60 - 80% carbon content and is found in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh).
  - **Lignite** (40 to 55% carbon content, high moisture content and is found in Rajasthan, Lakhimpur (Assam) and Tamil Nadu).
  - **Peat** (less than 40% carbon content and it is in the first stage of transformation from organic matter (wood) to coal).
- **Coal Reserves:**
  - Top States in terms of total coal reserves in India are **Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh**.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

#### Q1. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Coal sector was nationalized by the Government of India under Indira Gandhi.
2. Now, coal blocks are allocated on lottery basis.
3. Till recently, India imported coal to meet the shortages of domestic supply, but now India is self-sufficient in coal production

#### Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Ans: (a)**

#### Q2. Despite having large reserves of coal, why does India import, millions of tonnes of coal? (2012)

1. It is the policy of India to save its own coal reserves for future, and import it from other countries for the present use.
2. Most of the power plants in India are coal-based and they are not able to get sufficient supplies of coal from within the country



3. Steel companies need large quantity of coking coal which has to be imported

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: (b)**

**Q3. Which one of the following is the appropriate reason for considering the Gondwana rocks as most important of rock systems of India? (2010)**

- (a) More than 90% of limestone reserves of India are found in them
- (b) More than 90% of India's coal reserves are found in them
- (c) More than 90% of fertile black cotton soils are spread over them
- (d) None of the reasons given above is appropriate in this context

**Ans: (b)**

### **Mains**

**Q.**“In spite of adverse environmental impact, coal mining is still inevitable for development”. Discuss. (2017)

**Source: TH**

## **Screening Test for Heart Ailments**

**For Prelims:** [Heart Ailments](#), cardiovascular disease, [Blood Pressure](#), [National Health Mission](#).

**For Mains:** Screening Test for Heart Ailments.

### **Why in News?**

Recently, some experts have suggested the Large-Scale Screening Tests to prevent [Heart Ailments](#).

### **What is the Screening Test?**

#### **▪ About:**

- The main purpose of screening or early detection is to **pick up people with probable disease** and confirm it with another test.
  - Screening tests are usually **cheap and easy to operate on a large-scale** while

confirmatory tests are resource intensive.

- The goal of **mass screening is to detect heart diseases** in their early stages, before symptoms appear, so that preventive measures can be taken to reduce the risk of future heart attacks or sudden cardiac death.
- The screening tests for heart ailments include **Blood Pressure** measurement, cholesterol and lipid profile test, ECG (Electrocardiogram), etc.
- These tests can help identify the risk of **heart disease, irregular heart rhythms, abnormalities** in the heart's structure or function.

▪ **Need:**

- The need for screening tests for heart ailments is to **detect any underlying risk factors or signs** of heart disease **before it becomes life-threatening**.
  - Sudden blockages of the artery supplying the heart **can lead to a heart attack, which can be fatal**.
- Screening tests can help **identify risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels**, or irregular heart rhythms, **which can be managed with lifestyle changes, medication, or other interventions** before they develop into more severe forms of heart disease.

## What are the Challenges Related to Screening at Mass Level?

▪ **Risk of Procedure or False Labeling:**

- The risks associated with screening tests include **both the risk of procedure** (how tests are performed) **as well as false labeling**.
  - For instance, stress ECG when used as a screening test in young asymptomatic patients gives many false positives.
- This results in unnecessary **anxiety and more unwarranted tests** to confirm or reject its findings.

▪ **Additional Risk and Costs:**

- Tests like stress echocardiography/radionuclide test and CT angiography can accurately detect blockages and people with higher risk for cardiac events as compared to ECG. But there may also be associated risks related to false results, leading to unnecessary test and additional Costs.
  - A Danish study published in 2022 showed that a population well-treated for risk factors for heart disease derived no benefit from **additional tests, including CT scans**.

▪ **Lack of Access to Tests:**

- In India, a significant portion of the population (about 25-30%) is above 40 years old. However, most district **hospitals and some medical colleges in India do not have access to imaging tests** such as stress echocardiography, radionuclide tests, and CT angiography.
  - Moreover, these tests are relatively expensive, ranging from Rs 6,000 to Rs 15,000 in the public or private sector.
- It is crucial to take into account the accessibility of these tests for the public and whether **our healthcare infrastructure is capable of handling individuals** who receive a positive test result.

## What are the Important Facts Related to Heart Ailments?

▪ **About:**

- **Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs)** is a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels and include coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, rheumatic heart disease and other conditions.
- CVDs are the **leading cause of death globally**, taking an estimated 17.9 million lives in 2019 according to WHO.
- More than **four out of five CVD deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes, and one third of these deaths occur prematurely** in people under 70 years of age.
- Total economic burden of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in India is approximately **Rs 6 trillion annually**.

▪ **Indian Initiative:**

- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS)** is being implemented under the [National Health Mission \(NHM\)](#).
- **Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT)** Deendayal outlets have been opened at 159 Institutions/Hospitals with an objective to make available Cancer and Cardiovascular Diseases drugs and implants at discounted prices to the patients.
- **Jan Aushadhi** stores are set up by the Department of Pharmaceuticals to provide generic medicines at affordable prices.
- **ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI) Project:** The **Maharashtra government** launched the STEMI programme recognised by **NHM** in 2021 to **enable rapid diagnosis of heart disease.**
  - ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI) is a condition wherein one of the heart's major arteries, supplying oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle, gets completely blocked.

## Way Forward

- Using modern medical tools such as stress echocardiography, radionuclide tests, and CT angiography should be **limited to a smaller set of people who are at higher risk of ischemic heart** disease.
- High-risk individuals can be identified by screening for known risk factors such as tobacco use, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, hypercholesterolemia, and family history of early heart disease.
  - However, the most important approach for preventing cardiac deaths is to **promote healthy habits among populations of all ages.**
- Simple tests for known risk factors are cheap, widely available, and can be conducted during standard executive checkups at district hospitals.

[Source: TH](#)

## First Waterbodies Census

### Why in News?

The [Ministry of Jal Shakti](#) recently released the report of its **first-ever census of water bodies**, revealing crucial insights into the country's water resources.

- The census provides an **extensive inventory of water sources in India**, highlighting disparities between **rural and urban areas and varying levels of encroachment.**

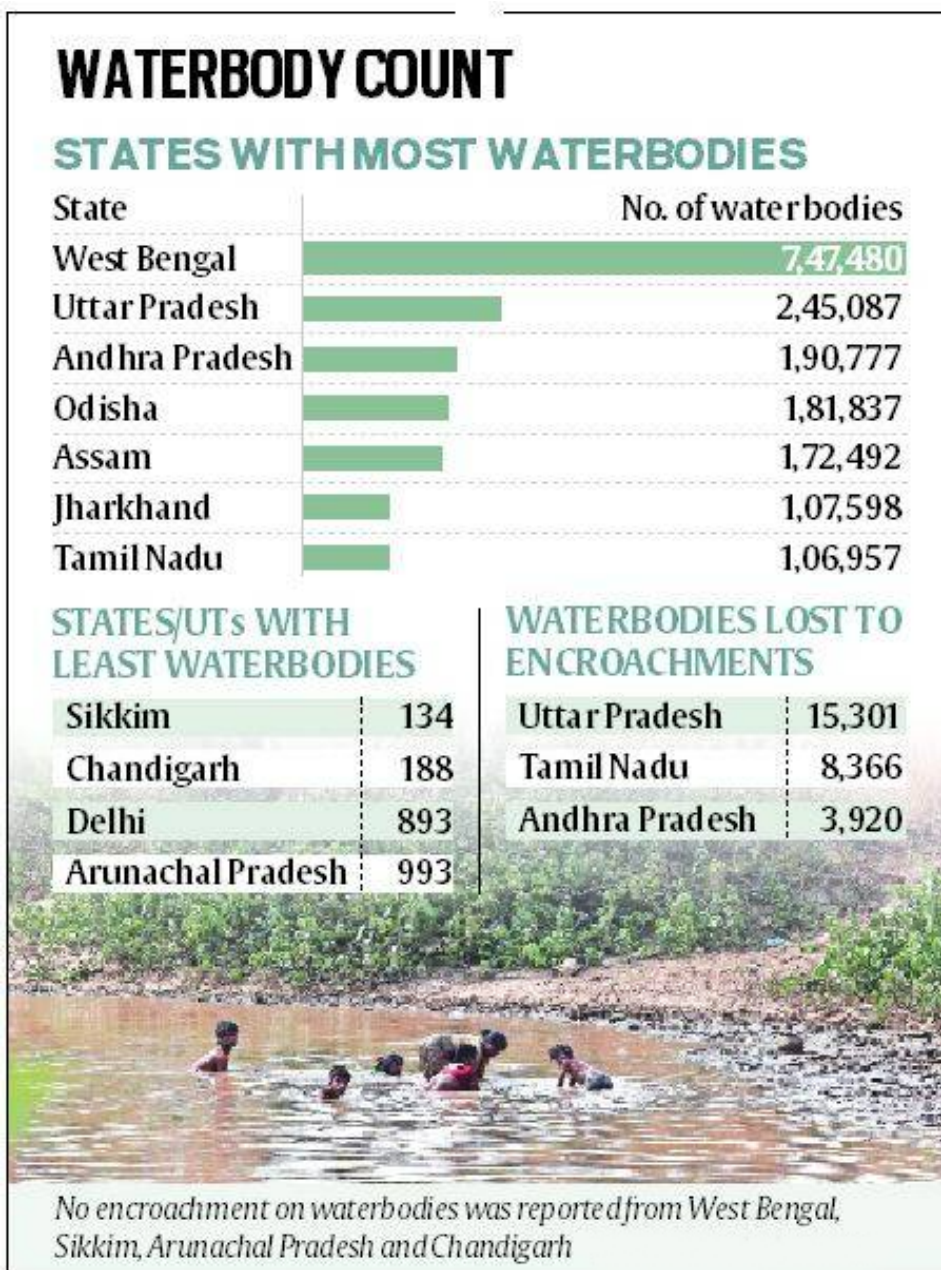
### What is the Census of Waterbodies?

- **About:**
  - The census of waterbodies was conducted in conjunction with the **6<sup>th</sup> Minor Irrigation Census for 2017-18.**
  - It defines a waterbody as "**all-natural or man-made units bounded on all sides with some or no masonry work used for storing water for irrigation or other purposes.**"
  - The census aimed to provide an inventory of India's water resources, including natural and man-made water bodies like ponds, tanks, lakes, and more, and to collect data on the

encroachment of water bodies.

▪ **Key Insights from the Census:**

- The census enumerated a total of 24,24,540 water bodies across the country, with **West Bengal accounting for the most (7.47 lakh) and Sikkim the least (134)**.
- The report reveals that:
  - **West Bengal** has the **highest number of ponds and reservoirs**
    - The top district in terms of waterbodies is South 24 Parganas in West Bengal.
  - **Andhra Pradesh** has the **highest number of tanks**
  - **Tamil Nadu** has the **highest number of lakes**
  - **Maharashtra** leads in water conservation schemes
- The report highlights that 97.1% of the waterbodies are in rural areas, with only 2.9% in urban areas.
- Most of **the waterbodies are ponds, followed by tanks**, reservoirs, water conservation schemes, percolation tanks, check dams, lakes, and others.



▪ **Encroachment of Waterbodies:**

- The census also collected data on the encroachment of waterbodies for the first time, revealing that **1.6% of all enumerated waterbodies are encroached, with 95.4% of**

**encroachments in rural areas** and the remaining **4.6% in urban areas**.

- A significant percentage of encroachments cover more than 75% of the waterbody's area.

▪ **Significance:**

- The census provides crucial data for **policymakers to make informed decisions regarding water resource management** and conservation.
- It **highlights disparities between rural and urban areas** and the need for effective measures to **prevent encroachment**.
- The data collected in the census can serve as a **baseline for future assessments of India's water resources**, helping to monitor changes and progress toward sustainable water management.

[Source: IE](#)

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## Genetic Markers and Preterm Birth

### Why in News?

Recently, Indian scientists working in the [Garbh-Ini program](#) have identified **19 genetic markers associated with preterm birth**, a major cause of [Neonatal deaths](#) (deaths among live births during the first 28 completed days of life) and complications globally.

- The identification of **genetic markers associated with preterm birth** could help in **predicting high-risk pregnancies** and monitoring them closely, leading to improved **maternal and neonatal outcomes**.

### What is Preterm Birth?

▪ **About:**

- Preterm birth, also known as premature birth, refers to the **birth of a baby before the completion of 37 weeks of gestation**. There are sub-categories of preterm birth, based on gestational age:
  - **Extremely preterm (less than 28 weeks)**
  - **Very preterm (28 to 32 weeks)**
  - **Moderate to late preterm (32 to 37 weeks).**
- It is a **significant public health issue**, especially in **India and Southeast Asia**, and is associated with delayed mental and physical development in infants and increased risks of diseases in adulthood.
- Globally, **one in every 10 births is preterm**.
  - Also, of all babies born annually in India, **about 13% are born preterm**. Globally, **India accounts for 23.4% of preterm births**.

▪ **Fatality:**

- Preterm babies are **two to four times at higher risk of death** after birth in comparison to those born after 37 weeks of gestation.
- When these babies become adults, they also become at higher risk of **diseases such as [Type-2 diabetes](#), [hypertension](#) and [cancer](#)**.

### What are Genetic Markers?

▪ **About:**

- Genetic markers, also known as **DNA markers or genetic variants**, are specific **sections of DNA that are associated with particular traits**, characteristics, or conditions.

- Genetic markers can be **either DNA sequences or specific variations in the DNA sequence**, such as **single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs)**, which are the most common type of genetic marker.
- **Significance:**
  - They are **used in genetics research and clinical practice to identify and study genetic variations** that may be linked to **diseases, disorders, or other biological traits**.
  - These SNPs are known to regulate important **biological processes** such as **inflammation, apoptosis, cervical ripening, telomere maintenance, selenocysteine biosynthesis, myometrial contraction, and innate immunity**.

## Garbh-Ini

- **Garbh-Ini (Interdisciplinary Group for Advanced Research on Birth Outcomes—DBT India Initiative)** was initiated by the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**, in 2014 as a collaborative interdisciplinary program.
- This program is led by **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)**, NCR Biotech cluster, Faridabad.
- It aims to elucidate **biological and non-biological risks of preterm birth (PTB)** to create **important knowledge-driven interventions** and technologies that can be sustainably implemented in clinical practice and in the community for this disease.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Q. Which of the following are the objectives of 'National Nutrition Mission'? (2017)

1. To create awareness relating to malnutrition among pregnant women and lactating mothers.
2. To reduce the incidence of anaemia among young children, adolescent girls and women.
3. To promote the consumption of millets, coarse cereals and unpolished rice.
4. To promote the consumption of poultry eggs.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

[Source: IE](#)

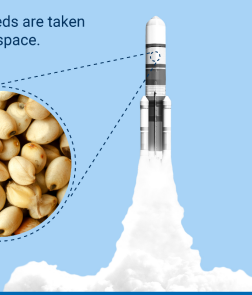
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## Rapid Fire Current Affairs

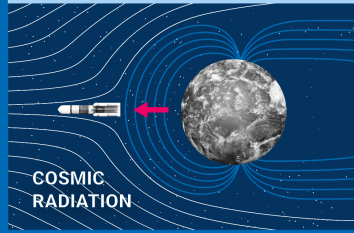
### Space Seeds for Food Security

# Space Mutagenesis

**1** Plant seeds are taken to outer space.

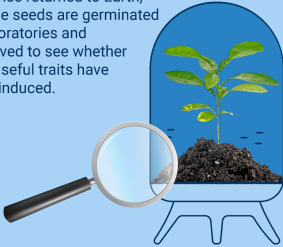


**2** Radiation from cosmic rays is used to speed up the evolutionary process in plants.



COSMIC RADIATION

**3** Once returned to Earth, the seeds are germinated in laboratories and observed to see whether new useful traits have been induced.



**4** Scientists analyse whether the mutations induced in the harsh conditions of space can help astrobotany and plant breeding on Earth, where plants endure harsh conditions imposed by climate change.



NuclearExplained

The [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) and the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) are accelerating research to develop climate-tolerant crops.

Two varieties of seeds — **arabidopsis** (a plant of the cabbage family) and **sorghum** (jowar, cholam, or jonna), **sent to space in 2022 to make them climate-tolerant by exposing them to harsher surroundings** returned to the Earth in March 2023.

Scientists will **examine the possibilities of developing resilient crops that can help provide sufficient food amid a climate crisis.** They will **also examine the impacts of cosmic radiation** (consists of high-energy charged particles, x-rays and gamma rays produced in space) **on accelerating the natural genetic adaptation of much-needed crops.**

**Increased radiation creates genetic changes that would help them withstand** greater temperatures, arid soils, diseases and rising sea levels.

The research is significant as (according to UN estimates), **rising temperatures and weather disruptions have slashed global food production by almost 13% since 1961.** Global warming is making it difficult for farmers to sustain yields. The **rising costs for essential grains and political instability in various parts of the world** **ave been aggravating it.**

**Read More:** [Climate Change and Food Insecurity](#)

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**Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council**



Recently, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, unanimously passed a **resolution seeking a ban on entry of media houses and individuals to Leh who tried to “malign the image” of the Dalai Lama.**

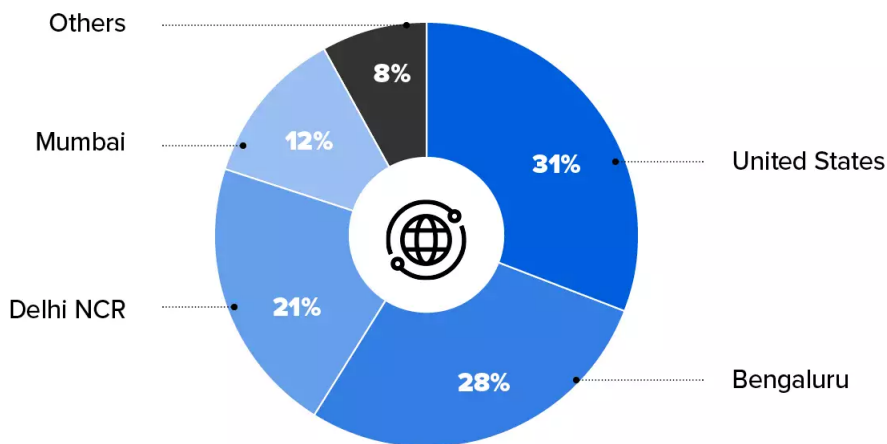
Dalai Lama is a title given by the Tibetan people for the foremost spiritual leader of the Gelug or "Yellow Hat" school of [Tibetan Buddhism](#), the newest of the classical schools of Tibetan Buddhism. LAHDC is an **autonomous district council that administers the Leh district of Ladakh.** The council was **created under the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act of 1995.**

**Read More:** [Dalai Lama](#), [Ladakh's Demand for Sixth Schedule](#)

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## Global Unicorn Index

### Indian unicorns across geographies



According to the **Global Unicorn Index 2023** by Hurun, Swiggy, Dream11 and BYJU'S are **India's top unicorns.**



A **unicorn** is any privately owned firm with a market capitalization of more than **USD 1 billion**. It denotes new entities **dedicated to offering creative solutions and new business models**, among other things.

The report indicates that **India continues to be the world's third-largest country with the highest number of unicorns**, following the US and China. However, **India ranks fifth in the Hurun Global 500 companies**, which is a list of the most valuable non-state-controlled businesses globally.

As per the report, **the number of Indian unicorns established outside of India is higher than those located within India**. India has a **total of 138 unicorns**.

The report also revealed that **India ranks third in terms of the number of gazelles**, which are startups established in the 2000s and valued at over \$500 million (not yet listed) which are **likely to become unicorns within three years**.

**Read More:** [India's Startup Ecosystem](#)

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### Exercise INIOCHOS-23

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will be participating in Exercise INIOCHOS-23, **a multi-national air exercise hosted by the Hellenic Air Force (Greece) from April 24 to May 4**. The IAF is **currently participating in [exercise Cope India with the US](#)**, as well as a multilateral **[exercise Orion hosted by France](#)**.

The IAF will be participating in INIOCHOS-23 with **four [Su-30 MKI](#) and two [C-17 aircraft](#)**. **The objective of the exercise is to enhance international cooperation, synergy and interoperability** among the participating Air Forces.

**Read More:** [Indian Air Force](#)

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