



Adi Ganga Revival Plan

For Prelims: Adi Ganga, National Mission for Clean Ganga, National Green Tribunal, National Council for Rejuvenation Protection and Management of River Ganga, Bhuvan-Ganga Web App, Namami Gange Programme.

For Mains: Major Issues Associated with Adi Ganga, Initiatives Related to Ganga.

Why in News?

Recently, plans to **revive Adi Ganga (the original channel of [River Ganga](#) passing through the city of Kolkata)** have been announced.

- The [National Mission for Clean Ganga](#) has allocated around **Rs 650 crore** to revive the ancient river and it has been included in a **multi-country South Asian River project on combating pollution**.

What are the Major Issues and Developments Associated with Adi Ganga?

- **Encroachment History:**
 - The river, which was once the main channel of the **Ganga till the 17th century, has been neglected for decades** and is now **polluted and encroached upon**. The choking of **Adi Ganga** severely impacted the natural drainage of the area.
 - However, Adi Ganga continued to thrive till the 1970s. Since then, **its water quality gradually deteriorated** until it turned into a sewer and got rapidly encroached.
 - In 1998, the **Calcutta High Court directed the removal of all encroachments on the river within a month**.
 - However, another report, close to two decades after the first order, **showed that the encroachments were still existing**.
- **Current Status:**
 - The **river is now practically dead and has turned into a sewer** with a load of faecal bacteria crossing **17 million in 100 millilitres of river water**, according to the state pollution control board data and **dissolved oxygen is zero**.
- **Rejuvenation:**
 - The **West Bengal government has been directed by the [National Green Tribunal](#) to complete its rejuvenation “positively by September 30, 2025”**.
 - The river was selected for the **pollution study** during an international water conference organised by the non-profit **Action Aid in Sylhet, Bangladesh**.
 - Apart from Adi Ganga, **Buriganga in Bangladesh, Puyang in China, Bagmati in Nepal and Klang in Malaysia** were also chosen for pollution study during the conference.

Note

- The **Adi Ganga**, also known as the Gobindapur creek, Surman’s Canal and (presently) Tolly’s Canal, was the **main flow of the Hooghly River between the 15th and 17th century** that virtually dried up due to natural reasons.

- Around 1750, a canal was dug to connect the main course of the river with the lower part of River Saraswati adjacent to Howrah.
 - The **resultant Hooghly became the main river stretch** and Adi Ganga turned into a secondary tributary.

What is the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)?

- **About:**
 - On August 12, 2011, the **NMCG** was listed as a society under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
 - The NMCG is implemented by the **National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga** also known as the **National Ganga Council**.
- **Objective:**
 - The objective of the NMCG is to reduce pollution and ensure rejuvenation of the Ganga river.
 - This can be achieved by **promoting intersectoral coordination for comprehensive planning & management** and maintaining minimum ecological flow in the river, with the aim of **ensuring water quality and environmentally [sustainable development](#)**.
- **Organization Structure:**
 - The Act envisages five tier structure at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga as below:
 - **National Ganga Council** under chairmanship of **Hon'ble Prime Minister of India**.
 - **Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga** under chairmanship of **Hon'ble Union Minister of Jal Shakti** (Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation).
 - **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**.
 - **State Ganga Committees**
 - **District Ganga Committees** in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

What are the Other Initiatives Related to Ganga?

- **Namami Gange Programme:** It is an **Integrated Conservation Mission**, approved as a 'Flagship Programme' by the Union Government in June 2014 to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of **pollution and conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga**.
 - **Ganga was declared as the 'National River'** of India in 2008.
- **Ganga Action Plan:** It was the first **River Action Plan that was taken up by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 1985**, to improve the water quality by the **interception, diversion, and treatment of domestic sewage**.
 - The National River Conservation Plan is an extension to the Ganga Action Plan. It aims at cleaning the Ganga River under Ganga Action Plan phase-2.
- **Bhuvan-Ganga Web App:** It ensures involvement of the public in monitoring of pollution entering into the river Ganga.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q1. Consider the following pairs: (2013)

	National Park	River flowing through the Park
1.	Corbett National Park	Ganga
2.	Kaziranga National Park	Manas
3.	Silent Valley National Park	Kaveri

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) None

Ans: (d)

Q2. On which one of the following rivers is the Tehri Hydropower Complex located? (2008)

- (a) Alaknanda
- (b) Bhagirathi
- (c) Dhauliganga
- (d) Mandakini

Ans: (b)

[Source: DTE](#)

60% of Voters Linked Aadhaar to Voter ID

For Prelims: Election Commission (EC), Aadhaar number, Puttaswamy case (Right to Privacy), Digital Personal Data Protection(DPDP) Bill, 2022

For Mains: Status of Aadhaar Linking in India, Issues Related to Linking Aadhaar with Voter ID.

Why in News?

According to the [Election Commission \(EC\)](#), over **60% of India's 94.5 crore voters** have linked their [Aadhaar number](#) to their voter IDs.

What is the Status of Aadhaar Linking in India?

- **Tripura** has the **highest rate of Aadhaar linking**, with over **92% of voters in the state providing their Aadhaar details to the EC.**
- **Lakshadweep and Madhya Pradesh** have the **second and third highest rates** of Aadhaar linking, with over **91% and 86% of voters** having provided the number respectively.
- **Southern states have lower proportions** of Aadhaar registration compared to the national average, with **Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka falling shy of 71%**, and **Tamil Nadu and Kerala** standing around 63% and 61%.
- **Gujarat has the lowest Aadhaar registration by voters**, with only **31.5% of voters linking the document** to their voter registration.
 - Also, less than **34% of voters** in Delhi had their Aadhaar linked.

Why is the Government Pushing to Link Voter ID with Aadhaar?

- **Update Database:**
 - The linking project would help the Election Commission, which conducts regular exercises to maintain an **updated and accurate record of the voter base**.
- **Remove Duplication:**
 - To weed out duplication of voters, such as [migrant workers](#) who may have been registered more than once on the electoral rolls in different constituencies or for persons registered multiple times within the same constituency.
- **Pan India Voter ID:**
 - As per the government, linkage of Aadhaar with voter IDs will **assist in ensuring that only one Voter ID is issued per citizen of India**.

What are the Issues Related to Linking Aadhaar with Voter ID?

- **Unclear Constitutional Status:**
 - In the [Puttaswamy case\(Right to Privacy\)](#), one of the questions that the [Supreme Court](#) explored was **whether the mandatory linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts** was constitutional or not.
- **Different Purpose:**
 - The **preference for Aadhaar for the purposes of determining voters is puzzling as Aadhaar is only proof of residence and not proof of citizenship**.
 - Therefore, verifying voter identity against this will only help in **tackling duplication but will not remove voters** who are not citizens of India from the electoral rolls.

Conclusion

- Along with pursuing the Aadhaar-Voter ID integration, the government shall also look forward to enacting the [Digital Personal Data Protection\(DPDP\) Bill, 2022](#). The DPDP regime must also **apply to government entities and require them to obtain an individual's explicit consent** before sharing their data across various government institutions.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.
2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.

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)

Mains

Q. Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy (2017)

One Year of Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Prelims: New START treaty, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Black Sea Food grain initiative.

Mains: Impacts of Russia-Ukraine conflict on India, Global impacts.

Why in News?

A year after start of [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#), there are still signs of escalation everywhere. Calculations on both sides that this would be a short, swift war have proved wrong.

- The anniversary of war comes in the **backdrop of Russia's withdrawal from [New START treaty](#)**.

What is the Current Status of the War?

- The West has recently announced the **supply of more advanced weapons to Ukraine**, deepening its involvement in the conflict.
 - In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin has already reinforced Russian positions along the 1,000-km long frontline in Ukraine.
- **Risks of a direct confrontation** between **Russia** and the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#), both nuclear powers, are also on the rise as the war is extended.

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MID-NOV: 54% of territory captured by Russia reclaimed by Ukraine.

- **Russia** wanted to **install a Moscow friendly regime** and to take the whole of Ukraine's east and south, stretching from **Kharkiv in the northeast** through the **Donbas in the east** (which comprises Luhansk and Donetsk) to **Odesa, the Black Sea port city in the southwest**, turning the country into a land-locked rump. **Russia has failed to meet any of these objectives.**
- Nevertheless, **Russia has taken substantial portions of Ukrainian territories**, including **Mariupol**. Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine peaked in March 2022, when it controlled some 22% of pre-2014 Ukraine.
- **Ukraine recaptured some land in Kharkiv and Kherson.** But still, Russia controls some 17% of Ukraine.
- Focused fighting has been going on in some flashpoints along the frontline including Bakhmut, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia.

What has been the West's Response?

- **Approach:**
 - Punish Russia's economy through sanctions and thereby weaken its war machine.
 - Arming Ukraine to counter the Russian offensive.
- **Major Aid Providers:**
 - The **U.S. is Ukraine's biggest aid provider** — it has pledged military and financial assistance worth over USD 70 billion.
 - The **EU has pledged \$37 billion** and among the EU countries, the **U.K. and Germany** top the list.
- **Evaluation of Western Response:**
 - While the approach of arming Ukraine has been **effective in at least halting the Russian advances, hurting Russia economically** has been a **double-edged sword.**

- **Sanctions on Russia**, one of the **top global producers of oil and gas**, hit the global economy hard, **worsening an inflationary crisis across the West, particularly in Europe.**
- Russia also took a hit, but it found **alternative markets for its energy exports in Asia**, redrawing the global energy export landscape. In 2022, despite sanctions, Russia **raised its oil output by 2% and boosted oil export earnings by 20%.**
- The **Russian economy** was estimated to have contracted by 2% in 2023, but, according to the IMF, it is **expected to grow 0.3% in 2023** and 2.1% in 2024.
- In comparison, Germany, Europe's largest economy, is expected to grow 0.1% in 2023, while the U.K., Ukraine's second biggest backer, is projected to contract by 0.6%.

Is there a Possibility for a Negotiated Settlement?

- Both sides **had exchanged several drafts about a potential peace plan in March 2022**, but the **U.S. and the U.K. staunchly opposed** Ukraine reaching any agreement with Russia. **Talks collapsed in March.**
- In July 2022, **Turkey brokered a deal** on taking out Russian and Ukrainian food grains through the Black Sea known as **Black Sea Food grain initiative**. Also, Warring parties had reached some prisoner exchange agreements.
- But barring these, talks between the two sides are non-existent.
 - **Russia**, despite the slow progress of its "special military operation", **remains adamant.**
 - **Mr. Zelensky** recently stated that he **would not reach any agreement with Russia making territorial compromises.**
 - There is absolutely **no push from the West for talks.**
 - **China** has stepped in with its own **peace initiative**, which is not in public domain yet.
- For any peace plan to succeed a few **Key issues** are to be addressed.
 - Ukraine's territorial concerns.
 - Russia's security concerns.
 - **Washington and Moscow should reach some kind of understanding** as Ukraine, given its dependence on the West, would require clearance from west for any final settlement.
 - However, in context of Russian withdrawal from New START Treaty, **possibility of such settlement in the near future looks bleak.**

How has the War Reshaped Geopolitics?

- **Increased focus on Security and Defence:**
 - The war has **re-energized the Europe-US security alliance.** **NATO** has opened its door to the **proposed inclusion of Sweden and Finland**, that will, once in (Turkey's approval is awaited), form the new military frontiers of the alliance against Russia.
- **Trust Deficit:**
 - The trust deficit **between Russia and the West is at an-all time high.** The US-led alliance is pouring weapons into Ukraine.
 - Though US President seems reluctant to accept all of Ukraine's demands, including for combat aircraft including F16s, perhaps mindful of the risk of widening the war.
- **China Factor:**
 - Moscow formalized its friendship with China in 2022 as "limitless". But China also does not want to jeopardize its Europe ties.
 - **China has not contributed with weapons to Russia** and also expressed its reservation **against nuclear war.**
 - However, the **US and Europe remain concerned about Chinese arms supplies** to Russia.

What has been India's Stand?

- The Ukraine war has been an **opportunity to practice strategic autonomy.** Adopting a neutrality India has maintained its relationship with Moscow while iterating support to global

peace.

- India **worked around Western sanctions to buy oil from Russia**. As much as **25% of India's oil purchase is now from Russia**, from less than 2% before the war.
- Recently, **India abstained** on a UNGA resolution on first anniversary of the war, asking Russia to withdraw from its territory as the resolution had limitations in reaching the lasting goal of securing lasting peace.
 - India has **abstained on all three votes so far** on the Ukraine crisis at the UN General Assembly since Russian invasion.
- But the longer the war continues, the more pressure on India from the Western alliance to choose the "right side".
- India has expressed the hope that it can use its [G-20](#) **presidency to bring peace**.

Way Forward

- There is an urgent **need for the parties of the war to return to negotiation table** as the escalation of hostilities and violence is in no one's interest.
- International principles and jurisprudence make it clear that parties to a conflict should **ensure civilians and civilian infrastructure are not targeted**, and the global order is based on international law, the UN Charter and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states. These principles must be upheld without any exception.

[Source:TH](#)

Higher Pension under EPS

Prelims: EPFO, EPS, Supreme Court, Employees' Pension (Amendment) Scheme, 2014.

Mains: Higher Pension under EPS.

Why in News?

The [Employees' Provident Fund Organisation \(EPFO\)](#) has issued guidelines to allow a section of its older members to opt for **Higher Pension** under the **Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) as per 4th November 2022 judgment of the [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#).**

What was the SC's November 2022 judgment?

- The SC upheld the [Employees' Pension \(Amendment\) Scheme, 2014](#) but extended **the time to opt for the new scheme** by four months.
- Under **Article 142**, the SC's ruling gives EPFO members, who have availed of the EPS, another opportunity over the next four months to opt and contribute up to 8.33% of their actual salaries as **against 8.33% of the pensionable salary capped at Rs 15,000 a month towards pension**.
 - Under the pre-amendment scheme, **the pensionable salary was computed as the average of the salary drawn during the 12 months prior** to exit from membership of the Pension Fund. The amendments raised this to an average of 60 months prior to exit from membership of the Pension Fund.
- The court held the amendment requiring **members to contribute an additional 1.16 % of their salary exceeding Rs 15,000** a month as ultra vires the provisions of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

What are the New Guidelines?

- The new guidelines open the **window for employees to deduct a sum equal to 8.33% of the actual basic salary** (Basic pay+ DA) towards the EPS, helping to accumulate larger corpus and receive a higher pension amount.
 - Currently, the EPS contribution from employees is capped at the maximum Rs 15,000 for pensionable salary.
- For subscribers who opt for this, the employers' share going to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) since September 2014 will be **shifted to the EPS, with the interest earned**.
- The **Basic Criteria to avail** the benefits are,
 - Employees who were members before September 1, 2014, and continued to be a member on or after that date.
 - Employees and employers who had contributed on salary exceeding the wage ceiling of Rs 5,000 or Rs 6,500.
 - Employees and employers who did not exercise the joint option in the previous window while being EPS members.

What is the Employees' Pension Scheme?

- The EPS, administered by the EPFO, came into being in 1995. The pension fund was to **comprise a deposit of 8.33% of the employers'** contribution towards the PF corpus.
- It makes provisions for pensions for the employees in the **organized sector after retirement at the age of 58 years**.
- Employees who are members of EPF automatically become members of EPS.
 - Both employer and employee contribute 12% of employee's monthly salary (basic wages plus dearness allowance) to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) scheme.
 - EPF scheme is mandatory for employees who draw a basic wage of Rs. 15,000 per month.
 - Of the employer's share of 12 %, 8.33 % is diverted towards the EPS.
 - Central Govt. also contributes 1.16% of employees' monthly salary.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to casual workers employed in India, consider the following statements: (2021)

1. All casual workers are entitled for Employees Provident Fund coverage.
2. All casual workers are entitled for regular working hours and overtime payment.
3. The government can by a notification specify that an establishment or industry shall pay wages only through its bank account.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Ans: (d)

Source: TH

Trends in Maternal Mortality: UN

Prelims: Issues Related to Women, Maternal Mortality Ratio, SDG.

Mains: Trends in Maternal Mortality: UN.

Why in News?

According to the [United Nations' \(UN\)](#) new report **"Trends in Maternal Mortality"**, of the estimated 287,000 maternal deaths recorded in 2020, 70 % took place in sub-Saharan Africa.

- The [Maternal Mortality Ratio \(MMR\)](#) — deaths per lakh live births — in the region was at a dangerous high of 545, many times greater than the world average of 223.

What are the Key Findings of the Report?

▪ Statistics:

- Every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth, revealing **alarming setbacks for women's health over recent years**, as maternal deaths either increased or stagnated in nearly all regions of the world.
- There were an estimated 287,000 maternal deaths worldwide in 2020, which is a **slight decrease from 309,000 in 2016** when the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) came into effect.
- Although there has been significant progress in **reducing maternal deaths between 2000 and 2015**, gains largely stalled, or in some cases even reversed, after this point.

▪ MMR:

- In 2020, about 70% of all maternal deaths were in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The **top three sub-regions in the world with a high or very high MMR** were found in **sub-Saharan Africa**,
 - Western Africa at 754, middle Africa at 539 and eastern Africa at 351.
 - On the country level, a similar trend was seen with South Sudan (1,223), Chad (1,063) and Nigeria (1,047) recording an extremely high — greater than 1,000 — MMR.
- With approximately 82,000 maternal deaths in 2020, **Nigeria accounted for over a quarter (28.5%) of all estimated global maternal deaths** in the pandemic year.
- From 2000 to 2020, declines in the MMR stagnated in sub-Saharan Africa, northern Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and western Asia, and eastern and south-eastern Asia.

▪ Causes of Maternal Deaths:

- Severe bleeding, **high blood pressure, pregnancy-related infections**, complications from **unsafe abortion**, and underlying conditions that can be aggravated by pregnancy (such as [HIV/AIDS](#) and malaria) are the leading causes of maternal deaths.
 - Globally, 1,878 HIV-related indirect maternal deaths were recorded, of which 1,738 (around 92.5%) were in sub-Saharan Africa.

▪ Healthcare Gaps:

- Roughly a third of women do not have even **four of a recommended eight antenatal checks** or receive essential postnatal care, while some 270 million women lack access to modern family planning methods.

▪ Risks:

- Inequities related to income, education, race or ethnicity further increase **risks for marginalized pregnant women**, who have the least access to essential maternity care but are most likely to experience underlying health problems in pregnancy.

What are the Findings Related to India?

- India recorded the **second highest number of maternal deaths** in 2020, coming second at 24,000 to only Nigeria.
- However, there has been **an overall reduction of 73.5% in MMR in India**, between 2000 and 2020.
- In 2020, India's MMR stood at 103, a vast improvement from 384 at the turn of the century.
 - In comparison, other developing countries like Argentina (45 in 2020), Bhutan (60), Brazil (72), Kyrgyzstan (50) and Philippines (78) **have performed better than India**.

What are the Recommendations?

- **More Resilient Health System:**
 - With immediate action, more investments in primary health care and stronger, **more resilient health systems**, we can save lives, improve health and well-being, and advance the rights of and opportunities for women and adolescents.
- **Community-centered Health Care:**
 - Community-centered primary health care can meet the needs of women, children and adolescents and enable equitable access to critical services such as assisted births and pre- and postnatal care, childhood vaccinations, nutrition and family planning.
- **Control over Reproductive Health:**
 - Exercising control over their reproductive health, particularly decisions about if and when to have children, is critical to ensure that women can plan and space childbearing and protect their health.
- **National and International Efforts:**
 - Ending preventable maternal deaths and providing universal access to quality maternal health care require **sustained national and international efforts** and unwavering commitments, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.
 - It is our collective responsibility to ensure that **every mother, everywhere, survives childbirth, so that she and her children can thrive**.
- **Meeting Global Targets:**
 - The world must significantly accelerate progress to meet global targets for reducing maternal deaths, or else risk the lives of over 1 million more women by 2030.
 - The SDG target for maternal deaths is for a global MMR of **less than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030**.

[Source: DTE](#)

Light Combat Aircraft Tejas Mk2

Why in News?

According to a senior official from the [Aeronautical Development Agency \(ADA\)](#), the **Indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk2** will be integrated with heavy standoff weapons like SCALP, an air-to-ground, long-range deep strike missile.

- Unlike other aircraft, the **LCA Mk2 will be able to integrate unique weapons from various countries**.

What is LCA Tejas Mk2?

- The **Indigenous LCATEjas Mk2** is a fighter aircraft developed in India that can carry **eight Beyond-Visual-Range (BVR) missiles simultaneously**, along with integrating all native

weapons and advanced weapons from other countries.

- The **LCA Mk2 is an upgraded version of the LCA Tejas Mk1**, which has improved range and mission endurance.
 - The mission endurance for fighting a war was **57 minutes for LCA Tejas Mk1, but it is 120 minutes for LCA Tejas Mk2.**
- The **LCA Mk2 will be pitched as a replacement for the Jaguars, MiG-29s, and Mirage 2000s** when they start retiring in a decade.
 - The critical design review of the aircraft is ready and the manufacturing initiated, and the aircraft should be rolled out by 2024.
 - LCA Mk2 will have a weapon carrying capacity of **6.5 tonnes**. The General **Electric GE-414** engine will power the **LCA Mk2**.

What is Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)?

- **About:**
 - The **LCA** programme was started by the Government of India in 1984 when they established the **Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)** to manage the LCA programme.
- **Features:**
 - Designed to **carry a range of air-to-air, air-to-surface, precision-guided**, weapons.
 - Air to air refueling capability.
- **Other Variants of Tejas:**
 - **Tejas Trainer:** 2-seater operational conversion trainer for training **air force pilots**.
 - **LCA Navy:** Twin- and single-seat carrier-capable for the [Indian Navy](#).

[Source: IE](#)

Dickinsonia Fossil

Why in News?

Fossils of an extinct species, Dickinsonia, that scientists reported in a [discovery from India's Bhimbetka Rock Shelters in 2021](#) have been found to be a false alarm.

- Researchers after a closer look at the site revealed the **Dickinsonia fossil** to really be wax smeared on a rock by a beehive.

What is Dickinsonia?

- Dickinsonia is an **extinct primitive animal** that inhabited seabeds around Australia, China, Russia, Ukraine, **in the Ediacaran period, 600-500 million years ago**. It was classified as an animal after discovery of cholesterol molecules in the fossils.
- It is believed to be **one of the earliest animals to have existed on earth**.



What are the Key Facts of Bhimbetka Rock Shelter?

- **History and Period Span:**
 - The Bhimbetka rock shelters are an **archaeological site in central India that spans the prehistoric Paleolithic** and Mesolithic periods, as well as the historic period.
 - It exhibits the **earliest traces of human life in India and evidence of [Stone Age](#)** starting at the site in Acheulian times.
 - It is a **[UNESCO World Heritage Site](#)** that consists of seven hills and over 750 rock shelters distributed over 10 km.
- **Discovery:** The Bhimbetka rock shelters were founded by V S Wakankar in 1957.
- **Location:** It is located in Raisen District between Hoshangabad and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh.
 - It is about 40 kilometres south-east of Bhopal in the foothills of the Vindhya Mountains.
- **Paintings:** Some of the Bhimbetka rock shelters feature prehistoric cave paintings and the earliest are about 10,000 years old (c. 8,000 BCE), corresponding to the Indian Mesolithic.
 - Most of these are done in red and white on the cave walls.
 - A multitude of themes were covered in this form of rock art and it depicted scenes like singing, dancing, hunting and other common activities of the people staying there.
 - The oldest of the cave paintings in Bhimbetka is believed to be **about 12,000 years ago**.

[Source: TH](#)

World Bank

Why in News?

Recently, Indian American business executive Ajay Banga was **nominated by US President to head the [World Bank](#)**.

- **If confirmed by the World Bank Board of directors, he will be the first Indian-American to head either of the two top international financial institutions: the [International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF) and the World Bank.**

What is World Bank?

▪ About:

- It was **created in 1944**, as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) along with the **IMF. The IBRD later became the World Bank.**
- The World Bank Group is a unique global partnership of five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.
- The World Bank is one of the **United Nations'** specialized agencies.

▪ Members:

- It has **189 member countries.**
- **India is also a** member country.

▪ Major Reports:

- **[Ease of Doing Business \(Stopped publishing\).](#)**
- **[Human Capital Index.](#)**
- **[World Development Report.](#)**

▪ Its Five Development Institutions:

- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)
- International Development Association (IDA)
- International Finance Corporation (IFC).
- Multilateral Guarantee Agency (MIGA)
- International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)
 - India is not a member of ICSID.

▪ Shareholding of WB:

- The United States is the largest single shareholder, with 16.41% of the votes, followed by Japan (7.87%), Germany (4.49%), the United Kingdom (4.31%), and France (4.31%). The rest of the shares are divided among the other member countries.

▪ Difference Between the WB and the IMF:

- While the World Bank provides support to developing countries, the IMF aims to stabilize the international monetary system and monitors the world's currencies.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. India's ranking in the 'Ease of Doing Business Index' is sometimes seen in the news. Which of the following has declared that ranking? (2016)

- (a) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- (b) World Economic Forum
- (c) World Bank
- (d) World Trade Organization (WTO)

Ans: C

Q2. With reference to 'IFC Masala Bonds', sometimes seen in the news, which of the statements given below is/ are correct? (2016)

1. The International Finance Corporation, which offers these bonds, is an arm of the World Bank.
2. They are the rupee-denominated bonds and are a source of debt financing for the public and private sector.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (c)

- IFC is one of the 5 Development institutions of World Bank. **hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Masala Bonds are rupee-denominated borrowings issued by Indian entities in overseas markets. Masala means 'spices' and the term was used by International Finance Corporation (IFC) to popularise the culture and cuisine of India on foreign platforms. The objective of Masala Bonds is to fund infrastructure projects in India, fuel internal growth via borrowings and internationalize the Indian currency. **Hence, statement 2 is correct. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

[Source: IE](#)

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

Phosphor-Gypsum in National Highway Construction

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) along with the Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers **will take up field trials on NHAI projects for the use of Phosphor-Gypsum in National Highway construction** to achieve a [circular economy](#) in the use of Gypsum.

Phosphor-Gypsum, **a waste product from manufacturing fertilizer, emits radon, a radioactive gas.** It also contains the radioactive elements uranium, thorium and radium.

NHAI is also **encouraging the use of waste plastic in road construction, which has been tested very successfully.** Studies have established that **roads built using plastic waste are durable, sustainable and increase the life of bitumen** (a substance produced through the distillation of crude oil).

Similarly, NHAI has used [Fly Ash](#) for the construction of Highways and flyover embankments. **Fly ash is an unwanted unburnt residue of coal combustion in a coal thermal power plant.** It is emitted along with flue gases (a waste gas from a combustion process) during the burning of coal in a furnace and **collected using electrostatic precipitators.**

Read More: [National Highways Authority of India \(NHAI\)](#), [Solid Waste Management](#)

Sinthan Top

For the first time, **the road to Sinthan Top has been opened in the month of February 2023** with an aim to promote tourism to this off-beat destination in Jammu and Kashmir.

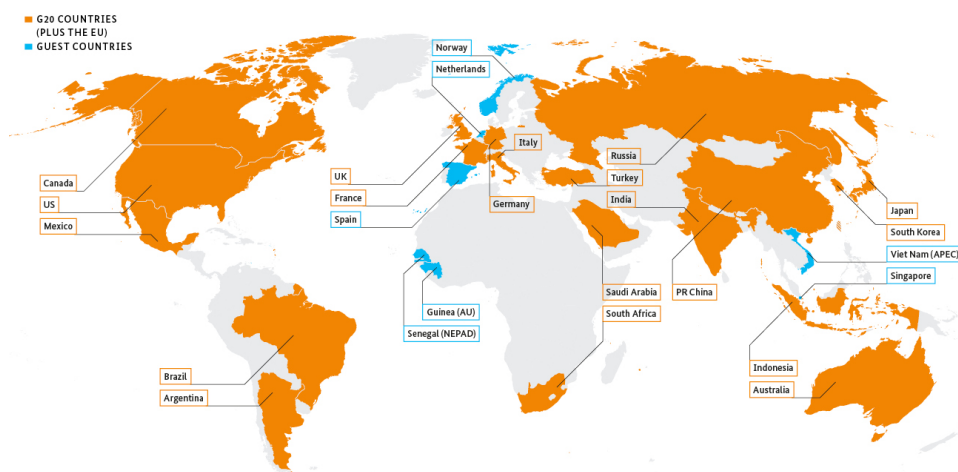
Sinthan Top is a high mountain pass that is **located between the Breng valley in Anantnag district and Kishtwar of J&K which connects Kashmir to Chenab Valley.**

[Jammu and Kashmir \(J&K\)](#) is a Union Territory, **located in the country's northern part and a global tourist destination.** In addition to traditional recreational tourism, vast scope exists for adventure, pilgrimage, spiritual, and health tourism. The natural beauty and picturesque locations have made it a favoured destination for tourists across the world. **Jammu is famous for its temples, while Kashmir Valley is known for its lakes and gardens.**

Some of the famous destinations include: Srinagar, Pahalgam, Jammu, Sanasar, Zanskar, Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Patnitop, Katra/ Vaishnodevi, Kargil, Nubra Valley.

Read More: [Tourism in India](#)

First Meeting of the Culture Working Group



Under the presidency of India in G20, the **first meeting of the Culture Working Group has begun at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh** recently. The meeting was chaired by the Union Minister for Culture and Tourism.

On the first day of the meeting Padam **Shri Mr. Nekk Ram known as the Millet man** has been invited to celebrate the **International Year of Millets (IYM) 2023**.

The **temples at Khajuraho were built during the Chandella dynasty**, which reached its peak between 950 and 1050 AD. Only about 20 temples remain; they **fall into three distinct groups and belong to two different religions - Hinduism and Jainism**. The **UNESCO site of 'Khajuraho Group of Monuments' is famous for its Nagara-Style architecture** and graceful sculptures of nayikas (Hindu Mythological female protagonists) and deities.

Read More: [International Year of Millets](#), [Presidency of India in G20](#)

Law Commission of India

Recently, the Union Cabinet **extended by one-and-a-half years the term of the 22nd Law Commission** which is mandated to identify laws that are **"no longer relevant" and recommend for their repeal**. The term of the panel has been extended up to August 31, 2024. It is also **mandated to suggest enactment of new legislation as may be necessary to implement the Directive Principles** and to attain the objectives set out in the **Preamble** of the Constitution.

The Law Commission of India is a **non-statutory body constituted by the Government of India from time to time**. The **first Law Commission was established during the British Raj era in 1834** by the Charter Act of 1833 and was **chaired by Lord Macaulay**. The **first Law Commission of independent India was established in 1955 for a three-year term**.

Read More: [Law Commission of India](#)