



Registered Unrecognized Political Parties

For Prelims: Election Commission of India, Recognised Political Party, Registered Unrecognised Political Party, Representation of the People Act 1951, Symbol Order 1968

For Mains: Regulation of Political Parties, Roles and Responsibilities of Election Commission of India, Significance of the Representation of People Act

Why in News?

[The Election Commission of India](#) has delisted 86 non-existent **Registered Unrecognized Political Parties** (RUPP) and declared additional 253 as '**Inactive RUPPs**'.

What do we need to know about the Delisting by ECI?

- **Declared Inactive:**
 - 253 RUPPs have **not responded to the letter/notice delivered to them** and have **not contested a single election** either to the **General Assembly of a State** or the [Parliament Election](#) of 2014 & 2019.
 - As per **Section 29A of the [Representation of People Act 1951](#)**, every political party has to communicate any change in its **name, head office, office bearers, address, PAN** to the Commission without delay.
- **Delisted:**
 - 86 RUPPs have been found to be **non-existent** either after a **physical verification carried out by the Chief Electoral Officers** of concerned States/UTs or based on a **report of undelivered letters/notices** from Postal Authority sent to the registered address of concerned RUPP.
 - Additionally, they would not be entitled to have **benefits under the Symbols Order, 1968**.

What are the Key Points related to the Political Parties?

- **Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPP):**
 - **About:**
 - Either **newly registered parties** or those which have **not secured enough percentage of votes** in the assembly or general elections to **become a state party**, or those which have **never contested elections** since being registered are considered unrecognised parties.
 - Such parties **don't enjoy all the benefits** extended to the recognised parties.
 - **Symbol Allocation:**
 - Common symbols are provided to RUPP under **Symbols Order, 1968**.
 - Privilege of a common symbol is given to RUPP based upon an undertaking for **putting up at least 5% of total candidates with regard to said legislative assembly election of a State**.
 - Possibility of such parties occupying the available pre-election political space by taking benefits of admissible entitlements without contesting elections **cannot be**

ruled out.

- This also tends to crowd out the political parties actually contesting elections and also creating confusing situations for the voters.

▪ **Recognised Political Party:**

- A recognised political party shall **either be a National party or a State party** if it meets certain laid down conditions.
- To become a recognised political party either at the state or national level, a party has to **secure a certain minimum percentage of polled valid votes** or a certain **number of seats in the state legislative assembly or the Lok Sabha** during the last election.
- The recognition granted by the Commission to the parties determines their right to certain privileges like **allocation of the party symbols, provision of time for political broadcasts on the state-owned television and radio stations and access to electoral rolls.**

What are the Conditions for Recognition of Political Parties?	
Conditions For Recognition of National Parties	Conditions for Recognition as a State Party
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A party is recognised as a national party if any of the following conditions is fulfilled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If it secures 6% of valid votes polled in any four or more states at a general election to the Lok Sabha or to the legislative assembly and in addition, it wins four seats in the Lok Sabha from any state or states, or ◦ If it wins 2% of seats in the Lok Sabha at a general election and these candidates are elected from three states, or ◦ If it is recognised as a state party in four states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A party is recognised as a state party in a state if any of the following conditions is fulfilled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If it secures 6% of the valid votes polled in the state at a general election to the legislative assembly of the state concerned and in addition, it wins 2 seats in the assembly of the state concerned or ◦ If it secures 6% of the valid votes polled in the state at a general election to the Lok Sabha from the state concerned and in addition, it wins 1 seat in the Lok Sabha from the state concerned or ◦ If it wins 3% of seats in the legislative assembly at a general election to the legislative assembly of the state concerned or 3 seats in the assembly, whichever is more or ◦ If it wins 1 seat in the Lok Sabha for every 25 seats or any fraction thereof allotted to the state at a general election to the Lok Sabha from the state concerned or ◦ If it secures 8% of the total valid votes polled in the state at a General Election to the Lok Sabha from the state or to the legislative assembly of the state. This condition was added in 2011.

What Powers does Symbol's Order 1968 provide to ECI?

- Under **Paragraph 15 of the Order**, EC can **decide disputes** among rival groups or sections of a recognised political party **staking claim to its name and symbol**.
 - The EC is the **only authority to decide issues on a dispute or a merger under the order**.
 - **The Supreme Court (SC)** upheld its validity in **Sadiq Ali and another vs. ECI in 1971**.
- This applies to **disputes in recognised national and state parties**.
- For splits in registered but unrecognised parties, the EC usually **advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court**.
- In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, **a clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs have supported one of the factions**.
- Before 1968, the EC **issued notifications and executive orders** under the Conduct of **Election Rules, 1961**.
- The splinter group of the party - other than the group that got the party symbol - **had to register itself as a separate party**.
 - They could lay claim to national or state party status **only on the basis of its performance in state or central elections after registration**.

What is the Representation of People Act 1951?

- **Key Provisions:**
 - It regulates the **actual conduct of elections and by-elections**.
 - It provides **administrative machinery** for conducting elections.
 - It deals with the **registration of political parties**.
 - It specifies the **qualifications and disqualifications for membership** of the Houses.
 - It provides **provisions to curb corrupt practices** and other offences.
 - It lays down the **procedure for settling doubts and disputes arising out of elections**.
- **Provisions Related to Political Parties:**
 - Every association or body in order to become a political party **must be registered with the ECI** whose decision regarding registration will be final.
 - Registered political parties, in course of time, **can get recognition as 'State Party' or National Party'**.

UPSC Civil Services, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2021)

1. In India, there is no law restricting the candidates from contesting in one Lok Sabha election from three constituencies.
2. In the 1991 Lok Sabha Election, Shri Devi Lal contested from three Lok Sabha constituencies.
3. As per the existing rules, if a candidate contests in one Lok Sabha election from many constituencies, his/her party should bear the cost of bye-elections to the constituencies vacated by him/her winning in all the constituencies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans:(b)

Exp:

- In 1996, the Representation of the People Act, 1951 was amended to restrict from 'three' to 'two' the number of seats one candidate could contest in Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- In 1991, Shri Devi Lal contested three Lok Sabha seats, Sikar, Rohtak and Ferozepur seats. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Whenever a candidate contests from more than one seat and wins more than one, the candidate has to retain only one, forcing bypolls in the rest. It results
- in an unavoidable financial burden on the public exchequer, government manpower and other resources for holding by-election against the resultant vacancy. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

[Source: PIB](#)

Addition of Tribes to ST List

For Prelims: Hatti Tribe, Gond community, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, Narikoravan and Kurivikkaran, Binjhia

For Mains: Issues Related to SCs & STs

Why in News?

Recently, government has approved the inclusion of certain communities in the lists of Scheduled Tribes in Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, fulfilling long-pending demands from these states.

What is the Process of Inclusion in the ST List?

- The process to include tribes in the ST list begins with the **recommendation from the respective State governments**, which are then sent to the Tribal Affairs Ministry, which reviews and sends them to the Registrar General of India for approval.
- This is followed by the [National Commission for Scheduled Tribes'](#) approval before the list is sent to the Cabinet for a final decision.

What do we Know about the Newly Added Tribe?

- **Hatti Tribe (Himachal Pradesh):**
 - The Hattis are a **close-knit community** who got their name from their tradition of selling homegrown vegetables, crops, meat and wool etc. at small markets called 'haat' in towns.
 - The community has been **making the demand since 1967**, when tribal status was accorded to people living in the Jaunsar Bawar area of **Uttarakhand**, which shares a border with Sirmaur district.

- Their demand for **tribal status gained strength because of resolutions** passed at various maha Khumbliis over the years.
- **Narikoravan and Kurivikkaran (Tamil Nadu):**
 - Nomadic tribes like the Narikuravas and Kuruvikaras (jackal catchers and bird eaters) pride themselves on their traditional occupations of hunting and gathering.
- **Binjhia (Chhattisgarh):**
 - The Binjhia in Chhattisgarh were listed as ST in Jharkhand and Odisha but not in Chhattisgarh.
 - The Binjhia are **non-vegetarians and agriculture is the mainstay** of their economy. They do not eat beef and pork but consume alcoholic drinks including the handia (rice beer).
- **Gond Community (Uttar Pradesh):**
 - The **Cabinet approved a proposal to bring the [Gond community](#) residing in 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh, under the ST list** from the Scheduled Caste list.
 - This includes the **five subcategories of the Gond community** (Dhuria, Nayak, Ojha, Pathari, and Rajgond).
- **'Betta-Kuruba' (Karnataka):**
 - The ST status granted to the Betta-Kuruba community as a synonym of Kadu Kuruba of Karnataka.
 - Betta-Kuruba community has been demanding to include in the ST category for the last 30 years.

What will be the Benefits in the Inclusion in the ST List?

- The move will **enable members of the communities newly listed in the revised list of Scheduled Tribes to derive benefits** meant for STs under the existing schemes of the government.
- **Some of the major benefits include** post-matric scholarship, overseas scholarship and the national fellowship, besides education, concessional loans from the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation, and hostels for students.
- In addition, they will **also be entitled to benefits of reservation** in services and admission to educational institutions as per the government policy.

What is the Status of Scheduled Tribes in India?

- **About:**
 - As per Census-1931, Schedule tribes are termed as "backward tribes" living in the "Excluded" and "Partially Excluded" areas. The Government of India Act of 1935 called for the first time for representatives of "backward tribes" in provincial assemblies.
 - The **Constitution does not define the criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes** and hence the definition contained in 1931 Census was used in the initial years after independence.
 - However, **Article 366(25) of the Constitution only provides process to define Scheduled Tribes:** "Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution."
 - **342(1):** The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor, by a public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory.
 - The **Fifth Schedule of the Constitution lays out provision for Administration** and Control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in states other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
 - The **Sixth Schedule deals with the administration** of the tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- **Legal Provisions:**
 - Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 against Untouchability.
 - [Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes \(Prevention of Atrocities\) Act, 1989.](#)
 - [Provisions of the Panchayats \(Extension to the Scheduled Areas\) Act, 1996.](#)

- [Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers \(Recognition of Forest Rights\) Act, 2006.](#)

▪ **Related Initiatives:**

- [TRIFED](#)
- [Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools](#)
- [Development of PVTGs](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana](#)

▪ **Related Committees:**

- [Xaxa Committee \(2013\)](#)
- Bhuria Commission (2002-2004)
- Lokur Committee (1965)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2013)

	Tribe	State
1.	Limboo (Limbu)	Sikkim
2.	Karbi	Himachal Pradesh
3.	Dongaria Kondh	Odisha
4.	Bonda	Tamil Nadu

Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- **Limboo (Limbu)** is the second most numerous tribe of the indigenous people called Kiranti. They live in **Nepal, on the easternmost section of the Himalayas**, east of the Arun River, and in northern India mostly in the states of Sikkim, West Bengal, and Assam. **Hence, pair 1 is correctly matched.**
- The **Karbhis**, earlier known as the Mikir, is an important ethnic group of **Assam**. Basically a hill dwelling tribe, they are also found in the plain regions of Assam. Besides Karbi Anglong, they inhabit the districts of Nagaon, Kamrup, Morigaon, North Cachar and Sonitpur districts of Assam. **Hence, pair 2 is not correctly matched.**
- **Dongria Kondh**, a tribe that lives in the dense forests of Niyamgiri Hills, is spread across Rayagada and Kalahandi districts of **southwestern Odisha**. The Dongrias have earned the status of PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group) from the GoI. **Hence, pair 3 is correctly matched.**
- The **Bonda tribes** are the most primitive tribe of India. They live in the isolated hill regions of the Malkangiri district of southwestern **Odisha**, near the junction of the three states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. **Hence, pair 4 is not correctly matched.**
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

[Source: TH](#)

Windfall Tax

For Prelims: Windfall Tax, Russia-Ukraine Conflict, Covid-19, fiscal Policy.

For Mains: Rationale and Issues Related to Windfall Tax.

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Finance has justified the **imposition of Windfall Tax** on domestic **crude oil** producers in July 2022, saying that it was **not an ad hoc (made or done suddenly) move** but was done after full consultation with the industry.

- Besides India, a wave of countries including the United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany have either already imposed a windfall profit tax on **super normal profits of energy companies or are contemplating doing so.**

What is a Windfall Tax?

- **About:**
 - Windfall taxes are **designed to tax the profits a company derives** from an external, sometimes unprecedented event— for instance, the **energy price-rise as a result of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.**
 - These are profits that cannot be attributed to something the firm actively did, like an investment strategy or an expansion of business.
 - A windfall is defined as **an “unearned, unanticipated gain in income** through no additional effort or expense”.
 - Governments typically levy a **one-off tax retrospectively over and above the normal rates of tax** on such profits, called **windfall tax.**
 - One area where such taxes have **routinely been discussed is oil markets,** where price fluctuation leads to **volatile or erratic profits for the industry.**
- **Rationale:**
 - There have been varying rationales for governments worldwide to introduce windfall taxes, from **redistribution of unexpected gains when high prices benefit producers at the expense of consumers,** to funding social welfare schemes, and as a **supplementary revenue stream** for the government.

Why are Countries Levying Windfall Taxes Now?

- Prices of oil, **gas,** and **coal** have seen sharp **increases since late last year** and in the first two quarters of the current year, **although they have reduced recently.**
- The increase stems from a combination of factors, **including a mismatch between energy demand and supply** during the economic recovery from **Covid-19,** further amplified by the **Russian war in Ukraine.**
- Pandemic recovery and supply issues resulting from the Russia-Ukraine conflict shore up energy demands, **in turn driving up global prices.**
- The rising prices meant huge and record profits for energy companies while **resulting in hefty gas and electricity bills for household bills** in major and smaller economies.
- The levies came as refiners made major gains by **boosting fuel exports to countries that were in a deficit like Europe,** which has now boycotted oil imports from Russia.
- The **U.N.(United Nations)** chief urged all **governments to tax these excessive profits** “and use the funds to support the **most vulnerable people** through these difficult times.”
- The calls to introduce windfall taxes also found support in organisations like the IMF, which released an **advice note as to how such a tax should be levied.**

What are the Issues with Imposing Windfall Tax?

- **Uncertainty in the Market:**
 - Companies are confident in investing in a sector if there is **certainty and stability in a tax regime**.
 - Since windfall taxes are imposed retrospectively and are often influenced by unexpected events, they **can brew uncertainty in the market** about future taxes.
- **Populist in Nature:**
 - It is believed that such taxes are **populist** and politically opportune in the short term.
- **Reduces Future Investment:**
 - Introducing a temporary windfall profit tax **reduces future investment because prospective investors will internalize** the likelihood of potential taxes when making investment decisions.
- **Not Defined Precisely:**
 - It is not defined **what exactly constitutes true windfall profits and how it can be determined** what level of profit is normal or excessive.
 - If rapid increases in prices lead to higher profits, in one sense it can be called true windfalls as they are unforeseeable but it can be argued that it is the profit **the companies earned as a reward for the industries risk-taking** to provide the final product to the end user.
 - It is not defined who should be taxed- only the big companies responsible for the bulk of high-priced sales or smaller companies as well— raising the question of whether producers with revenues or **profits below a certain threshold should be exempt**.

UPSC Civil Services, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Explain the salient features of the Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016. Do you think it is efficacious enough “to remove cascading effect of taxes and provide for common national market for goods and services”? **(2017)**

[Source: TH](#)

India Mexico Relations

For Prelims: ITEC, Cold War, Colonial Era, Latin America, Covid-19, Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Green Revolution.

For Mains: Significance of India Mexico Relations.

Why in News?

On the Occasion of Mexico National Day (16th September), India extended its greetings and felicitations to all Mexico Nationals and commemorated the **72 years of the establishment of [diplomatic Relations](#)**.

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How is India-Mexico Relations?

▪ Historical Ties:

- Being colonies in the past, India and Mexico have **European connections of the colonial era**.
- Mexico was the **first Latin American country** to recognise India after Independence and establish **diplomatic relations with India in 1950**.
- Mexican wheat varieties **used in Indo-Mexican hybrids** were the backbone of India's **Green Revolution in the 1960s**.
- In the **Cold War years**, Mexico and India had worked together closely as **members of the United Nations (UN)**, both actively championing the interests of developing countries such as in the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations (**under the World Trade Organisation**).
 - Both countries are members of **G-20**.

▪ Political and Bilateral Cooperation:

- Both countries established a **'Privileged Partnership' in 2007**.
- In 2015, both countries agreed to work towards achieving a **'Strategic Partnership'**.
- The two countries have several bilateral agreements and MoUs, including for Investment Promotion and Protection, **Extradition**, Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters, Space Cooperation, etc.
- India gives 20 scholarships to Mexico under the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme** and Mexican diplomats are also given training at **Forest Survey of India (FSI)**.

▪ Economic and Commercial Relations:

- India is the **10th largest trading partner of Mexico**, and the trade balance has remained in favor of India for eight years.
- Mexico is currently **India's largest trading partner in Latin America**.
- In 2021, exports to Mexico from India reached USD 5.931 billion and imports from Mexico were at USD 4.17 billion, taking the total trade to USD 10.11 billion.
 - **India's Exports:** Vehicles and auto parts, organic chemicals, electrical machinery and electronic equipment, aluminium products, readymade garments, iron and steel products and gems and jewellery.
 - **India's Imports:** Crude oil, mineral fuel, fertilizers, etc. Crude oil occupies 75% of the export basket from Mexico.
- India's **exports of pharmaceutical products remained steady in 2020** and increased by more than 80%.

▪ Security:

- Both countries share **a common concern** over growing traditional and non-traditional security challenges, particularly the rise of **global terrorism**.
- **Cultural Ties:**
 - The **Gurudev Tagore Indian Cultural Centre** has been functioning in Mexico since October 2010, teaching Yoga, classical dances, music, etc.
 - An agreement on cultural cooperation has been in existence since 1975 and cooperation activities are carried out through four-yearly '**Programmes of Cultural Cooperation**'.
- **Indian Community:**
 - The Indian community in Mexico is estimated to be more than 7,000, comprising mostly software engineers of Indian IT companies, academics/professors, and private businessmen.
 - Tourism between the two countries is steadily increasing and Mexicans have been extended the **online e-Tourist Visa facility**.
 - Indian nationals holding ordinary passports but having a valid visa for the USA, the UK, Canada, Schengen area or Japan, and holders of permanent residence in the same countries or Member States of **Pacific Alliance viz. Colombia, Chile and Peru do not need a visa for short tourism or business visits to Mexico**.
- **Differences:**
 - Mexico and India have had different viewpoints on the issue of **nuclear non-proliferation**. However, during the Indian Prime Minister's 2016 visit, Mexico pledged support for India's bid to be part of the **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**.
 - Both countries have differences on the issue of **United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms**.
 - Mexico has been a member of the **United for Consensus (UfC) group/Coffee Club** that, unlike India and the other **Group of Four (G-4)** members (Japan, Germany and Brazil), opposes the expansion of permanent membership in the UNSC.

What are Recent Developments?

- In June 2022, India and Mexico signed an agreement for **cooperation in space**, focusing on areas **ranging from trade and investment to health and pharmaceuticals**.
- The specific cooperation agreement on crop monitoring, drought assessment and capacity building were signed on behalf of the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
 - ISRO and AEM (Mexican Space Agency) last signed a memorandum of understanding on **space cooperation for peaceful purposes in October 2014**.

Way Forward

- India and Mexico have striking similarities in geo-climatic conditions, biodiversity, physiognomy and people, cultural and family values. Both are heirs to a great civilizational heritage and contacts between them indicatively go back centuries.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. In which one of the following groups are all the four countries members of G20? (2020)

- (a) Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey
- (b) Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand
- (c) Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam
- (d) Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea

Ans: (a)

Source: IE

Fall in Price of Natural Rubber

For Prelims: Natural rubber (NR), Hevea Brasiliensis, National Rubber Policy.

For Mains: Significance of Rubber & National Rubber Policy.

Why in News?

Recently, there have been protests by farmers and various organizations due to the price of [natural rubber \(NR\)](#) crashing to a sixteen-month low in the Indian market.

What has Caused the Sharp Fall in Prices?

- **Poor Demand and Other Factors:** Due to weak Chinese demand and the European energy crisis, along with high [inflation](#).
 - While the unremitting zero COVID strategy in China, which consumes about 42% of the global volume, has cost the industry dearly.
- **Import from Other countries:** There is an ample supply of block rubber from Ivory Coast and compounded rubber from the Far East in the domestic tyre industry.
 - The **Auto-Tyre manufacturing sector** accounted for **73.1%** of the total quantity of natural rubber consumption.

How does the Falling Price affect the Farmer?

- **Crop Shifting:** The impact of the price fall is felt more in the rural areas, where most people are solely dependent on rubber cultivation, therefore, they might switch to other crops.
 - It can even lead to the fragmentation of rubber holdings.
- **Effect on Small and Medium Enterprises:** As most of the production occurs in small and medium enterprises, the falling price could lead to their uncertain future and force them to stop production temporarily.
- **Panic in Kerala:** The state accounts for almost 75% of total production, as local economy depends on rubber production, therefore the falling price could lead to major panic in villages of Kerala.

What do we Know about Natural Rubber?

- **Commercial Plantation Crop:** Rubber is **made from the latex** of a tree called **Hevea Brasiliensis**. Rubber is largely perceived as a **strategic industrial raw material** and accorded special status globally for defence, national security and industrial development.
- **Conditions for Growth:** It is **an equatorial crop**, but under special conditions, it is also grown in tropical and sub-tropical areas.
 - **Temperature:** Above 25°C with a moist and humid climate.
 - **Rainfall:** More than 200 cm.
 - **Soil Type:** Rich well-drained alluvial soil.
 - **Cheap and adequate supply of skilled labour** is needed for this plantation crop.
- **Major Producers Globally:** Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, China and India.
- **Major Consumers:** China, India, USA, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.

What is the Status of Rubber Production in India?

▪ **Production:**

- The **British established the first rubber plantation in India in 1902** on the banks of the river Periyar in **Kerala**.
- India is currently the **fifth largest producer of Natural Rubber** in the world with one of the highest productivity.
- The production of the material improved by 8.4%, to 7,75,000 tonnes, during 2021-22 compared to 2020-21.
 - It also remains the **second biggest consumer** of the material globally.
 - About **40% of India's total natural rubber consumption** is currently met through **imports**.

▪ **Top Rubber Producing States:** Kerala > Tamil Nadu > Karnataka.

▪ **Government Initiatives:**

- **Rubber Plantation Development Scheme** and the **Rubber Group Planting Scheme** are examples of government-led initiatives for rubber.
- 100% **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** is allowed in plantations of rubber.
- **The Department of Commerce** brought out the **National Rubber Policy in March 2019**.
 - The policy includes several **provisions to support the Natural Rubber (NR)** production sector and the entire rubber industry value chain.
 - It is based on the **short-term** and **long-term strategies** identified by the **Task Force** constituted in the rubber sector for mitigating problems faced by rubber growers in the country.
 - Developmental and research activities for supporting the NR sector for the welfare of growers are carried out through **Rubber Board** by implementing the **scheme Sustainable and Inclusive Development of Natural Rubber Sector** in the **Medium-Term Framework (MTF)**.

What do we know about the Rubber Board of India?

- It is **headquartered in Kottayam, Kerala**, under the **administration of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- The Board is responsible for the development of the rubber industry in the country by assisting and encouraging research, development, extension and training activities related to rubber.
- **Rubber Research Institute** is under the Rubber Board.

Way Forward

- The Government needs to raise the import duties on compound rubber to make it on par with natural rubber.
- The government must address the demands of the farmers by raising the replanting subsidy and the support price of the crop under the price stabilization scheme.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which one of the following groups of plants was domesticated in the 'New World' and introduced into the 'Old World'? (2019)

- (a) Tobacco, cocoa and rubber
- (b) Tobacco, cotton and rubber
- (c) Cotton, coffee and sugarcane
- (d) Rubber, coffee and wheat

Ans: (a)

- New World refers to the Americas, which was discovered by Christopher Columbus during his

voyage attempt to India. Old World continents during 15th century included Asia, Africa and Europe.

- Tobacco is one of the most important cash crops in American farming and is native to the North and South American continents. It first became known to the Old World when European explorers during the 15th and 16th centuries saw it being used as a medicine and as a hallucinogen by native Americans.
- Natural rubber trees originated in Southern America and from there it was introduced to the Old World. The cocoa tree is also native to the Amazon Basin, which was introduced to the Old World from New World.
- Cotton and Wheat were found in the Indus Valley Civilization. So both these crops were native of the Old World. **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

[Source: TH](#)

Plea on Western Ghats

For Prelims: Western Ghats, Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA), Gadgil Committee, Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), Kasturirangan Committee.

For Mains: Significance of Western Ghats, Threats Faced by Western Ghats.

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court has dismissed a **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)**, which challenged the [Gadgil and Kasturirangan Committees](#) on [Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area \(ESA\)](#).

What are Eco-Sensitive Areas?

- Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs) are areas notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) **around Protected Areas**, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries under the [Environment Protection Act 1986](#).
- The basic aim is **to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries** so as to minimize the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

What was the PIL?

- The petitioner had pleaded to the apex court to not implement the recommendations of the Western Ghats Ecologically Expert Panel (**Gadgil Committee Report**) and the **High-Level Working Group (Kasturirangan Committee Report)**.
- It asked the court to **declare the 2018 draft notification** by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) **as ultra vires** (beyond its legal power or authority) as it may lead to the **violation of the [Right To Life](#) of the citizens** hailing from the Western Ghats, especially Kerala.
- The **petition pushed** for the implementation of the 2014 report of the **expert committee set up** by the former Chief Minister of Kerala.
 - The report recommended implementing changes in clauses of the **Environmentally**

Fragile Land (EFL) in the Western Ghats, stating the **lapses occurred in determining the EFL areas.**

What did SC Rule?

- But the apex court dismissed the petition stating that the MoEF&CC draft notification it challenged in 2018, was followed by a **fifth draft notification** that was issued in July 2022.
 - The draft notification issued in July prohibits activities like **mining, thermal power plants, and all 'Red' category** industries from coming up in the ESA.
- The Court did not find **any reason to exercise its jurisdiction under [Article 32](#)** of the Constitution of India.

What do the Committees say?

- **Gadgil Committee:**
 - Also known as the **[Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel \(WGEEP\)](#)**, it recommended that all of the Western Ghats be declared as the Ecological Sensitive Areas (ESA) with only limited development allowed in graded zones.
 - It classified the whole of the Western Ghats, spread across six states and covering 44 districts and 142 talukas, as an **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)**.
- **Kasturirangan Committee:**
 - It sought to **balance development and environment protection** in contrast to the system proposed by the Gadgil report.
 - The **[Kasturirangan committee](#)** recommended that instead of the total area of Western Ghats, only **37% of the total area should be brought under ESA** and a complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining be imposed in ESA.

What do we Need to Know about the Western Ghats?

- **About:**
 - Western Ghats consist of a **chain of mountains running parallel to India's Western Coast** and passing from the states of **Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.**
- **Significance:**
 - The Ghats **influence the Indian monsoon weather patterns** that mediate the warm tropical climate of the region.
 - They act as a **barrier to rain-laden monsoon winds** that sweep in from the south-west.
 - Western Ghats are **home to tropical evergreen forests**, as well as to 325 globally threatened species.
- **Threats to Western Ghats:**
 - **Developmental Pressures:**
 - Urbanisation together with agricultural expansion and livestock grazing are posing **serious threats to the region.**
 - About 50 million people are estimated to live in the Western Ghats Region, resulting in developmental pressures that are orders of magnitude greater than many protected areas around the world.
 - **Biodiversity Relates Issues:**
 - Forest loss, habitat fragmentation, habitat degradation by invasive **plant species, encroachment and conversion also continue** to affect the Ghats.
 - Fragmentation caused by development pressure in the Western **Ghats is shrinking the availability of wildlife corridors** and suitable habitats outside Protected Areas.
 - **Climate Change:**
 - In the intermediate years, the climate crisis has gained momentum:
 - **In the past four years (2018-21)**, floods have ravaged the ghat areas of Kerala thrice killing hundreds of people and delivering an overwhelming blow to infrastructure and livelihoods
 - **Landslides and flash floods** ravaged the ghat areas of Konkan in 2021

- Cyclones are also gaining intensity with the warming of the Arabian Sea leaving the west coast especially vulnerable.
- **Threats from Industrialisation:**
 - More polluting industries, **quarries and mines, roads, and townships are likely to be planned due to the absence** of the Western Ghats ESA policy.
 - This implies more damage to the fragile landscape of the region in future.

Way Forward

- Considering the changes in climate, which would affect the livelihood of all people and hurt the nation's economy, **it is prudent to conserve the fragile ecosystems.**
- A proper analysis based on scientific study followed by consensus among various stakeholders addressing respective **concerns is required urgently.**
- A holistic view of threats and demands on the forest land, products and services, devising strategies to address these with clearly stated objectives for the authorities involved must be taken.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. 'Gadgil Committee Report' and 'Kasturirangan Committee Report', sometimes seen in the news, are related to (2016)

- (a) constitutional reforms
- (b) Ganga Action Plan
- (c) linking of rivers
- (d) protection of Western Ghats

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Gadgil Committee Report and Kasturirangan Committee Report are both related to the protection of Western Ghats.
- Gadgil Committee was formed by the Ministry of Environment in 2010 to study the impact of population pressure, climate change and development activities on the Western Ghats.
- Kasturirangan Committee was formed in 2012 for finding a holistic way of protecting the biodiversity of the Western Ghats and addressing the rightful aspirations for inclusive growth and sustainable development of indigenous residents.
- **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

Source: DTE

Ukraine's Counter-Offensive

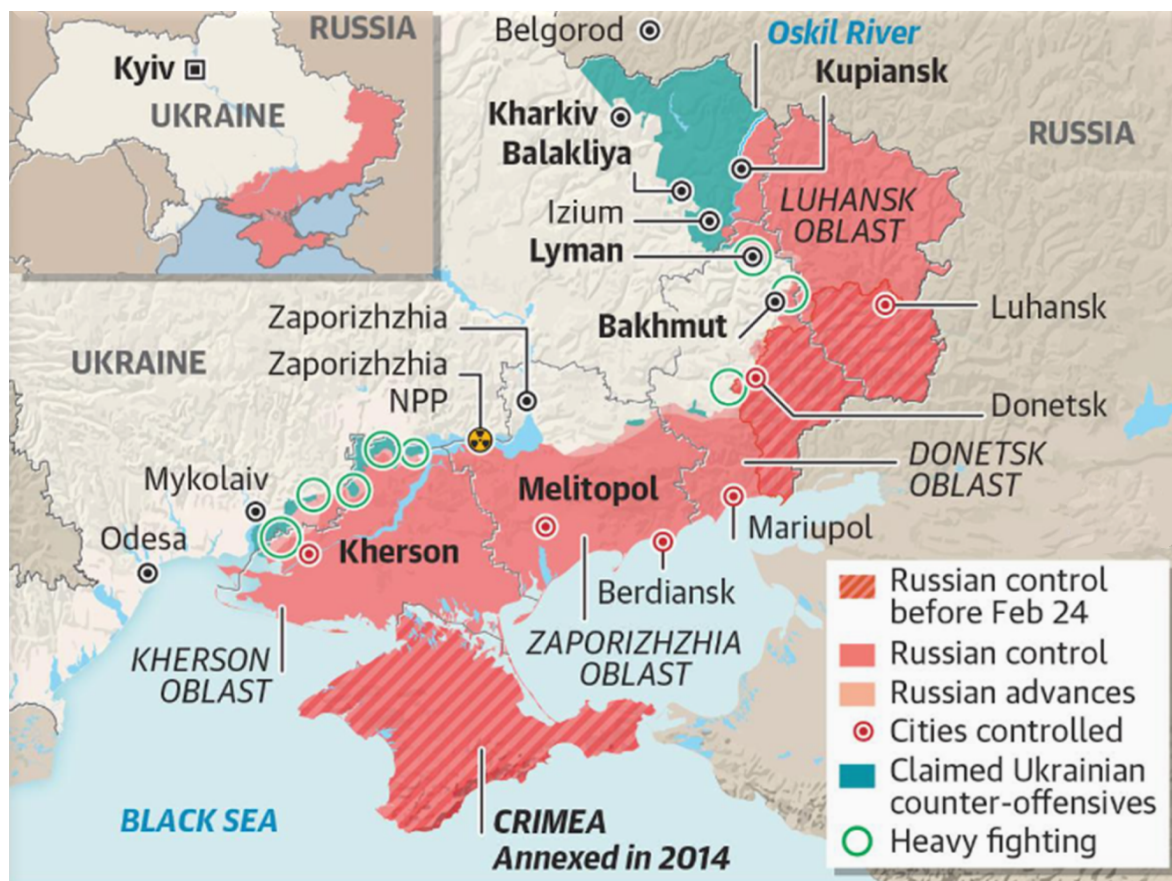
For Prelims: Russia-Ukraine Conflict, Regions of Kharkiv Oblast, NATO, Minsk Protocols

For Mains: Ukraine-Russia Conflict and India's Interests in Ukraine and Russia, Implications of Conflict on India

Why in News?

Recently, **Ukraine has launched a lightning counter-offensive** in the country's northeast that saw **surprising territorial gains**.

- Its forces have **pushed back Russian soldiers from most of Kharkiv Oblast**, retaking **thousands of square kilometres of territory**.
- This is the **first time that Ukrainian troops have pushed back the Russians** through combat since the [Russia Ukraine conflict](#) began.



How did Ukraine Push Back Russia in Kharkiv Oblast?

- **Halt of Russian Forces:**
 - After capturing Lysychansk in July 2022 and taking the whole of Luhansk province coming under its control, **Russia's battlefield combat came to a halt**.
 - Russia was controlling **almost 25% of Ukraine at this time**.
 - The halt of Russian forces **opened a window opportunity for Ukraine** to move ahead with its counter-offensive plans.
- **Help from US:**
 - **Advanced mid-range rocket systems** such as **High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS)**.
 - **Military assistance worth more than USD 14.5 billion**.
 - **U.S. intelligence agencies** also provided information to Ukraine on the weak links of the Russian defence.
- **Sanctions on Russia:**
 - Russia was being **faced with sanctions** which made it difficult to make sure their supply was intact and they had to turn to Iran and North Korea.
- **Ukraine's Attacks:**
 - Ukraine started attacks in **southern Ukraine** in **Kherson** and **sabotage hits in Crimea**,

- which Russia annexed in 2014.
- Russia, faced with the Ukrainian attacks in the south, **bolstered the defences of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.**
 - Ukraine broke into the **relatively weaker defence lines** in the northeast and successfully **pushed the Russians back.**

What do we need to know about the Russia Ukraine Conflict?

▪ History:

- In 2014, Russia had annexed **Crimea from Ukraine** following a hastily called referendum, a move that **sparked fighting between Russia-backed separatists and government forces in eastern Ukraine.**
- Ukraine urged the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#) to speed up the country's membership in the alliance.
- Russia declared such a move a **"red line"**, and worried about the **consequences of the US-led military alliances** expanding right up to its doorstep.
- **This has led to the present war between Russia and Ukraine.**

▪ Invasion of Ukraine:

- The conflict is now the **largest attack by one state on another in Europe** since the [Second World War](#), and the first since the **Balkan conflict in the 1990s.**
- With the invasion of Ukraine, agreements like the [Minsk Protocols of 2014](#), and the **Russia-NATO Act of 1997** stand all but voided.

▪ Stand of Other Countries:

- **Global:**
 - The [G7 nations](#) **strongly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine.**
 - Sanctions have been imposed on Russia by the **U.S., the European Union (EU), the UK, Australia, Canada and Japan.**
 - China **rejected calling Russia's moves on Ukraine an "invasion"** and urged all sides to exercise restraint.
- **India's Stand:**
 - India **did not join the Western powers' condemnation** of Russia's intervention in Crimea and kept a **low profile on the issue.**
 - However, in August 2022, **India voted against Russia** during a **"procedural vote"** at the [United Nations Security Council on Ukraine.](#)

[Source: TH](#)

Naval Exercise Kakadu

Why in News?

INS Satpura and [P8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft](#) have arrived in **Darwin in Australia** to participate in a multinational naval **exercise, Kakadu**, being hosted by the **Royal Australian Navy.**



What do we Know about Exercise Kakadu?

- **About:**

- Exercise Kakadu is a joint-enabled, **biennial exercise** hosted by the Royal Australian Navy and supported by the Royal Australian Air Force.
- Kakadu is the Navy's premier maritime exercise, **developing interoperability between nations in the maritime and air domains**, and providing training opportunities for maritime security and surveillance.
- It started in 1993.

- **Exercise Kakadu -22:**

- It's a two-week-long exercise, both in harbour and sea, involving ships and maritime aircraft from 14 navies.
- **Participation:** Around 19 vessels, 34 aircraft and more than 3000 personnel from 25 countries are expected.
- **Theme:** Partnership, Leadership, Friendship.
- Significance: As Navy's most significant international engagement activity, Exercise Kakadu is vital for building relationships between participating countries.
 - The exercise provides an opportunity for regional partners to undertake **multinational maritime activities** ranging from constabulary operations to **high-end maritime warfare** in a combined environment.

What are other military exercises with Australia?

- **Multilateral exercise:**
 - [Malabar](#)
 - [Exercise Pitch Black 22](#)
- **Bilateral exercise:** [Ausindex](#).

[Source: PIB](#)

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