



Cryo-Born Baby Corals

[Source: OM](#)

The world's first **cryo-born baby corals** have been successfully introduced into the [Great Barrier Reef](#), marking a groundbreaking achievement in [coral restoration and conservation](#).

- Australian scientists used cutting-edge **cryopreservation** to fertilize **coral eggs** with **cryopreserved sperm** collected from the **Great Barrier Reef**.
 - Scientists grew the corals in the **National Sea Simulator** before transferring them to specially designed '**coral cradles**' on the Reef.
- It aims to introduce [heat-tolerant corals](#) to protect reefs from climate change and rising **ocean temperatures**.
- The **CryoDiversity Bank** in **Australia** holds the world's **largest collection of frozen coral sperm** from 32 species, collected annually since 2011.
- **Coral Reefs:** Corals are **invertebrates** from the **class Anthozoa, phylum Cnidaria**.
 - Reefs are formed by **colonies of polyps** that secrete **limestone skeletons** and rely on **symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae)** for nutrition.
- **Soft corals** are species that **do not produce** the massive **calcium carbonate skeletons** needed to form coral reefs. Only **hard corals** make reefs.

//



Coral Reefs

(Rainforests of the seas)



About

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

Hard Corals vs Soft Corals

- ✦ **Hard Corals** - Rigid skeleton **made of CaCO₃** - reef-building corals
- ✦ **Soft Corals** - Non reef-building

Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

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



Corals in India

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



Significance

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

Threats

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

Coral Bleaching

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



Initiatives to Protect Corals

Technology

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



Global

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

Indian

National Coastal Mission Programme



Read More: [World's Largest Deep Sea Coral Reef](#)

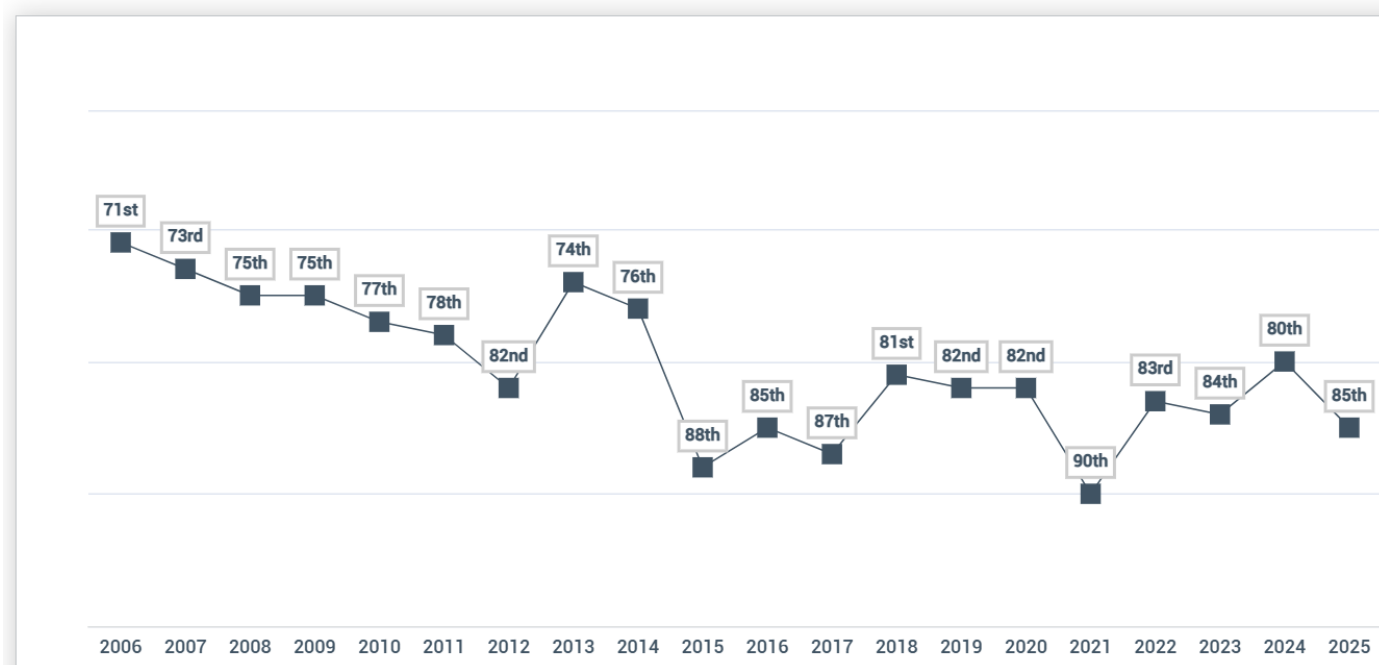
Henley Passport Index 2025

Source: [TH](#)

In the latest **Henley Passport Index 2025**, India's rank has dropped to **85th**, down from **80th in 2024** giving its holders visa free access to **57 countries**.

- India's ranking showed fluctuations over the years, with its **highest being 71st in 2006** and **lowest 90th in 2021** due to **Covid-19** restrictions.

 India's Historical Ranking on the Henley Passport Index



Henley Passport Index 2025

- About:**
 - The Henley Passport Index **ranks 199 global passports** (covers 227 travel destinations) based on the **number of destinations their holders can travel to without a visa**, with data sourced from the **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**.
 - It is compiled and published by **Henley & Partners**, a global citizenship and residence advisory firm.
- Key Highlights:**
 - Top Rankings:** **Singapore** (195 destinations) leads, followed by **Japan** (193). Several **EU countries and South Korea** share 3rd place (192 destinations).
 - Falling Rankings:** The US (2nd to **9th**), the UK (1st to 5th).
 - Bottom Countries:** **Pakistan and Yemen** (shared the 103rd position) followed by **Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan**.
- As per UK-based online platform "**Compare the Market, 2024 data:**

- **Most Expensive Passports:** Mexico, Australia, and the USA
- **Cheapest Passports:** UAE, India, and Hungary.
- **India's passport** stands out for offering the best "cost per year" value, making it highly economical compared to other countries.

Read More: [Henley Passport Index 2023](#)

Unauthorized Railway E-ticket Declared Illegal

Source: [TH](#)

In the *Mathew K Cherian Case, 2025*, the [Supreme Court](#) held that **unauthorised** business of **procuring and supplying railway e-tickets** is a **social crime** which must be stopped.

- **Section 143 of the Railways Act, 1989** addresses **penalties** for the unauthorized sale and procurement of railway tickets, **both online and offline**.
- The case referenced the *English case of Comdel Commodities Ltd. v. Siporex Trade SA Case, 1990* to argue that legal provisions can **extend to unforeseen technological advancements**.
 - The [Kerala High Court](#) had previously ruled that the provision **applied only to offline ticket sales** but was corrected by the Supreme Court.
- **Mathew**, the accused, created hundreds of **unauthorized user IDs** to circumvent ticketing limits set by [IRCTC \(12-24 ticket reservations per month\)](#), violating **Section 143 of the Act**.
- The Indian Railways is a keystone of India's [infrastructure](#) that carries around **673 crore passengers annually**.

Read More: [Rerouting Indian Railways' Future](#)

Mobile Connectivity at Maha Kumbh Mela 2025

Source: [TH](#)

The government is preparing to provide **seamless mobile connectivity** at the [Maha Kumbh Mela 2025](#) in Prayagraj.

- **Maha Kumbh Mela 2025** is expected to host **40 crore devotees over 44 days**, averaging nearly **1 crore devotees per day** expected to be the **maximum tele-density** in human history.
- **Over 100 km of optical fibre** has been laid, and each **tower** will be configured with **higher radio capacities** to ensure peak data capacity.
- **78 transportable towers and 150 small cell solutions** will be deployed in **crowded zones** to maintain communication.
- **Special centres** will facilitate **emergency communication**, coordinated with local authorities.
- The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, a sacred pilgrimage, will be held in **Prayagraj** from **13th January to 26th February 2025**.
 - It occurs every **12 years**, rotating among four locations i.e., **Prayagraj (UP), Haridwar (UK), Nashik (MH), and Ujjain (MP)**.
 - The word Kumbh refers to a **pot or vessel**, which, in **Hindu mythology**, is said to have held the **nectar of immortality (amrit)**.

- Uttar Pradesh has declared the **Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj** as a new district called **Maha Kumbh Mela** for **4 months** i.e., **1st December 2024 to 31st March 2025**.

Read More: [Maha Kumbh Mela 2025](#)

Sovereign AI

Source: [BS](#)

Why in News?

The government is investing in [semiconductors](#) and [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) to ensure **AI sovereignty** as India's [digital economy](#) is aiming for **USD 1 trillion** by **2028**.



Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI is the simulation of human intelligence in machines programmed to think and learn like humans, capable of problem-solving, reasoning, and adapting to new information.

AI Timeline - Major Milestones

- 1950s** Turing Test Proposed; First AI Programs Developed
- 1956** Dartmouth Conference Coins "Artificial Intelligence"
- 1960s** Eliza Chatbot Created; Early Neural Networks Emerge
- 1996** Deep Blue - a Chess-Playing Program
- 2012** Deep Learning Breakthrough in Image Recognition
- 2014** Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) Introduced
- 2020** GPT-3 Demonstrates Advanced Language Generation
- 2022** Chatgpt Launches, Bringing Conversational AI to Masses
- 2023** Generative AI Boom; Major Tech Companies Release AI Models



Applications of AI

- ↳ **Healthcare:** Personalised medicine
- ↳ **Finance:** Algorithmic trading
- ↳ **Transportation:** Autonomous vehicles
- ↳ **Marketing & Customer Service:** Targeted advertising, chatbots
- ↳ **Education:** Adaptive learning systems, personalised tutoring
- ↳ **Agriculture:** Crop monitoring
- ↳ **Cybersecurity:** Threat detection
- ↳ **Energy:** Smart grid management, consumption forecasting

Concerns

- ↳ Deepfakes & misinformation
- ↳ Algorithmic bias
- ↳ Automation & job displacement
- ↳ Privacy issues
- ↳ Data ownership & liability issue
- ↳ Ethical decision-making complexes

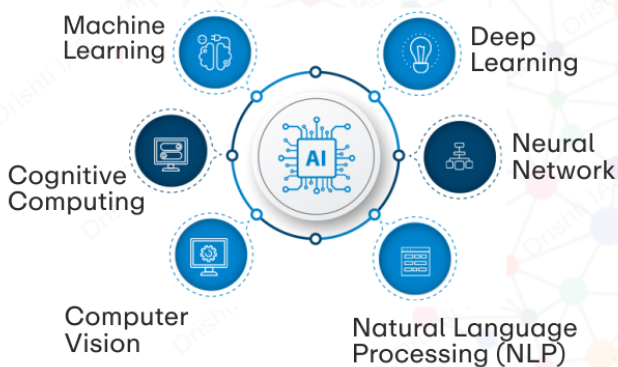
Regulating AI

- ↳ **Global Partnership on AI (GPAI)** launched in 2020
- ↳ **Bletchley Declaration (2023):** Enhance Global Collaboration on AI
- ↳ **G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (2023):** Harnessing AI responsibly for good and for all
- ↳ **Hiroshima AI Process (2023)** by G7

India and AI

- ↳ **National Strategy For AI 2018**
- ↳ **AI For All:** Self-learning online program
- ↳ **GPAI Summit 2023** hosted by India
- ↳ **IndiaAI Mission 2024**
- ↳ **US India Artificial Intelligence (USIAI) Initiative:** AI cooperation in critical areas
- ↳ **AIRAWAT** (AI Research, Analytics and Knowledge Assimilation Platform): Supercomputer

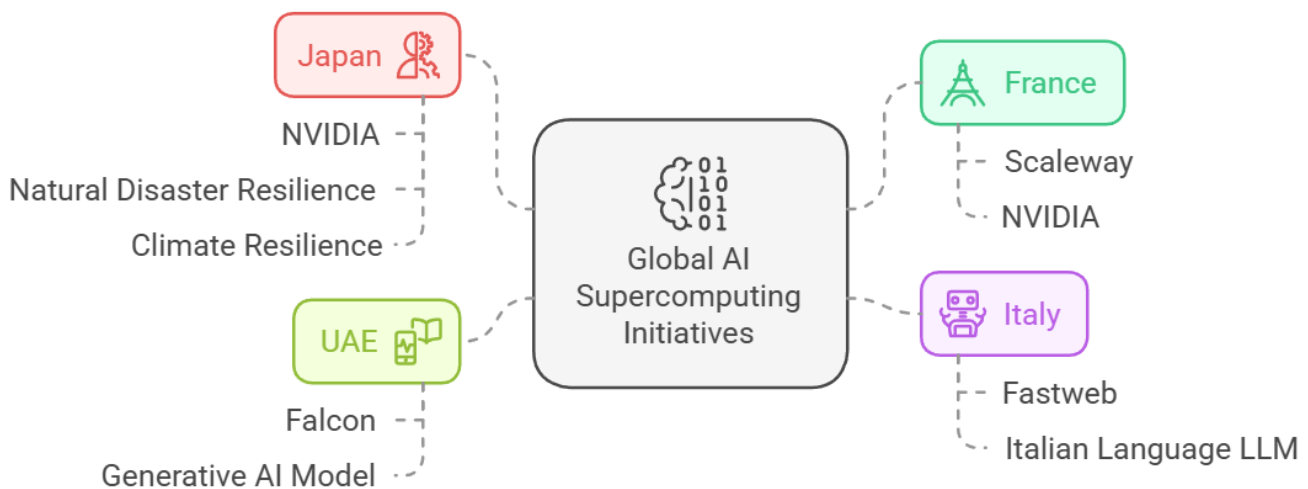
KEY COMPONENTS OF AI



What is Sovereign AI?

- **About:** Sovereign AI refers to a **nation's ability to develop, control, and deploy artificial intelligence** using its own infrastructure, data, workforce, and business networks.

- This includes developing **AI models, infrastructure, and fostering talent** within the country.
- **Growth of AI:** In 2018, a 340-million-parameter model was considered **large (LLMs)**, while today, **ChatGPT has 1.8 trillion parameters**, Gemini has 1.5 trillion, and China's DeepSeek has 240 billion.
 - Parameters are **internal variables** that are **adjusted** during **training** to improve a **model's performance**.
- **Key Aspects:**
 - **National Control:** Sovereign AI ensures alignment with **national laws, regulations, and ethics**.
 - **Data Sovereignty:** It emphasizes data control within borders, **safeguarding privacy and national security**.
 - **AI in Governance:** **Generative AI** is reshaping markets, governance, industries, and work dynamics, with **AI-powered copilots** assisting professionals.
 - **Ethical Considerations:** Nations set **security protocols and ethical standards** for AI use.
 - **Strategic Autonomy:** Sovereign AI reduces reliance on **foreign technologies**, promoting domestic AI development.
 - **Economic Competitiveness:** AI is key to industrial innovation; without it, India risks falling behind globally.
 - **Various Applications:** Sovereign AI is used in critical sectors like **defense, healthcare, and transportation**.
- **India's Position:** **Tata Group and Reliance** are developing **AI infrastructure and Large Language Models (LLMs)** for India.
 - India allocated **USD 1.2 billion** for a sovereign AI project, including an **AI supercomputer** with thousands of chips under **IndiaAI Mission**.
- **Global AI Cooperation:** A proposed **Global AI Compact** suggests that **AI resources** should be shared across nations, ensuring **equitable access to critical technologies**.



UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following?(2020)

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
2. Create meaningful short stories and songs

3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (b)

Wildfires in California

[Source: HT](#)

Why in News?

Los Angeles, California, is battling devastating wildfires, with fatalities and structural losses, as **authorities deploy pink fire retardants to contain the flames**.

- These wildfires have been occurring with **increasing frequency** and **outside the usual wildfire season**, prompting questions about their causes, the role of [climate change](#), and potential solutions.
- Authorities are using **pink fire retardants** to control the wildfires.

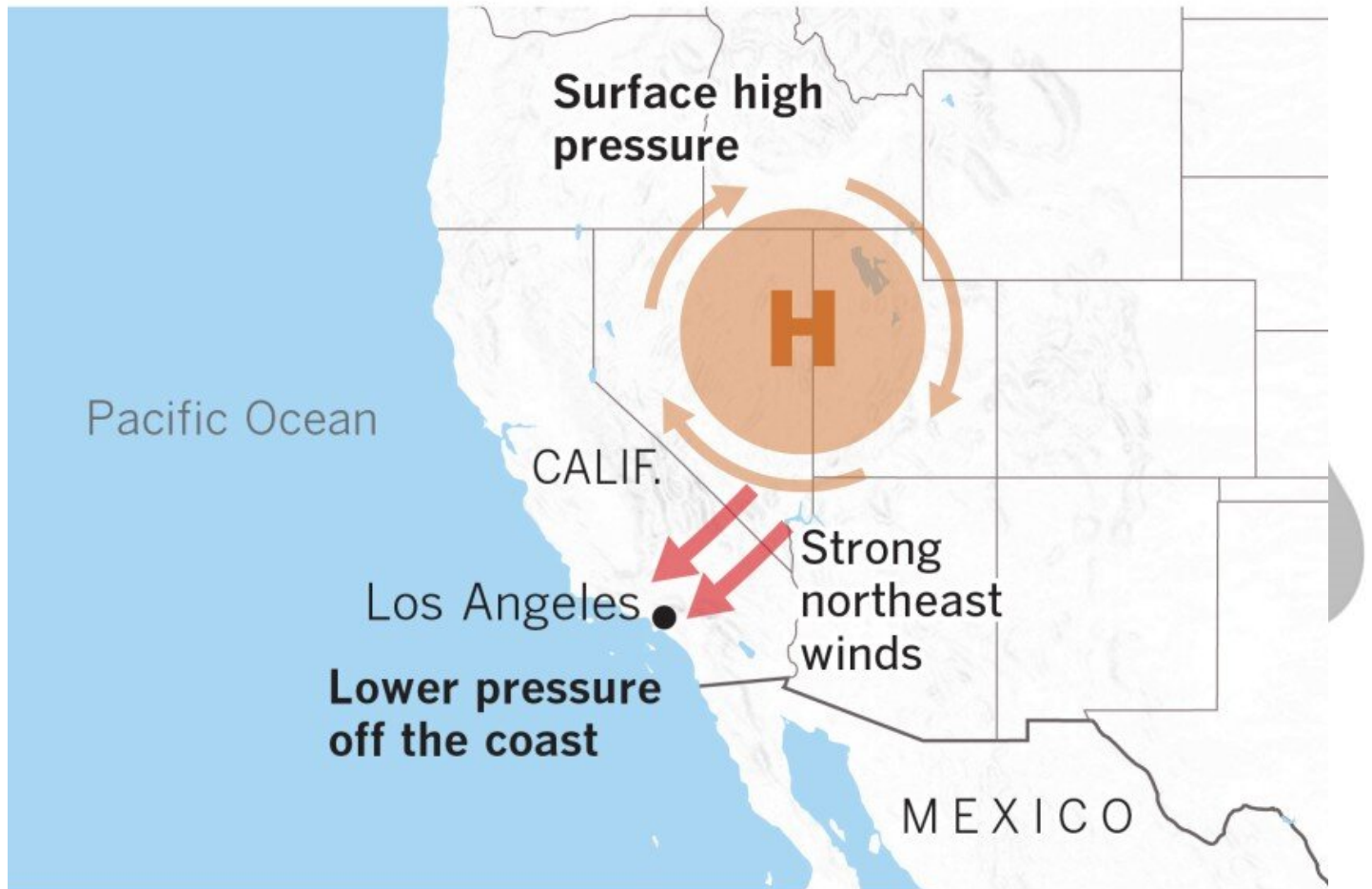
Note: In India, as per the [India State of Forest Report \(ISFR\) 2021](#) published by the [Forest Survey of India \(FSI\)](#), **35.47% of the forest cover is prone to fire**.

What are the Causes and Impacts of Frequent Wildfires in California?

- **Natural Causes:**
 - **Lightning Strikes:** Lightning Strikes **ignite dry vegetation** like trees and grass, triggering uncontrollable fires, especially when combined with strong winds. This is **common during dry seasons**.
 - **Climate Change:** California, in the last **two winters (2022 and 2023)** saw **heavy rainfall**, promoting vegetation growth.
 - The **unusually dry winters of 2024-2025** have **dried out vegetation** in Los Angeles, **turning it into fuel for wildfires**.
 - [Global warming](#) has also exacerbated dry and wet seasons, leading to prolonged [droughts](#) and **reduced moisture in vegetation**, which has led to a rise in **frequency and severity of wildfires**.
 - **Santa Ana Winds:** The [Santa Ana winds](#) in California, typically strong between **October and January**, have been exceptionally **powerful in 2025**.
 - The winds originate from **high-pressure systems** in the **Great Basin** and blow hot, **dry air** from **east to west**, flowing down **towards the Pacific coast**.

- As air **descends the Sierra Nevada and Santa Ana mountains** and passes through valleys, **it gets compressed**, which raises its **temperature and reduces humidity**.
- In Southern California, these winds **exacerbate wildfires by rapidly** spreading flames across dry vegetation, power lines, and buildings.

Santa Ana winds



- **Human Intervention:** According to the US National Park Service, **human activities** account for approximately **85%** of wildfires in the US.
 - **Campfires:** Unattended or **improperly extinguished campfires** are major human-induced causes of wildfires.
 - **Roadside Ignition:** Sparks from vehicles, such as dragging chains or malfunctioning **catalytic converters**, **can ignite fires** along highways.
 - **Power Lines:** Faulty or wind-disturbed power lines often trigger wildfires.
 - **Other Human Activities:** Equipment malfunctions, arson, and discarded cigarettes also contribute to wildfire outbreaks.
 - Sometimes **smugglers and wildlife traffickers** ignite **wildfires** to **divert the attention of security forces** or to **destroy the evidence of crime**.
- **Impact of Wildfires:**
 - **Economic loss** from destruction of life and property.
 - **Air pollution** by small particulate matter and also acids, organic chemicals, and metals along with dust and allergens.
 - **Land degradation** as high temperatures consume all nutrients and vegetation from a land, leaving it barren and infertile.
 - **Loss of biodiversity**

What is Pink Fire Retardant?

▪ **About:**

- It is a chemical mix used to **slow or extinguish wildfires**.
- It primarily contains **ammonium phosphate-based slurry** with salts like **ammonium polyphosphate** and toxic metals like **chromium** and **cadmium**.
- A commonly used fire retardant in the US is **Phos-Chek**.
 - **Phos-Chek** is a **mixture of water, ammonium phosphate-based fertilizers** (diammonium phosphate and ammonium polyphosphate), and a **red dye (iron oxide)** for visibility.
 - It also includes **thickening agents** to enhance its stickiness and prevent drift during aerial application.



- **Function:** It is sprayed ahead of fire that **coats vegetation to prevent oxygen from aiding combustion**.
 - **Pink** is chosen because it is **highly visible**, helping firefighters target fire lines more effectively.
- **Concerns:** Toxic metals like chromium and cadmium cause **cancer and organ damage**, and pose **severe risks to aquatic life** when they contaminate waterways.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following: (2019)

1. Carbon monoxide
2. Methane
3. Ozone
4. Sulphur dioxide

Which of the above are released into atmosphere due to the burning of crop/biomass residue?

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

Ans: (d)

Community Notes Programme Against Fake News

For Prelims: [Meta](#), [Election](#), [Deep Fake](#), [Jana Gana Mana](#), [Press Council Act, 1978](#), [News Broadcasters Association](#), [Information Technology \(IT\) Act, 2000](#), Community Notes Programme, User-Generated Context.

For Mains: Issues related to fake news, social media regulation in India

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, has scrapped its **3rd-party professional fact-checking** programme and **replaced** it with a **Community Notes programme** similar to **X platform** (formerly Twitter).

- Meta said that fact-checking organisations had behaved in a **partisan way** and added that the **Community Notes programme** would face **fewer biases**.
- Experts warn that replacing fact-checkers with a community-based network could lead to **increased fake news and misinformation in India**.

What is a Community Notes programme?

- **About:** It is an **initiative of X**, aimed at combating misinformation and enhancing content quality through **user-generated context**.
 - It **empowers users** rather than relying solely on centralized moderation teams.
 - Community Notes was first **piloted** as a programme called **'Birdwatch' by Twitter in 2021**.
- **Function:** Users provide notes on posts that need **clarification or additional context**.
 - Notes are **visible** only when a diverse group **agrees on their accuracy and usefulness**.
- **Algorithmic Review:** A **rating system** ensures that only the most **balanced and widely supported** notes appear publicly. This helps **mitigate bias and ensure fairness**.
- **No Editorial Oversight:** Unlike traditional fact-checking or moderation, the notes are **not edited or curated** by platform employees but are entirely community-driven.

Professional Fact Checkers

- **About:** Professional fact-checkers are **individuals or organizations** that **verify public claims** to **combat misinformation** in the digital age.
 - Meta collaborates with **11 independent**, certified fact-checking organisations covering content in **15 languages in India**.
- **Key Characteristics:** Professional fact-checkers are **trained, independent, and**

non-partisan, using **evidence-based** methods and **ethical codes** for transparent claim verification.

- **Prominent Examples:** International ones include **PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, and Snopes**, while India-specific platforms are **Alt News, Factly, and Boom Live**.

What are the Concerns Regarding the Community Notes Programme in India?

- **Vulnerability to Misinformation:** Without professional fact-checkers, **untrained users** may struggle to identify biases and misinformation.
 - Without oversight, **political or biased content** may dominate, misleading large sections of the population.
- **Shifting Responsibility to Users:** User-flagged content may experience **delays in addressing misinformation** as companies **shift responsibility to the public**, resulting in **inconsistencies** and the potential **spread of false information**.
- **Ideological Bias:** Without neutral fact-checking, content may **skew politically**, contributing to **manipulation and polarization**, especially in politically charged environments that may enforce **majoritarian views**.
- **Financial and Technical Challenges:** Losing support from platforms like Meta could **limit fact-checkers' scope**, weakening **fight against misinformation** and leaving gaps in content verification.
- **Diversity and Context:** India's **cultural and political diversity** makes community-based fact-checking challenging, as interpretations may vary.
 - Complex issues may require **professional expertise** to interpret accurately, which users may not provide.

Why is Fact-Checking Essential?

- **Fair Journalism:** Fact-checking ensures **media credibility, fosters transparency, and combats misinformation**, especially on social media, by correcting false claims and ensuring accurate news.
- **Political Integrity:** Fact-checking ensures **election integrity** by combating misinformation and **verifying political claims** to prevent misleading the electorate.
- **Technological Innovations:** The rise of **deep fakes, viral rumors, and manipulated media** requires professional journalists to investigate and verify content.
- **Accountability:** By scrutinizing and exposing **exaggerations or falsehoods**, fact-checkers ensure that those in power are held to high standards of truthfulness.

Popular Examples of Fake News from India

- **Muzaffarnagar riots** of 2013 caused by fake video fuelled communal passions
- UNESCO has declared '**Jana Gana Mana**' best national anthem in the world (WhatsApp)
- **GPS tracking nano chip** in 2000 Rupee notes (Nov 2016)
- A Indian politician used photo of Russian streets to show **LED-electrification of Indian streets**
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) annual report used a picture of **Spain-Morocco border** to show Indian border floodlighting

What are Challenges in Tackling Fake News?

- **Lack of Legal Definition:** Most countries (including India), including those with robust free speech laws, **lack a clear legal definition of fake news**, complicating efforts to regulate it effectively.
 - A study found that **false information spreads 70% more quickly** than accurate news on social media platforms.

- **Balancing Regulation and Free Speech:** Efforts to curb fake news often risk being perceived as **censorship**, leading to **controversies** over freedom of expression and **content moderation practices**.
- **Passive Re-sharers:** A significant number of users **unknowingly share unverified content**, amplifying misinformation without malicious intent, which is harder to address with punitive measures.
- **Platform Accountability:** Social media platforms have limited accountability due to **safe harbor protections** making it challenging to hold them liable for user-generated content.
- **Language and Regional Diversity:** India, with over **22 official languages** and **hundreds of dialects**, faces unique challenges in combating fake news, as a **BBC study (2019)** revealed that misinformation often **spreads faster in regional languages** than in English or Hindi.
- **Rise of Deepfakes:** According to **Deepttrace Labs (2019)**, the number of deepfake videos online **doubled every 6 months**, with **96% related to disinformation or exploitation**.
 - **Deepfake** tools are now **widely accessible**, lowering the barrier for malicious actors.

What are Provisions to Tackle Fake News in India?

- **Press Council of India (PCI):** The **Press Council Act, 1978** allows the PCI to **censure or warn media outlets** for spreading fake news or professional misconduct.
- **News Broadcasters Association (NBA):** The **NBA** is a self-regulatory body that ensures **better control** over the quality and accuracy of content aired on **private television news channels**.
- **Indian Penal Code (IPC):** **Sections 153 and 295 of the IPC (Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita)** can be invoked to deal with fake news that incites **violence, communal unrest, or insults religious sentiments**.
- **Defamation Laws:** Defamed individuals can file a case under **IPC Section 499**, with criminal defamation under **Section 500** carrying up to two years of imprisonment.
- **Section 66 in IT Act, 2000:** The **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** penalizes cybercrimes such as **identity theft (Section 66C), cheating by impersonation (Section 66D), privacy violations (Section 66E)**, transmitting obscene material (Section 67) etc.

Way Forward

- **Multilingual Moderation:** Develop **AI-driven tools** for detecting **fake news in regional languages and dialects**. Collaborate with **linguists and local fact-checkers** to improve monitoring of regional content.
- **Platform Accountability:** Social media platforms like **Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp** must ensure accountability by investing in **strong moderation systems** to prevent the spread of **fake news**, especially during elections.
- **Ethical Journalism:** Implementing **stringent editorial guidelines, independent audits of content**, and holding journalists accountable for spreading fake news are crucial for maintaining trust in the media.
- **Public Awareness:** Governments and NGOs can run awareness campaigns to educate the public on the **dangers of fake news** and the importance of **verifying information**, helping reduce misinformation spread.
- **Media Literacy Programs:** Introduce **media literacy and critical thinking** as part of **school curricula** to cultivate a generation of **responsible digital citizens**.

Drishti Mains Question:

What are the challenges India faces in implementing effective fact-checking mechanisms, and how can these challenges be addressed?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. In India, it is legally mandatory for which of the following to report on cyber security incidents? (2017)

1. Service providers
2. Data centres
3. Body corporate

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. What do you understand about the concept of “freedom of speech and expression”? Does it cover hate speech also? Why do the films in India stand on a slightly different plane from other forms of expression? Discuss. **(2014)**

Challenges and Developments Related with Denotified Tribes

For Prelims: [Idate Commission report](#), Nomadic, Semi Nomadic, and De-Notified Tribes (NTs, SNTs, and DNTs) in India, [National Commission for Schedule Tribes](#), Kanjar, Nat, Pardhi, and Sapera, Sixth Schedule.

For Mains: Issues related to Denotified Tribes (DNTs), Nomadic Tribes (NTs), and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (SNTs), Challenges and Measures.

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

The **Denotified Tribes (DNTs), Nomadic Tribes (NTs), and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (SNTs)** in India face numerous challenges, including **denial of caste certificates** in most states.

- Despite the Indian Government launching the [Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs scheme \(SEED\)](#) for their upliftment, various other issues have led to growing discontent among these communities.

What are the Major Challenges faced by DNTs, NTs, and SNTs?

- **Historical Injustice:** These tribes were labeled **criminal tribes** under the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871** during British rule, stigmatizing them for generations.

- Despite being denotified in 1952, the stigma persists, impacting their social and economic inclusion.
- Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes **never had access to private land or home ownership.**
- **Unclassified Communities: The Idate Commission (2017)** identified a total of **1,526 DNT, NT and SNT** communities.
 - Out of these 1,526 identified communities, **269 communities** are still **unclassified** under the categories of **either SC, ST or OBC.**
 - Similarly, many individuals from these communities are unable to obtain **caste certificates in 29 states**, limiting their access to welfare schemes.
 - **Several estimates** suggest a significant population of **over 25 crore** individuals, yet many lack basic identity recognition.
- **Implementation Gaps:** Recommendations of the Idate Commission, including a **permanent commission and caste-census inclusion**, remain unaddressed.
 - The **SEED scheme** has seen limited success due to delays and lack of outreach. Overlapping benefits with SC/ST/OBC schemes lead to difficulties in beneficiary identification.
- **Lack of Representation:** Leadership positions remain scarce for DNT communities, with no **full-time chairperson** in the Union government's **Development and Welfare Board for DNTs, SNTs, and NTs (DWBDNC).**

Idate Commission, 2014

- **About:** It was **established in 2014 under the leadership of Bhiku Ramji Idate**, to compile a statewide catalogue of Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs).
- **Mandate:** It was mandated to recognize those excluded from **Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST)** and **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** categories and recommend welfare measures for their well-being.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Create a **permanent commission** with legal standing for the DNTs, SNTs, and NTs.
 - Assign individuals not identified in the SCs/STs/OBCs list to the OBC category.
 - Enhance legal and constitutional safeguards by incorporating a **third schedule into the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** to prevent atrocities and restore the feeling of security amongst the members of the community.
 - Form a **distinct department to address the welfare** of these communities in states with significant populations.
 - Undertake a thorough **survey of DNT families** to determine their estimated numbers and distribution.

Note: Instead of establishing a **permanent commission** for De-notified Tribes (DNTs), the government set up the **DWBDNC under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**, citing that a permanent commission would conflict with the existing **National Commissions for SCs, STs, and OBCs.**

Who are DNTs, NTs, and SNTs?

- **About:** The term **De-notified Tribes** refers to communities that were once classified under the **Criminal Tribes Acts, 1871** which were implemented by the British Government.
 - The Acts were abolished by the **Government of India in 1952**, leading to the **De-Notification** of these communities.
 - A few of these communities which were listed as **de-notified were also nomadic.**
 - **Nomadic and semi-nomadic** communities are defined as those who **move from one place to another** rather than living in one place all the time.
 - While most DNTs are spread across the **SC, ST** and **OBC** categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.

- **Distribution:** DNTs encompass a wide range of communities, each with unique cultural practices, languages, and socio-economic conditions. Communities include the **Kanjar, Nat, Pardhi, and Sopera**.
 - South Asia is estimated to have the largest nomadic population in the world. In India, approximately **10% of the population** comprises NTs, SNTs, and DNTs.
 - While there are around 150 De-notified Tribes, the Nomadic Tribes population includes about 500 distinct communities.
- **Major Committees/Commissions for DNTs, NTs, and SNTs Communities:**
 - **The Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee, 1947** constituted in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh).
 - **Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee, 1949.**
 - Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 was repealed based on the recommendation of this committee.
 - **[Kaka Kalelkar Commission](#) (also called first OBC Commission), 1953.**
 - **[B P Mandal Commission](#), 1980.**
 - The commission also made some recommendations related to the issue of NTs, SNTs, and DNTs Communities.
 - The **[National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution \(NCRWC\), 2002](#)** held that DNTs have been wrongly stigmatised as crime prone and subjected to high handed treatment as well as exploitation by the representatives of law and order and general society.
 - **Renke Commission (2005):** The commission had estimated their population to be around **10 to 12 crores** at the time.

What is SEED?

- **About:** The **Scheme for Economic Empowerment Denotified, Nomadic, Semi Nomadic** communities was launched in **February 2022** by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Aim and Components:** It aims to **provide free competitive exam coaching to these students for Civil Services**, entry to professional courses like medicine, engineering, **MBA, etc.**
 - To provide health insurance to families, to uplift clusters of these communities through livelihood initiatives, and to provide financial assistance for housing.
 - Health Insurance through **[PM Jan Arogya Yojana](#)**.
 - Livelihoods through **[National and State Rural Livelihood Missions \(NRLM and SRLMs\)](#)**.
 - Land and Housing construction of houses through **[PM Awas Yojana](#)**.
- **Features:** It ensures expenditure of **Rs.200 crore** to be spent over five years beginning 2021-22.
 - The **[DWBDNCs](#)** has been tasked with the implementation of this scheme.

What are India's Efforts Taken for DNTs, NTs, and SNTs?

- **Dr Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs:** This **[Centrally Sponsored Scheme](#)** was launched in **2014-15** for the welfare of those DNT students who are not covered under **[SC](#), [ST](#) or [OBC](#)**.
 - The scheme of **[Pre-matric Scholarships](#)** for DNT students is helpful in spreading education amongst DNT children, especially the girl child.
- **Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostels for DNT Boys and Girls:** This **Centrally Sponsored Scheme, launched in 2014-15**, is implemented through State Governments/UT Administrations/Central Universities.
 - The goal of the program is to offer hostel accommodations to DNT students who do not fall under the categories of SC, ST, or OBC.

Way Forward

- **Policy Implementation:** Expedite the classification process for DNT communities within

SC/ST/OBC frameworks. Issue caste certificates alongside **regular caste classifications. e.g. SC-DNT, ST-DNT.**

- **Strengthening SEED Scheme:** Improve **outreach through active Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) participation** and awareness drives.
 - Simplify eligibility processes to ensure that all eligible families access education, housing, and livelihood support.
- **Identity and Representation:** Conduct **a caste-based census** to capture the actual population and socio-economic conditions of these communities.
 - Encourage community representation in policy making through reserved leadership roles.
- **Institutional Reforms:** Establish a permanent commission with a clear mandate to oversee DNT welfare. Ensure **district-level complaints committees** to address grievances.

DRISHTI Mains Question:

Critically examine the socio-economic issues faced by the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes communities and suggest policy measures for their upliftment.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. With reference to 'Changpa' community of India, consider the following statements:(2014)

1. They live mainly in the State of Uttarakhand.
2. They rear the Pashmina goats that yield a fine wool.
3. They are kept in the category of Scheduled Tribes.

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: (b)

Mains:

Q. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs). (2017)