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## ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE (UHC) IN INDIA

### In Context

- The excerpt from “Mission Possible” by Swami Subramanian and Aparajithan Srivathsan presents a visionary roadmap for achieving UHC in India, emphasizing the importance of technology, team-based care, and a strong public health system.

### About Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

- It is a global health objective aimed at ensuring that everyone can access essential health services without facing financial hardship. It encompasses the full range of health services, from health promotion and prevention to treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care, and is a critical component of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG-3).

### Key Components of UHC

- Availability:** Adequate health services in sufficient quantity.
- Accessibility:** Equal access regardless of location or socio-economic status.
- Affordability:** Health services without financial strain.
- Quality:** High-quality services meeting population needs.

### Health and the Indian Constitution

- State List (List II, Schedule VII):** Public health, sanitation, hospitals, and dispensaries.
- Concurrent List (List III, Schedule VII):** Family welfare, population control, medical education, and prevention of food adulteration.
- Article 263:** Establishes the **Central Council of Health and Family Welfare** for policymaking in health and family welfare matters.
- Right to Health:** Interpreted by the judiciary as part of the **Right to Life (Article 21)**.

### Challenges in Achieving UHC in India

- High Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE):** Despite government health expenditure rising to **1.84% of GDP** (2021-22), OOPE remains a significant burden for many households.
- Limited Health Insurance Coverage:** The ‘missing middle’—a segment of the population without insurance—remains financially vulnerable to medical expenses.

- Resource Constraints:** Shortages in financial, clinical, and infrastructural resources, especially in low-income regions, hinder healthcare delivery.
- Rising Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):** Growing prevalence of NCDs demands a shift toward preventive care and long-term management.
- Public-Private Collaboration:** Stronger partnerships are needed to expand healthcare access and improve service delivery.
- Digital Transformation:** While promising, implementing digital solutions in healthcare faces challenges like infrastructure gaps and digital literacy.

### Key Recommendations

- Leveraging Modern Technology:** Technology acts as the “glue” binding a network of healthcare workers, from community health workers to specialists in tertiary hospitals.
  - Integrated health teams using tools like mobile phones and electronic medical records can enhance efficiency and accessibility.
- Strengthening the Public Health System:** The **Bhore Committee report (1946)** laid the foundation for India’s public health system with its three-tier model integrating preventive and curative care.
  - Improving public health as the primary provider of promotive, preventive, and curative services, reducing health expenditure while ensuring quality.
  - Integration of private healthcare with the national system can improve access and outcomes.
- Creating an Integrated Health System:** The Public Health Foundation of India recommends:
  - Universal Health Insurance to protect against financial hardship.
  - Establishing autonomous organizations for evidence-based healthcare practices.
  - Training appropriately skilled healthcare workers.
  - Decentralizing and coordinating health governance.
  - Legislating health entitlement for all Indians.
- Community Health Worker Teams:** Community health workers can perform 75% of a doctor’s duties, enabling local access to healthcare.
  - Each worker would serve a population of 40,000, supported by a 75-bed district hospital for tertiary care.
  - Training MBBS and MSc biotech students in community medicine for three months would prepare them for grassroots healthcare.

- **Indian Medical Service (IMS):** Proposal for creating an Indian Medical Service (IMS) similar to the IAS, with advanced certification (MD) holders managing state-level healthcare.
  - ♦ This would improve governance and ensure professional management of public health systems.
- **Role of Private and Specialty Care:**
  - ♦ Private medical centers and foundations should coexist with public healthcare to expand quality care.
  - ♦ Examples from South India's ophthalmology institutions demonstrate the success of a pyramidal four-tier model, where local eyecare workers connect with world-class research centers using advanced technologies for diagnosis and treatment.
- **Road to UHC:** Aadhaar-like identification systems for healthcare delivery.
  - ♦ World-class medical facilities in each state (e.g., AIIMS, Delhi; NIMS, Hyderabad).

Source: TH

## 76TH REPUBLIC DAY PARADE

### Context

- During the 76th Republic Day parade, India showcased its military strength and cultural heritage.

### About

- This parade is presided over by the **President of India**, who is the **supreme commander of the Armed Forces**.
- **Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto** was the chief guest at the event.



- ♦ A contingent of **342 members from the Indonesian National Armed Forces** also participated in the parade, marking the **first time troops from Indonesia joined a foreign parade**.
- ♦ Foreign soldiers took part in the parade for the **first time in 2016** with the participation of the **French army contingent**.

### Do You Know?

- On the first Republic Day celebrations in 1950, India's first President headed to **Irwin Amphitheatre** (now Major Dhyan Chand Stadium) where he raised the national flag and bands played the national anthem.
  - ♦ However, there's no mention at all of cultural tableaux at this parade.
- In the upcoming years Each state was invited to send a tableau representing some distinctive feature, displaying India's rich diversity.
- **The Irwin Amphitheatre**, designed by **Robert Torr Russell**, was built in **1933** as a gift from the Maharaja of Bhavnagar.
  - ♦ It was renamed the **National Stadium in 1951**, just before hosting the Asian Games.

### Highlights of Military Strength

- **Sanjay and Pralay:** The Army's battle surveillance system "Sanjay" and the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) surface-to-surface tactical missile "Pralay" were featured for the first time.
- **Joint Tri-Services:** For the first time, a tri-services tableau, highlighting enhanced synergy among the country's armed forces was showcased.
  - ♦ It depicted a coordinated battlefield scenario, featuring land, air, and naval operations.
- **Key Military Assets:** BrahMos, Pinaka, and Akash systems.
- **Indian Navy:** It showcased indigenous warship design and included models of vessels such as INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer, underlining the country's progress in maritime security.

### Showcasing Women Empowerment

- **Dimple Singh Bhati** of the Indian Army created history by becoming the **first woman officer** to present a salute to the President.
- An **all-women marching contingent** from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- **The Delhi Police All-Women Band**, included four women Sub-Inspectors and 64 women constables from the Brass and Pipe Band units.
- **The ministry of rural development's tableau** on the "**Lakhpatti Didi Initiative**," which promotes women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

### Indian Culture

- The Republic Day parade featured 31 tableaux from **16 states and union territories**, as well as **central ministries and organizations**.

- **Theme: Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas.**
- **Uttar Pradesh's tableau** highlighted the **ongoing Maha Kumbh** in Prayagraj, showcasing scenes of **'Samudra Manthan,' 'Amrit Kalash,'** and holy bathing at the **Sangam.**
- **Cultural performance:** It spanned the entire Kartavya Path **for the first time, over 5,000 folk and tribal artists** performed **45 dance forms.**
  - ♦ The 11-minute performance, titled **"Jayati Jaya Mamah Bharatam,"** was curated by the **Sangeet Natak Akademi.**

#### Other Major Highlights

- **Madhya Pradesh's** tableau focused on the **reintroduction of cheetahs in the state.**
- **The Ministry of Earth Sciences** presented a tableau themed around the **celebration of 150 years of India Meteorological Department (IMD).**

#### Significance

- It marks the **adoption of the Indian Constitution on January 26, 1950.**
  - ♦ January 26 is chosen to honour the **declaration of Purna Swaraj** made by the Indian National Congress on January 26, **1930.**
- It honors the martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the country and to **bestow bravery awards upon military personnel and citizens.**
- It also **pays tribute to the Constitution's principles** and the **democratic framework** it established, highlighting values such as justice, equality, and fraternity.

#### Beating Retreat Ceremony

- It is a ceremony that marks the **end of Republic Day festivities.**
- **Held on:** January 29, three days after Republic Day, at the Vijay Chowk, New Delhi.
- It features a musical performance by the bands of the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force, Delhi Police, and the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).
- The ceremony is **presided over by the President of India.**
- It was first held in the **1950s**, during the **state visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip.**
  - ♦ Since then, the ceremony has become an annual event to pay tribute to the valour and sacrifice of the Indian Armed Forces.

Source: TOI

## DEBATE IN GOVERNOR'S ROLE IN THE UNIVERSITIES

#### In Context

- The role of the Governor as Chancellor of State universities has been a subject of debate.

#### Governor's Role in the Universities

- The role of the Governor as Chancellor of State universities is inherited from British colonial rule and not mandated by the Indian Constitution.
- The role was initially created to restrict university autonomy, allowing Governors to maintain direct control over universities, especially in appointing Vice-Chancellors and approving university decisions.

#### Issues and Concerns

- **Politicization:** After 1967, Governors became tools of the Central government, politicizing the office and interfering in university affairs.
  - ♦ Many Governors are former politicians, which has further compromised the neutrality and impartiality of the office.
- **Dual Role of Governors:** Governors have powers both with ministerial advice (Article 163) and independently as Chancellor, allowing them to bypass state governments, especially in Opposition-ruled states.
- **Governor vs. President:** Unlike Governors, the President consults with the Ministry of Education and Parliament, ensuring transparency.
  - ♦ Governors act unilaterally, bypassing state authorities.
- **Other Challenges:** Many Governors lack the necessary academic qualifications to effectively govern universities or academic institutions.
  - ♦ The dual authority system creates administrative paralysis.
  - ♦ The model undermines federalism by giving the Centre undue influence.

#### Insights from Commissions:

- Various commissions (**Rajamannar, Sarkaria, Venkatachaliah, Punchhi**) have critiqued the Governor's role, recommending reforms like political neutrality, clearer roles, and greater university autonomy.
- The **Punchhi Commission** specifically suggested that Governors should avoid statutory roles like Chancellor to preserve the dignity of their office.

#### Alternative Models for University Governance:

- **Ceremonial Governor as Chancellor:** The Governor's role could be purely ceremonial, with no executive authority, as seen in states like Gujarat, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.

- **Chief Minister as Chancellor:** States like West Bengal and Punjab have proposed this model, where the Chief Minister holds the Chancellor position, though this awaits Presidential assent.
- **State-Appointed Chancellor:** Telangana has adopted this model, appointing a ceremonial Chancellor from among distinguished academics or public figures.
- **Elected Chancellor:** Some universities could elect a Chancellor, as done in institutions like Oxford or Cambridge.
- **Chancellor Appointed by University Executive Council:** As seen in universities in the UK, Canada, and Australia, this model ensures transparency and institutional autonomy.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

- Reforming the Governor's role is crucial for ensuring university autonomy, accountability to elected state governments, and academic freedom.
- Some states have passed reforms, but many others face delays in Presidential assent, highlighting the need for a **more impartial approach from the Centre**.
- Progressive reforms should be encouraged to dismantle colonial-era structures and align university governance with global best practices.

Source :TH

## INDONESIA PRESIDENT'S VISIT ON 76TH REPUBLIC DAY

### Context

- The Indonesian President arrived in India as the chief guest for 76th India's Republic Day celebrations—the fourth leader from the Southeast Asian country to grace the occasion.

### About

- To be invited by India as a chief guest for Republic Day **indicates the closeness in ties between the two countries**.
- The first President of Indonesia, was the chief guest at **India's first Republic Day celebrations in 1950**.
- India and Indonesia signed pacts on maritime security, health, traditional medicine, culture and digital cooperation.

### Key Highlights of PM's Address

- Indonesia is an **"important partner"** of India in the 10-nation ASEAN bloc as well as in the Indo-Pacific.

- He welcomed Indonesia in the BRICS grouping.
  - ♦ Indonesia became the **first Southeast Asian nation** to formally join BRICS.
- Cooperation in the field of maritime security, cyber security, counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation.
  - ♦ Two sides will conduct joint exercises by their respective disaster management teams.

### India-Indonesia Relation & Significance

#### History & Background:

- ♦ **Foundation of Relations:** The shared experience of colonialism, and common post-colonial goals of political sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency drove India's friendly bilateral relationship with Indonesia in the late 1940s and 1950s.

- In 1951, India and Indonesia signed a **Treaty of Friendship** which aimed at perpetual peace and unalterable friendship.

- ♦ **Founding NAM:** India and Indonesia became the voice of independence of Asian and African countries in the UN, which led to **Bandung Conference of 1955**, and the subsequent formation of **Non-Aligned Movement in 1961**.

- India and Indonesia were among the five founding leaders of NAM along with Yugoslavia, Egypt, and Ghana.

- ♦ **Look East:** Since the adoption of India's 'Look East Policy' in 1991, and its upgradation to 'Act East' in 2014, there has been a rapid development of bilateral relations.

#### Geo-economics Relations:

- ♦ **Trade Relations:** Indonesia is the second largest trading partner of India in the ASEAN region (after Singapore).

- Bilateral trade increased from \$4.3 billion in 2005-06 to \$38.84 billion in 2022-23 and \$29.40 billion in 2023-24.

- ♦ India-Indonesia bilateral ties were elevated to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2018**.

- The Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific was also adopted.

#### Geopolitical Engagement:

- ♦ **Shared Platforms:** Both nations actively participate in major international forums like BRICS, G20, IORA, and the East Asia Summit, fostering cooperation on global issues.

- ♦ **Policy Alignment:** India's "Act East Policy" and "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" align well with Indonesia's "Global Maritime Fulcrum" vision, creating synergies for regional cooperation in areas like maritime security, connectivity, and economic development.
- **Geostrategic Importance:**
  - ♦ **Maritime Security:** Indonesia's strategic location between the Indian and Pacific Oceans makes it a crucial partner for maintaining maritime security and stability in the region.
  - ♦ **Counterbalancing Influence:** Indonesia's strategic location and growing influence can help counterbalance China's growing dominance in the Indo-Pacific region, aligning with India's strategic interests.
  - ♦ **Counter-terrorism:** Cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts is essential, given the shared challenges posed by extremism and transnational crime.
- **Cultural Connections:**
  - ♦ **Deep-rooted Cultural Ties:** Historical and cultural ties, particularly the influence of Hindu traditions and epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, foster strong people-to-people connections between the two nations.
  - ♦ **Tourism Potential:** These shared cultural roots can be leveraged to boost tourism and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

### Challenges

- **Trade Imbalance:** The trade balance is often skewed in favor of Indonesia, mainly due to high imports of palm oil and coal.
  - ♦ Both nations are looking for ways to diversify trade to reduce this imbalance.
- **Regional Tensions:** There are challenges posed by regional tensions and the changing dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with the rise of China.
  - ♦ Both countries are navigating these pressures while maintaining their strategic partnership.

### Conclusion

- India and Indonesia enjoy a multi-faceted and growing relationship, underpinned by historical ties, economic collaboration, and shared security concerns.
- Both countries have great potential to further deepen their partnership in the coming years, with a focus on regional stability, economic growth, and cultural exchange.

Source: TH

## NEWS IN SHORT

### ETIKOPPAKA DOLLS

#### In News

- The Republic Day celebrations at Kartavyapath in Delhi showcased Andhra Pradesh's **Etikoppaka dolls**.

#### About Etikoppaka Dolls

- **Origin:** They are handcrafted in the Etikoppaka village of Andhra Pradesh, India.
- **Material:** These toys are primarily made from a softwood called 'Ankudu Karra' (also known as Ivory Wood).
- **Crafting Process:** The process involves meticulous carving, shaping, and painting.
- **Decorations:** Natural dyes extracted from plants, seeds, and leaves are used to paint the toys, resulting in a unique and eco-friendly finish.
- **Variety:** Etikoppaka toys encompass a wide range of creations, including animals, birds, dolls, and decorative items.

Source: TH

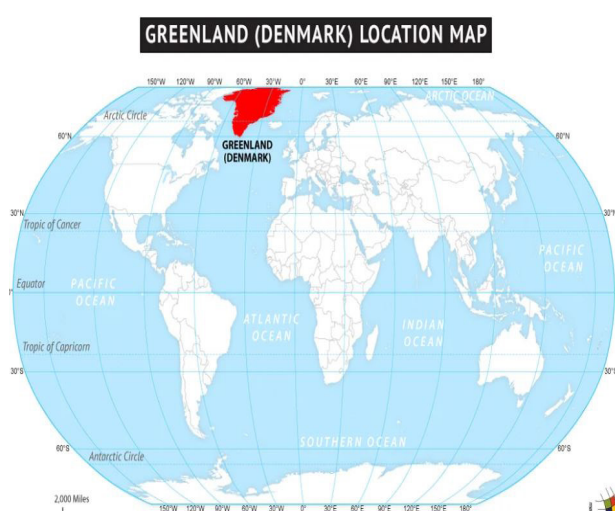
### GREENLAND

#### Context

- US President Trump has said Denmark would be committing a 'very unfriendly act' if it did not allow the US to take over Greenland.

#### About

- Greenland was once a Danish colony and is now an **autonomous province of Denmark**, autonomy extended in **2009**.
  - ♦ It has self-government and its own parliament.
  - ♦ This does not include foreign and security policy or currency policy.



- **Location:** It lies between the **Arctic and Atlantic oceans**, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.
  - ♦ It is the **world's largest island**, with a population just over 56,000.
  - ♦ **Almost 80%** of it is covered by the ice cap and glaciers.
- **Languages:** Greenlandic, also Danish and English
- **Mineral Reserves:** Greenland has large deposits of traditional resources like gold, nickel and cobalt.
  - ♦ It also has some of the biggest reserves of rare earth minerals like **dysprosium, praseodymium, neodymium, and terbium**.
- Of the 34 classified rare earth minerals, **Greenland has about 23**.
  - ♦ Outside of Greenland, these critical minerals are heavily concentrated in China, which controls the bulk of the global production and supply.

Source: IE

## WHIP SYSTEM

### Context

- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's recent statement that party whips curtail an MP's freedom of expression by enforcing a party line has sparked a debate.

### What is Whip?

- A whip refers to an order **to members of a party in the House** to abide by a certain direction of the party.
- Political parties issue whips to their MPs to either vote for or against the bill, depending on their party line.
  - ♦ Once the whip is issued, the MPs from each party will **necessarily have to obey the whip** or else risk losing their seat in Parliament.
- The term is derived from the old **British practice of "whipping in"** lawmakers to follow the party line.
- **It is not mentioned in the constitution** but is considered a parliamentary convention.
- Parties appoint a senior member from among their House contingents to issue whips — this member is called a **chief whip**, and he/ she is assisted by **additional whips**.

### Types of Whip

- **There are three kinds.**
  - ♦ **A one-line whip** just informs members about a vote but permits them to abstain.

- ♦ **A two-line whip** asks them to be present but does not tell them how to vote.
- ♦ **The three-line whip**, largely the norm these days, directs members to be present and vote as per the party line.

### Importance of a whip

- The whip maintains discipline, secure attendance of, and gives necessary information to, members of the party.
- It is a **channel of communication** between the political party and the members of the party in the legislature.
- They also serve the **function of gauging the opinion** of the members, and communicating it to party leaders.

Source: IE

## ELECTORAL TRUSTS

### Context

- In light of the Supreme Court's decision to scrap electoral bonds, donations to political parties witnessed a marked increase through electoral trusts.

### What are Electoral Trusts?

- An Electoral Trust (ET) is a body registered under the **Companies Act, 1956**, solely tasked with distributing contributions received from individuals or companies to political parties.
  - ♦ Electoral trusts were set up under the **Electoral Trusts Scheme, 2013**.
- **Sources of Contributions:** Electoral trusts can accept contributions from;
  - ♦ Individual Indian citizens.
  - ♦ Companies registered in India.
  - ♦ Firms and Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs).
- **Restrictions on Donations:** Contributions from foreign entities or individuals who are not Indian citizens or residents are prohibited.
- **Accountability Measures:** Electoral trusts maintain detailed accounts of donors, their contributions, the funds distributed to political parties, and operational expenses.

Source: IE

## RBI OMBUDSMAN SCHEME

### In News

- The **Reserve Bank of India's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS)** saw a significant rise in complaints during the year ending March 2024, with a 32.81% increase, reaching a total of 934,355 complaint

### About The Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021

- It integrated three previous RBI Ombudsman schemes into one unified system. Three erstwhile Ombudsman Schemes were
  - The Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 2006
  - The Ombudsman Scheme for Non-Banking Financial Companies, 2018, and
  - The Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions, 2019.
- This streamlined approach aims to resolve customer complaints against regulated entities (REs) regarding deficiencies in service.
- Coverage** : It covers all commercial banks, **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)**, **Payment System Participants**, **most Primary (Urban) Cooperative Banks**, and **Credit Information Companies**.
  - Additional entities like **Non-Scheduled Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks** with deposits above 50 crore and Credit Information Companies are included.
- Significance** : The scheme enhances customer service by promoting faster and more efficient grievance resolution, ensuring broader accessibility and transparency.

Source :IE

### PARAQUAT POISONING

#### In News

- Paraquat was used recently in a high-profile murder case in Kerala.

#### About Paraquat

- Paraquat, also known as **paraquat dichloride** or **methyl viologen**, is one of the most widely used herbicides globally.
- It is primarily used to control weed growth and dry crops like cotton before harvest. However, it is **extremely toxic** and is banned in over 70 countries, including the European Union and China.
- The **WHO classifies paraquat** as a **Category 2 (moderately hazardous)** chemical.
- It **damages the body at a cellular level** and spreads rapidly, affecting vital organs like the lungs, kidneys, and liver.

#### Regulations on Paraquat Use

- In India**: The Central Insecticides Board (CIBRC) under the **Insecticides Act of 1968** regulates paraquat use. A 2021 notification restricts its use

to crops like wheat, rice, tea, and maize. Despite regulations, misuse and lack of safety measures are widespread.

- In the US**: Paraquat can only be purchased by licensed commercial users, and it must include safety features like blue dye, a sharp odor, and a vomiting agent.

Source: IE

### STARGARDT DISEASE

#### In News

- Researchers from the Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology, Basel, Switzerland, have developed a gene editing technique to address Stargardt disease.

#### About Stargardt Disease

- Also known as **Stargardt macular degeneration**, is caused by mutations in the ABCA4 gene, which disrupts Vitamin A processing in the retina.
- This leads to the excessive accumulation of lipofuscin, a pigment that damages the macula, the part of the retina responsible for central vision.
- Currently, **no cure exists for this condition**.

Source: TH

### GUILLAIN-BARRÉ SYNDROME (GBS)

#### Context

- The recent outbreak of **Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)** in Pune (Maharashtra) has raised concerns.

#### What is Guillain-Barré Syndrome?

- About**: GBS is an **autoimmune neurological disorder** where the immune system mistakenly attacks the **peripheral nerves**, leading to muscle weakness and, in severe cases, paralysis.
- Causes**: The exact cause of GBS remains unclear, but it is often triggered by:
  - Respiratory or gastrointestinal infections.
  - Bacterial infections, such as Campylobacter.
  - Viral infections, including influenza, COVID-19, and Zika virus.
- Vulnerability**: Although rare, it can **affect individuals of all ages**, with adults and males being more commonly affected.
- Symptoms**: Include difficulty in walking, trouble with facial movements — speaking, chewing or swallowing — and problems with coordination and balance. Severe cases may involve breathing difficulty due to chest muscle weakness.
- Transmission**: It is **not contagious** and does not directly spread from person to person.

- **Treatment:** There is **no known cure** for GBS. However, there are some treatments that aid in recovery.
  - ♦ The treatments primarily include plasma exchange and intravenous immunoglobulin therapy.

Source: TH

## FENTANYL

### In News

- The U.S. is proposing a 10% tariff on Chinese imports, accusing China of failing to stop fentanyl trafficking into the U.S. via Mexico and Canada.

### About Fentanyl

- It is a powerful **synthetic opioid** primarily used in medicine to treat severe pain, especially after surgery or for chronic pain in patients with tolerance to other **opioids**.
  - ♦ Opioids are a class of drugs that bind to opioid receptors in the brain and body, reducing the perception of pain.
- It is approximately **50-100 times more potent than morphine**.
- However, **fentanyl is also illegally manufactured and sold for recreational use**. It is often mixed with heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine and pressed into pills designed to look like prescription opioids, significantly increasing the risk of overdose.

Source: TH

## INDORE AND UDAIPUR JOIN THE LIST OF 31 WETLAND ACCREDITED CITIES IN WORLD

### Context

- Indore and Udaipur have become the **first two Indian cities** to join the **global list of accredited wetland cities**.

### About

- **Sirpur Lake, a Ramsar Site in Indore**, has been recognised for water bird congregation and is being developed as a bird sanctuary.
- **Udaipur in Rajasthan** is surrounded by **five major wetlands**, namely, Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Rang Sagar, Swaroop Sagar, and Doodh Talai.

### The Wetland City Accreditation Program

- It is part of the **Ramsar Convention**, and was approved during **COP12** held in the year **2015**.
- **Accreditation is granted to only those cities** which satisfy all the **six international criteria**

including adopting measures for conservation of wetlands and their ecosystem services.

- **Aim:** To promote conservation and wise use of urban and peri-urban wetlands.
- **Validity:** It is valid for **6 years**, after which it must be renewed, providing that it continues to fill each of the 6 criteria.
- **The global list of 74 accredited wetland cities** comprises the **highest 22 from China** followed by nine from France.
- **Ramsar Convention:** It is an international convention on wetlands, adopted in **1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar**.
  - ♦ It provides a framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources across its **172-member countries including India**.
  - ♦ At present, 85 wetlands in India are protected under the treaty.

Source: PIB

## CORPSE FLOWERS

### In News

- A rare plant, the **corpse flower (Amorphophallus titanum)**, bloomed in Sydney, Australia, for the first time in over a decade.

### About Corpse Flower (Amorphophallus Titanum)

- It is **native to Sumatra, Indonesia**, is famous for its enormous size, rare blooming cycle, and its strong odor, resembling rotting flesh.
- The flower emits a strong, pungent odor to attract carrion insects for pollination.
- The corpse flower blooms rarely, often **once every 7–10 years or even longer**. The bloom lasts only about 24–48 hours.
- It is listed as **endangered by the IUCN**.

Source: DD News

## ASAN WETLAND

### Context

- A recent bird counting campaign at the Asan Wetland, Uttarakhand, has recorded 5,225 birds from 117 species.

### Asan Wetland

- **Location: The Wetland**, also known as the Asan Conservation Reserve, spans 444 hectares along the **Asan River**, which flows into the **Yamuna River in Dehradun district**, Uttarakhand.
- **Ramsar Designation:** Since **2020**, the wetland has been recognized as a Ramsar Site.

- **Avian Diversity:** The wetland is home to 330 bird species, including critically endangered species like the **red-headed vulture**, **white-rumped vulture**, and **Baer's pochard**.
- **Aquatic Biodiversity:** It also supports 49 fish species, including the endangered **Putitor mahseer (Tor putitora)**.

Source: IE

## ISLAMIC ARTS BIENNALE

### In News

- The 2025 Islamic Arts Biennale, held at the King Abdulaziz International Airport's Western Hajj Terminal in Saudi Arabia.

### About Islamic Arts Biennale

- It is organized by the Diriyah Biennale Foundation, and aims to establish a global platform for cultural exchange and Islamic art research.
- It is the **world's first biennale** dedicated to the **Islamic arts**, offering the opportunity for renewed perspective and research.

- It brings together contemporary and newly commissioned artworks with historical Islamic objects to explore themes of spirituality, identity, and the connection between the past and present.
- The 2025 Islamic Arts Biennale is inspired by the **Quranic phrase "And All That Is In Between,"** exploring how faith is lived, expressed, and celebrated.
- The event **features** over 500 historical objects and contemporary artworks.
  - ♦ It showcases Islamic art from over 30 global institutions, including the Louvre, Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Vatican Apostolic Library, as well as contributions from Saudi Arabia and India
  - ♦ Visitors will also experience sacred objects from Makkah and Madinah, fostering spiritual resonance and cross-cultural dialogue.

Source :IE

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