NEXT IAS

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Table of Content

SC RULES ROHINGYA REFUGEES SUBJECT TO FOREIGNERS ACT

Context

- The Supreme Court observed that if **Rohingya refugees** are found to be **'foreigners' under the Foreigners Act,** they will be dealt with as per the law.

About

- **Petitioners' Arguments:**
  - The Rohingya are recognized as **refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),** and thus **deserve protection under the principle of non-refoulement** (not returning refugees to a place where they face serious threats).
  - Deportation to Myanmar, where they are stateless and allegedly face torture and death, **violates Article 21** (Right to Life) and **Article 14** (Right to Equality).

- **Government's and Court's Position:**
  - India is **not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention**, and **the Foreigners Act** gives the government broad powers to regulate the entry and exit of foreigners.
  - **Article 19(1)(e)** (Right to reside/settle) **applies only to Indian citizens**, not to foreigners, per the Supreme Court's interpretation.
  - The SC acknowledged basic constitutional protections (like Articles 14 and 21) extend to all persons in India, but **not a right to stay or settle in India.**
  - The bench reiterated that the matter of whether the refugees can stay is **subject to legal procedure under Indian law.**

Who are the Rohingya refugees?

- The Rohingya are a **Muslim minority ethnic group** with their roots in the **Arakan kingdom in Myanmar**.
- The Rohingya are culturally and religiously distinct from the **majority Buddhist population in Myanmar.**
- The Rohingya claim to have lived in Myanmar's **Rakhine State** for generations, but successive governments in the country have disputed their ties, labelling them **illegal immigrants from Bangladesh**.
- Myanmar has **denied them citizenship since 1982,** thus making them the **world's largest stateless population**.

- Their **largest exodus began in 2017** driving more than 7.5 lakh people to seek refuge in Bangladesh to escape the brutality of security forces.

India's Policy on Refugees

- India has welcomed refugees in the past, with nearly **300,000 people categorised as refugees.**
  - This includes the Tibetans, Chakmas from Bangladesh, and refugees from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, etc.
- But **India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugee**. Nor does India have a refugee policy or a refugee law.
- **All foreign undocumented nationals** are governed as per the provisions of The **Foreigners Act, 1946, The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and The Citizenship Act, 1955.**
- As per the MHA foreign nationals who enter into the country **without valid travel documents are treated as illegal immigrants.**

Reasons for India's Policy on Refugees

- **Resource Strain:** Hosting refugees puts pressure on resources, especially in areas where infrastructure is already stretched thin.
- **Social Cohesion:** Large numbers of refugees can strain social cohesion, potentially leading to tensions with host communities.
- **Security Concerns:** Refugee influxes can raise security concerns, including the potential infiltration of extremist elements and difficulties in monitoring movements across porous borders.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** Hosting refugees strain diplomatic relations with neighboring countries or countries of origin.
- **Economic Impact:** Refugees compete for low-skilled jobs, affecting the local job market, while their potential contributions to the economy through entrepreneurship or labor may not be fully realized.

Way Ahead

- India's approach to refugees is shaped by a **tradition of humanitarianism, regional geopolitics, and national security concerns.**
- Though India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, it has historically provided refuge to various displaced communities.

- As global displacement continues to rise, there is an i**ncreasing need for India to establish a clear and consistent national refugee policy** that balances humanitarian obligations with security and demographic concerns.

Source: TH

CJI FORWARDS 'IN-HOUSE' PANEL PROBE REPORT TO PRESIDENT

Context

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna has forwarded to the President and the Prime Minister the report of an in-house committee that investigated allegations against the Delhi High Court judge.

In-House Procedure for Investigation

- To address judicial misconduct **outside the formal impeachment process**, the Supreme Court in **1999** adopted an **"in-house procedure"** for conducting investigations;
  - **Filing Complaints:** Complaints can be made to the CJI, High Court Chief Justice, or the President.
  - **Preliminary Inquiry:** The Chief Justice of the High Court seeks a response from the accused judge and forwards the findings to the CJI.
  - **Fact-Finding Committee:** If serious allegations arise, the CJI appoints a committee comprising two Chief Justices of other High Courts and one High Court judge to investigate.
  - **Recommendations and Action:** If the committee finds sufficient grounds for removal, the CJI may advise the judge to resign. If the judge refuses, the report is forwarded to the President and the Prime Minister for further action, paving the way for impeachment.

Judicial Precedents

- **K Veeraswami v. Union of India (1991):** No criminal case can be registered against a judge of a high court or the Supreme Court without the prior permission of the Chief Justice of India.
- **The Additional District and Sessions Judge versus Registrar General, High Court Of Madhya Pradesh judgment, 2014:** If a judge refuses to resign despite adverse findings by an in-house panel, the report must be forwarded to constitutional authorities for further action.

Mechanism for Removal of Judges

- The Constitution of India provides for the removal of judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts under **Article 124(4)** and **Article 217** on grounds of **"proved misbehavior or incapacity."**
- **The process involves;**
  - **Initiation of Impeachment:** A motion for removal must be introduced in either House of Parliament, supported by a **special majority** (rd of the total membership and rd of members present and voting).
  - **Presidential Approval:** After the motion is passed, the President of India issues an order for the removal of the judge.

Concluding remarks

- The existing in-house procedure and constitutional safeguards are designed to ensure that such matters are examined fairly, without undermining judicial independence.
- As the process moves forward, it reflects the strength of India's legal framework in addressing concerns while maintaining institutional dignity.

Source: TH

INDIA'S LATEST MMR SHOWS A DECLINING TREND

In News

- India's latest Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) data was released by the Registrar-General of India.

> **Do you know?**
> - The Registrar-General arrives at estimates on fertility and mortality using the Sample Registration System, one of the largest demographic sample surveys in the country.

Maternal death

- **It** is the death of a woman while pregnant or within **42 days of termination of pregnancy**, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.
  - One of the key indicators of maternal mortality is the **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** which is defined as the number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 100,000 live births during the same time period.

- The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim at reducing global **MMR to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.**

Recent Findings

- Maternal Mortality Ratio in India dropped to **93 per 100,000** live births in 2019–21, down from 97 (2018–20) and 103 (2017–19).

- The highest MMR occurs in the **20-29 age group**, and the second highest in the 30-34 age group.

- Several States, including Madhya Pradesh (175), Assam (167), Uttar Pradesh (151), Odisha (135), Chhattisgarh (132), West Bengal (109), and Haryana (106), have high MMRs.

Global Statistics (2023)

- Over 700 women die daily from preventable pregnancy-related causes.

- Maternal deaths occurred every 2 minutes.

- More than 90% happened in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

- Global MMR fell by about 40% from 2000 to 2023.

Issues and Concerns

- Maternal mortality remains a critical public health issue in India.

  - It serves as a key indicator of healthcare quality and accessibility, reflecting the effectiveness of maternal health services.

- Most maternal deaths occur due to complications from pregnancy, childbirth, or abortion, not from accidental causes.

Government Initiatives to Reduce MMR

- India has committed to the UN target for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for MMR at 70 per 1,00,000 live births by 2030 and NHP (National Health Policy) 2017 target for MMR less than 100 per 1,00,000 live births by 2020.

  - India has accomplished the National Health Policy (NHP) target for MMR.

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) supports all States/UTs in implementation of **Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child, Adolescent health and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N)** strategy under National Health Mission (NHM) based on the Annual Programme Implementation Plan (PIP) submitted by States/ UTs to reduce MMR & Neonatal Mortality Rate.

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**: Launched in 2005, it promotes institutional deliveries among poor and marginalized women (SC/ST/BPL) to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** A maternity benefit scheme offering 5,000 for the first live birth to eligible women. Under PMMVY 2.0 (from April 2022), additional incentives are given if the second child is a girl, to promote positive behavioural change.

- **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)**: Started in 2011, it eliminates out-of-pocket costs for pregnant women and sick newborns by providing free delivery, transport, medicines, diagnostics, and diet in public facilities.

- **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN**): Launched in 2019, it ensures free, respectful, and quality healthcare for all pregnant women and newborns, aiming to eliminate preventable deaths.

- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):** Initiated in 2016, it provides free antenatal care on the 9th of every month.

  - The e-PMSMA extension targets high-risk pregnancies with individual tracking and financial incentives. Over 5.9 crore women have benefited by March 2025.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- India has made significant progress in reducing maternal mortality, successfully achieving the National Health Policy (NHP) target of an MMR below 100 by 2020. However, continued efforts are required to reach the SDG target of MMR below 70 by 2030.

- Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, expanding maternal health programs, and addressing socioeconomic barriers will be critical in further reducing maternal mortality in the country.

Source :TH

AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS: INDIA & WORLD

Context

- Recently, India thwarted Pakistani aerial attacks along the western border through its air defence systems, and successfully neutralized an air defence system in Lahore, Pakistan.

About the Air Defence Systems

- These are critical components of a nation's security infrastructure, designed to **detect, track,**

and **neutralize aerial threats** such as enemy aircraft, missiles, and drones.

- These systems operate through **layered defense mechanisms**, combining radars, missile interceptors, electronic warfare tools, and command centers to safeguard airspace.

Key Components of Air Defence Systems

- **Detection and Surveillance:**
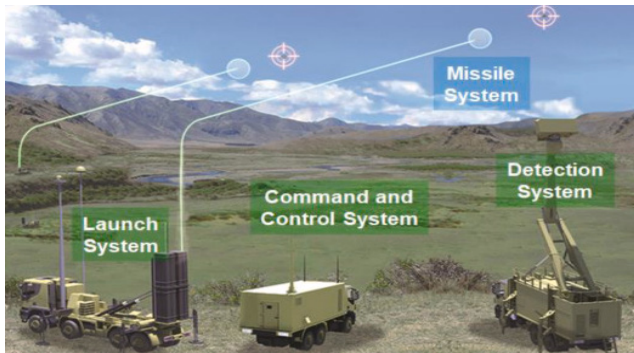
- ◆ **Radar Systems:** Air defence begins with high-frequency radar waves that detect incoming threats by bouncing signals off objects in the sky.
- ◆ **Satellite and Infrared Sensors:** Advanced systems use satellite imaging and infrared tracking to identify stealth aircraft and hypersonic missiles.
- **Tracking and Target Identification:** Once a threat is detected, tracking systems analyze its speed, altitude, and trajectory to determine its nature—whether it's a fighter jet, ballistic missile, or drone.
  - ◆ Command centers assess the threat level and decide on the appropriate response.
- **Engagement and Neutralization:**
  - ◆ **Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs):** These missiles intercept enemy aircraft or incoming projectiles before they reach their target.
  - ◆ **Electronic Warfare (EW) Systems:** Jammers disrupt enemy communications and radar signals, reducing their ability to coordinate attacks.
  - ◆ **Anti-Aircraft Artillery:** In close-range combat, high-caliber guns provide an additional layer of defense.

Types of Air Defence Systems

- **Short-Range Air Defence (SHORAD):** Designed to counter low-altitude threats, including drones and cruise missiles.
  - ◆ **Example:** Barak-8 Missile System.

- **Medium-Range Air Defence (MRAD):** Covers larger areas, intercepting fighter jets and long-range missiles.
  - ◆ **Examples:** Patriot Missile System, **S-400 Triumf.**
- **Long-Range Air Defence (LRAD):** Protects entire regions, capable of neutralizing intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).
  - ◆ **Examples:** THAAD, Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense.

Key Air Defence Systems in India

- **Akash Missile System:** It is a **Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) system** designed to neutralize multiple airborne threats simultaneously, using command guidance and phased array radar.
- **S-400 Triumf Missile System:** It is procured from Russia, which enhances India's air defence capabilities.
  - ◆ It can detect and intercept ballistic missiles, fighter jets, and drones at distances up to 400 km.
  - ◆ It is also used by **China, and Turkey** for ballistic missile and aircraft defense.
- **Integrated Counter-UAS Grid:** India has deployed **counter-drone technology** to neutralize hostile UAVs along sensitive borders.
  - ◆ It integrates radar detection, electronic jamming, and kinetic interception to prevent aerial intrusions.
- **Barak-8 Missile System:** It is jointly developed by **India and Israel,** and provides high-speed interception against airborne threats.
  - ◆ It enhances naval and land-based air defence capabilities.

Other Air Defence Systems in the World

- **Patriot Missile System (United States):** It is widely deployed for missile interception and aerial threat neutralization.
  - ◆ It is used by the U.S., Germany, Japan, and Saudi Arabia for high-altitude defense.
- **Iron Dome (Israel):** It is designed for short-range missile interception, particularly effective against rocket attacks.
  - ◆ It is used extensively by Israel to protect urban areas and military installations.
- **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) – United States**: It is a high-altitude missile defense system capable of intercepting ballistic missiles in their terminal phase.
  - ◆ It is deployed by the U.S., South Korea, and Japan for regional security.

Source: IE

CCI NOTIFIES NEW DEFINITIONS TO CURB PREDATORY PRICING

In News

- The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** has notified the **"Determination of Cost of Production Regulations, 2025"**, replacing its 2009 framework.

About

- This regulatory shift aims to empower the watchdog to better **scrutinize predatory pricing and deep discounting**, especially in the e-commerce and quick commerce sectors.

Background: Predatory Pricing and Competition Law

- Predatory pricing is defined under the **Competition Act, 2002** as "the sale of goods or provision of services, at a **price below the cost of production with a view to reduce competition or eliminate competitors."**

- Such practices are deemed abuse of dominant position under **Section 4 of the Act.**

- The earlier Cost Regulations (2009) were increasingly seen as outdated amid the rise of digital markets, which involve complex pricing structures, cross-subsidies, and non-monetary value exchanges.

Key Features of the 2025 Regulations

- **Flexible, Sector-Agnostic Framework:** Moves away from a one-size-fits-all model.
  - Allows case-by-case assessment, adapting to sector-specific dynamics, including platform-based digital businesses.

- **Focus on Measurable Production Costs:** Reaffirms that internal production costs form the benchmark, not market value (which can be influenced by consumer perceptions, brand value, or subsidies).

- Rejects stakeholder proposals to use market value due to its subjectivity and external dependencies.

- **Modernization & Global Alignment:** Aligns with international competition law standards and best practices. Incorporates insights from modern economic theories and judicial interpretations relevant to platform economies and dynamic pricing.

Significance

- **Legal Clarity:** Provides a defined cost-benchmark framework grounded in economic rationale.

- **Digital Economy Readiness:** Accounts for cross-subsidisation, high fixed costs, and non-traditional revenue models prevalent in digital platforms.

- **Consumer and MSME Protection:** Prevents dominant firms from using price wars to wipe out smaller players.

- **Ease of Regulation:** Enhances CCI's ability to investigate, quantify, and adjudicate anti-competitive pricing with consistency.

Source :TH

SUPREME COURT FLAGS BITCOIN TRADING AS A WAY FOR HAWALA

Context

- The Supreme Court expressed concern over the unregulated nature of Bitcoin trading in India, likening it to a "refined way of Hawala business."

What is Bitcoin?

- Bitcoin is a type of digital or virtual currency that uses cryptography for security, making it difficult to counterfeit or double-spend.

- It operates on **decentralized networks** based on **blockchain technology**—a distributed ledger enforced by a network of computers.

- Cryptocurrencies are typically **not controlled by any central authority,** which makes them theoretically immune to government interference or manipulation.

> **Blockchain technology**
> - Blockchain technology is a **decentralized, distributed ledger system** that records transactions across many computers in a way that ensures security and transparency.
> - Blockchain networks rely on **consensus algorithms to validate transactions** and maintain network integrity.
>   - These mechanisms ensure that **only legitimate transactions are added** to the chain.

Concerns of Bitcoin

- **Lack of Regulation:** Despite repeated judicial nudges, the government has not issued a clear legal framework for virtual currency.

- **Potential for Misuse:** Due to the absence of KYC/AML enforcement and its cross-border nature, cryptocurrency can be misused for illicit activities, including a digital form of Hawala.

- **Threat to Financial Integrity:** The unregulated market could jeopardize India's efforts to curb black money and maintain capital controls.

India's Cryptocurrency Landscape

- At present, India does not have any Law or provision which specifically deals with Cryptocurrency. India has not officially banned or allowed cryptocurrency trading.

- **Regulatory Uncertainty:** In **2018**, the **Central Board of Direct Taxes** proposed a ban on cryptocurrencies, and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) restricted banks from facilitating cryptocurrency transactions labeling it as a **"macro-economic risk."**

  - This decision was overturned by the Supreme Court in **2020.**

- **Taxation Policies:** The Indian government imposed a **30% tax** on income from transfers of virtual digital assets in **2022,** along with a **1% tax deducted at source (TDS)** on each transaction.

  - These stringent measures have dampened domestic enthusiasm for cryptocurrency trading.

What is Hawala?

- Hawala is an informal method of transferring money without any physical movement of cash.

- It works outside traditional banking channels and is often used for money laundering, terror financing, and tax evasion.

How Bitcoin can be in Hawala?

- **Anonymity:** Traditional Hawala relies on trust and secrecy.

  - Bitcoin allows pseudonymous transactions that are hard to trace, mimicking Hawala's secrecy.

- **Cross-Border Transfers:** In traditional Hawala, money doesn't physically cross borders; balances are settled informally.

  - With Bitcoin, a person in one country can send Bitcoin to a counterpart in another country, who can convert it into local currency and deliver it to the intended recipient—mirroring the Hawala model.

- **Quick Transfers:** Unlike traditional remittances that take days and charge fees, Bitcoin transactions can be near-instantaneous and low-cost, making it attractive for illicit transfers.

HAWALA TRANSACTION SYSTEM

How hawala works

Hawala is a legal but informal means of transferring money across the globe.

STEP 1
In Country A...

SENDER   HAWALADAR A

Sender gives cash to hawala agent (Hawaladar A). Agent gives sender a code.

STEP 2
Hawaladar A to B...

HAWALADAR A   HAWALADAR B
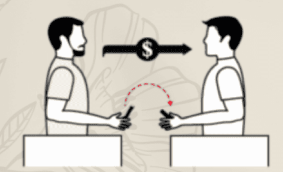
Hawaladar A tells a counterpart in country B how much cash has been received.

STEP 3
Sender to Recipient...
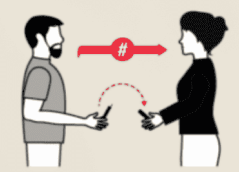
SENDER   RECIPIENT

Sender passes the code to the recipient, saying how much cash was handed in.

STEP 4
In Country B...

HAWALADAR B   RECIPIENT

Recipient gives code to Hawaladar B who hands over cash, minus fee. Hawala agents settle their account separately.

Sources: Financial Action Task Force (FATF); Interpol

Way Ahead

- **Comprehensive Legislation:** India must enact a clear legal framework defining and regulating cryptocurrencies, exchanges, and wallets.

- **Strengthen Enforcement:** Enhance capabilities of financial intelligence units to monitor crypto transactions.

- **International Cooperation:** Work with FATF and G20 to establish global norms on crypto governance.

Source: TH

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

KOZHIKODE GETS WHO RECOGNITION AS AGE-FRIENDLY CITY

Context

- Kozhikode city has received global recognition by becoming a member of the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC).

What is an Age-Friendly City?

- An age-friendly city ensures that urban environments, infrastructure, and services are accessible and inclusive for older adults. It addresses challenges related to:
  - Accessible public spaces (parks, transportation, buildings),
  - Affordable and suitable housing, healthcare access and social support,
  - Age-friendly communication tools,
  - Participation in community activities.

WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC)

- **Establishment:** 2010

- **The mission** of the Network is to stimulate and enable cities and communities around the world to become increasingly age-friendly.

- **The Network seeks to do this by:**
  - **inspiring change** by showing what can be done and how it can be done;
  - **connecting cities and communities** worldwide to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and experience; and
  - **supporting cities and communities** to find appropriate innovative and evidence-based solutions.

> **UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)**
> - Kozhikode was inducted into the UNESCO Creative Cities Network under the Literature category in **2022.**
> - It became the **first Indian city** under the UNESCO "**City of Literature".**

Source: TH

MATURITY-ONSET DIABETES OF THE YOUNG (MODY)

In News

- Scientists from the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF), Chennai, and Washington University School of Medicine have discovered a new **subtype of Maturity-Onset Diabetes of the Young (MODY)**, bringing the total recognized subtypes to 14.

Maturity-onset diabetes of the young (MODY)

- It is a type of **monogenic diabetes** first described as a **mild and asymptomatic form of diabetes** that was observed in non-obese children, adolescents, and young adults.

- It is caused by **defects in pancreatic islet cell development** that impairs insulin secretion.

- It is usually inherited in an **autosomal dominant fashion**, and patients generally have heterozygous mutations.

Latest Developments

- The newly identified genetic variant, found in Indian patients, affects potassium channel function in pancreatic beta cells, leading to disrupted insulin secretion and a shift from congenital hyperinsulinism to diabetes.

- Unlike other MODY forms, it does not respond to standard treatments like sulphonylureas.

> **Diabetes or Diabetes Mellitus (DM)**
> - It is a chronic metabolic disorder characterized by elevated blood glucose levels. This condition arises when the body either doesn't produce enough insulin or becomes resistant to the insulin it does produce.
>
> **Types of Diabetes:**
> - **Type 1 Diabetes:** An autoimmune disorder where the body's immune system attacks the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.

- **Type 2 Diabetes:** The most common type, often associated with lifestyle factors like obesity and sedentary lifestyle. The body becomes resistant to insulin or doesn't produce enough.

Gestational Diabetes: Develops during pregnancy and usually resolves after childbirth.

Symptoms: Frequent urination, Increased thirst, Excessive hunger, Blurred vision and Fatigue.

Source: TH

BRAHMOS MISSILE MANUFACTURING UNIT

Context

- The production of **supersonic cruise missile, BrahMos**, is set to begin in **Lucknow**, with the inauguration of the **BrahMos missile manufacturing unit.**

About

- The **BrahMos missile manufacturing unit** will be officially inaugurated on May 11, marking a **historic milestone in India's defence manufacturing journey.**

- The facility is being set up by **BrahMos Aerospace with a ₹300 crore investment.**

- The unit has been completed--from construction to production--**within 3.5 years.**

- It will also be the **first-of-its-kind hi-tech unit in the state.**

Significance

- **Strategic Impact:** Enhances India's defence capabilities.

- **Industrial Impact:** Brings modern manufacturing technologies to the state, stimulating growth of allied industries.

- **Employment Generation:**
  - 500 direct jobs (engineers & technicians).
  - Thousands of indirect jobs across skill levels.

About BrahMos

- It is a joint venture between **India's DRDO (50.5%) and Russia's NPOM (49.5%).**

- Etymology: BrahMos = **Brahmaputra (India) + Moskva (Russia),** symbolizing strength and peace.

- BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles are known for their **speed, precision, and versatility.**

Source: IE

HAROP DRONE

Context

- India reportedly used **HAROP drones** to target multiple Air Defence systems in Pakistan.

About

- It is developed **by IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries)** and is the **second-generation system following the HARPY platform.**

- They cause **destruction by crashing into their targets** with the explosive payload that they carry, earning names such as **"suicide drones" and "kamikaze drones".**

- **Dual-Role Capability:** Acts both as a surveillance drone and a precision strike missile.

- **Features:**
  - Endurance Up to 9 hours.
  - Operational Range up to 1,000 km, enabling deep-strike operations without frontline exposure.
  - Fully autonomous search and tracking.
  - Two-way data link allows operators to make real-time targeting decisions and abort missions if needed.
    - Attack can be cancelled mid-flight, allowing re-loitering — reducing collateral damage risks.
  - **Effective against:** Radars, Missile systems, Mobile units, Enemy bunkers/hideouts.

Source: IE

INS ARNALA

Context

- The Indian Navy took delivery of a **new shallow-water vessel designed for anti-submarine warfare (ASW).**

About

- INS Arnala is the lead ship of the **Arnala-class anti-submarine warfare (ASW) corvette**, it is named after **Arnala Island,** which is located off the coast of Maharashtra.

- **Indigenously designed** by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.

- **Role:** The ship has been designed for underwater surveillance, search & rescue operations and Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO).

- **Features:**

- ◆ The ship is capable of full-scale sub-surface surveillance of coastal waters as well as search and attack. It can also carry out ASW operations in coordination with aircraft.
- ◆ Arnala also boasts a combat management system and armament consisting of lightweight torpedoes and ASW rockets.

Source: PIB

VULTURES

Context

- At least 123 vultures died in South Africa's Kruger National Park after consuming a poisoned elephant carcass left by poachers.
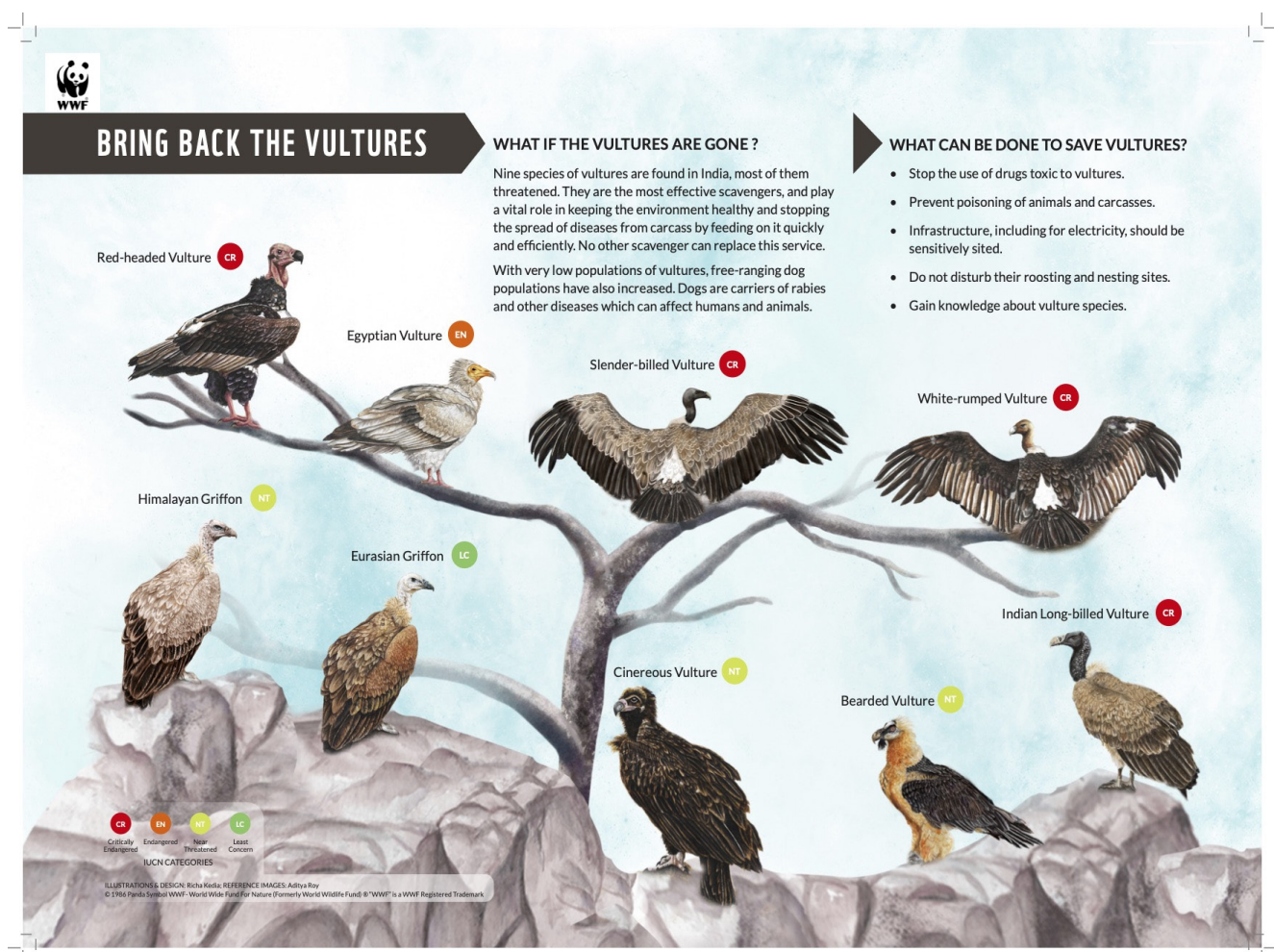
Vultures

- They are large, social raptors found on every continent except Antarctica and Australia.

- There are 23 species, split into New World vultures (Americas) and Old World vultures (Europe, Asia, Africa), which evolved separately through convergent evolution and are not closely related.

Status in India

- India has **nine species of vultures** in the wild.

- These are the Oriental White-backed Vulture (Gyps bengalensis), Slender billed Vulture (Gyps tenuirostris), Long billed Vulture (Gyps indicus), Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus), Red Headed Vulture (Sarcogyps calvus), Indian Griffon Vulture (Gyps fulvus), Himalayan Griffon (Gyps himalayensis), Cinereous Vulture (Aegypius monachus) and Bearded Vulture or Lammergeier (Gypaetus barbatus)

BRING BACK THE VULTURES

WHAT IF THE VULTURES ARE GONE ?

Nine species of vultures are found in India, most of them threatened. They are the most effective scavengers, and play a vital role in keeping the environment healthy and stopping the spread of diseases from carcass by feeding on it quickly and efficiently. No other scavenger can replace this service.

With very low populations of vultures, free-ranging dog populations have also increased. Dogs are carriers of rabies and other diseases which can affect humans and animals.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO SAVE VULTURES?

- Stop the use of drugs toxic to vultures.
- Prevent poisoning of animals and carcasses.
- Infrastructure, including for electricity, should be sensitively sited.
- Do not disturb their roosting and nesting sites.
- Gain knowledge about vulture species.

Red-headed Vulture CR
Egyptian Vulture EN
Slender-billed Vulture CR
White-rumped Vulture CR
Himalayan Griffon NT
Eurasian Griffon LC
Indian Long-billed Vulture CR
Cinereous Vulture NT
Bearded Vulture NT

CR Critically Endangered   EN Endangered   NT Near Threatened   LC Least Concern
IUCN CATEGORIES

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Importance

- Vultures play a crucial role in maintaining sanitation by consuming dead animals quickly, preventing the spread of dangerous pathogens like botulism and anthrax.
- With highly acidic stomachs, they effectively sterilize carcasses and their surroundings.

Threats

- Use of Diclofenac and pesticides were also the major causes of mortality.
- Lack of Nesting Trees
- Electrocution by power lines
- Food Dearth and Contaminated Food

Conservation status

- Bearded, Long-billed, Slender-billed, and Oriental white-backed are protected in the Schedule-1 of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. Rest are protected under 'Schedule IV'.
  - The Ministry for Environment, Forests, and Climate Change launched a Vulture Action Plan 2020-25 for the conservation of vultures in the country.
  - Establishment of Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centres
  - Ban on the veterinary use of Diclofenac in India

Source: TH

SMALL SNAIL INFESTATION IN IDUKKI'S CARDAMOM SECTOR

Context

- In Kerala's Idukki district, a promising cardamom season is being threatened by a snail infestation.

About

- Snails feed on the young panicles and flowers of cardamom, causing considerable damage to the crop.
- In response, farmers are using chemical molluscicides, such as **metaldehyde pellets.**
- However it is raising serious concerns about the long-term ecological impact on the Western Ghats' biodiversity.

Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum)

- **Cardamom, a tropical spice,** is produced from the seeds of the plant Elettaria cardamomum, a member of the ginger family.
- This plant is native to **southern India and Sri Lanka**, and is now cultivated widely in other tropical regions.
- **Growing conditions:** Cardamom thrives in warm, humid climates with well-drained, organic-rich soil and partial shade.
  - It needs a temperature range of **10 to 35 degrees Celsius** and prefers a **pH between 4.6 and 6.5.**

- It is typically grown in highland areas, generally at altitudes between **600 and 1500 meters** above sea level.
- It is cultivated mainly in States like **Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.**

Source: TH

PULITZER PRIZE 2025

Context

- Columbia University has announced the 2025 Pulitzer Prizes, awarded on the recommendation of the Pulitzer Prize Board.

Pulitzer Award

- The Pulitzer Award was established in **1917**, named in honour of newspaper publisher **Joseph Pulitzer.**
- **Significance:** It is considered the highest honor in American journalism and one of the most respected awards in literature and the arts.
- The Pulitzer Prize is awarded in over 23 categories, which include:
  - Journalism (15 categories)
  - Books, Drama, and Music (8 categories).
- Each winner receives a certificate and a **US$15,000 cash** award. The winner in the **public service** category is awarded a **gold medal.**

First Recipients

- **Herbert Bayard Swope of the New York World** received the first Pulitzer Prize for Reporting for his series titled "Inside the German Empire," which provided an in-depth look into wartime Germany.
- **Gobind Behari Lal:** First from India to win the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 1937. He was a member of the Ghadar Party in America.

Winners of 2025

- **Fiction:** James by Percival Everett
- **Drama:** Purpose by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins
- **Biography:** Every Living Thing by Jason Roberts
- **Commentary:** It was awarded to Mosab Abu Toha, for his powerful personal narratives published in **The New Yorker**, detailing the physical and emotional devastation in Gaza during the ongoing Israel–Palestine conflict.

Source: TH

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