

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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INDIA-CANADA TIES

Context

- **Two years after a major rupture in ties**, India and Canada have agreed to **restore the High Commissioners**, and discussed **restarting talks for a trade agreement, visa services, and other dialogue mechanisms**.

About

- The decisions came during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's talks with Canada's newly elected Prime Minister Mark Carney on the **sidelines of the G7 outreach session**.
- The leaders also discussed the **importance of restarting** the stalled negotiations on the **Trade Agreement (EPTA)**, with a view to paving the way for a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.
- **The two Prime Ministers discussed collaborations** in "clean energy, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, LNG, food security, critical minerals, higher education, mobility, and supply chain resilience".

Background of the Issue

- **Khalistani separatist activities in Canada** have strained ties; India has repeatedly **raised concerns over Canada's inaction**.
- **2023 Diplomatic Row:** Relations deteriorated after the Canadian PM alleged Indian involvement in the killing of a Canadian citizen linked to Khalistan extremism.
 - ♦ India dismissed the allegations and expelled Canadian diplomats.
- Talks on trade and economic agreements were suspended due to the diplomatic fallout.

Brief on India-Canada Relations

- **Historical Relations:** India and Canada established diplomatic relations in **1947**.
 - ♦ Shared democratic values and Commonwealth membership have underpinned ties.
 - ♦ Relations were historically strained after India's nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998, due to Canada's non-proliferation stance.
- **Economic Cooperation:** In 2024 (January – August), total bilateral trade in goods amounted to USD 8.55 billion (India's exports: USD 5.22 billion and India's imports: USD 3.33 billion).
 - ♦ Negotiations continue on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA).

- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:** Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) signed in 2010, operational since 2013.
 - ♦ A Joint Committee oversees implementation of the 2010 Agreement on "Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy".
- **Space Cooperation:** MoUs signed in 1996 and 2003 between ISRO and Canadian Space Agency (CSA).
 - ♦ Cooperation includes satellite tracking, space astronomy, and commercial satellite launches.
 - ♦ ISRO's commercial arm ANTRIX has launched multiple Canadian nanosatellites.
- **Science and Technology:** Department of Earth Science and Polar Canada have started a programme for exchange of knowledge and scientific research on Cold Climate (Arctic) Studies.
 - ♦ A Memorandum of Cooperation between National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) and POLAR Canada was signed in 2020.
- **People-to-People Links:** There are around 1.8 million Indo-Canadians and one million non-resident Indians in Canada, making up over **3% of its population**.
 - ♦ **India is the largest source of international students** in Canada, with Indians making up around 40% of that group.
 - ♦ Strong cultural exchanges and vibrant diaspora influence bilateral perceptions.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Both countries cooperate in forums like the G20, Commonwealth, United Nations, and International Solar Alliance.

Conclusion

- India-Canada relations have strong foundations and significant potential, especially in trade, education, and clean energy. However, bilateral ties remain fragile, with political and security concerns acting as key irritants.
- The future of the relationship depends on how both countries manage these differences while leveraging shared interests.

Source: TH

INDIA AND CROATIA TO MAKE LONG-TERM PLANS FOR DEEPENING DEFENCE TIES

Context

- **India and Croatia** have agreed to develop a **long-term defence cooperation plan**.

Major Highlights

- Both sides agreed to develop a **long-term Defence Cooperation Plan** including:
 - Joint military training.
 - Personnel exchanges.
 - Industry-level defence partnerships.
 - Emphasis on **cooperation in cybersecurity and defence production**.
- MoUs Signed on** Agriculture, Cultural Exchange, Science & Technology and setting up of an ICCR Chair of Hindi in Zagreb.
- India-EU FTA:** India and Croatia have discussed the long-pending India-EU Free Trade Agreement.
 - Croatia has reiterated its strong support for the early conclusion of the FTA.
- Investment:** Commitment to enhance investment in Croatia's critical industries, including pharmaceuticals, agriculture, information technology, clean technology, digital technology, and semiconductors.
- Academic and cultural exchanges:** Academic institutes from both countries would carry out joint research projects.
 - The two sides finalised a five-year plan for cultural exchange programs, institutionalising the people-to-people connections.
- Enhanced mobility and diplomatic engagement:** India and Croatia would "soon" sign a mobility agreement to facilitate the movement of people between the two countries.
 - This agreement is expected to boost tourism, educational exchanges, and business cooperation.
- Space and Academic Collaboration:** Joint work in space ventures announced.
 - India to share its space expertise with Croatia.

Significance of the Engagement

- Evolving European Strategy:** PM Modi's visit reflects **India's expanding European outreach beyond traditional Western partners**.
 - The focus is on **newer EU members like Croatia** that influence the EU's consensus-driven decision-making.
- Importance of Croatia in India's Strategic Vision:** Croatia's neutral stance on major global conflicts and tech cooperation willingness align with India's values.
 - Minimal dependence on China and skepticism toward BRI make **Croatia ideal for India's vision of democratic, sustainable development**.

- Eastern & Central Europe Access:** Croatia shares borders with Hungary, Slovenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Serbia.
 - Strengthening ties offers a **gateway to Central European markets and emerging sectors**.
 - Enhances India's regional presence in the Balkans and Central Europe.



- Maritime and Logistics Significance:** Croatia is located on the **eastern Adriatic coast, a key maritime gateway to Europe**.
 - Strategic for India amid Red Sea/Suez disruptions and global supply chain rebalancing.
- Role in India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):** Croatia viewed as a critical node in the IMEC trade corridor.
 - Offers alternative trade routes to Central and Eastern Europe bypassing traditional Western European ports.
- Influence in EU and NATO:** Croatia is a full member of the EU and NATO, increasing its institutional weight.
 - Provides India with indirect access to European regulatory systems and policy debates.
 - Supports India's FTA with EU; valuable for overcoming FTA negotiation roadblocks.
- Diplomatic Alignment and Multilateral Support:** Croatia supports India's UNSC permanent membership bid.
 - India's position on Jammu and Kashmir (non-interventionist approach).
 - Acts as a predictable and consistent partner, unlike some larger EU countries.

Conclusion

- The visit marks a **new chapter in India's European diplomacy**.
- Rooted in shared values, mutual respect, and complementary capabilities.
- Demonstrates that small but influential nations can be **vital in India's multipolar global strategy**.

Source: AIR

LATERAL ENTRY POLICY STILL ACTIVE

In News

- Union Minister Jitendra Singh clarified that the government has not given up on the idea of lateral entry into government departments.

Lateral entry

- It refers to the hiring of specialists, including professionals from the private sector, to take up senior roles in the government.
- It aims to bring in fresh talent and strengthen middle management by appointing specialists with domain expertise for specific roles.

View of NITI Aayog and various commissions

- The policy of lateral entry originated from recommendations by the **NITI Aayog** in its **2017 report**, which highlighted the need for specialists in policymaking due to the economy's growing complexity.
 - ♦ It proposed inducting experts to enhance competition and bring fresh talent into governance.
 - ♦ The idea was to replace frequent officer rotations with longer, specialised postings.
- Similar recommendations were made earlier by the **second Administrative Reforms Commission in 2005** under the UPA government.

Previous appointments

- Former **PM Manmohan Singh** and experts like **Verghese Kurien, Homi Bhabha, and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** were lateral entrants who made significant contributions in various fields.
- Post-independence, lateral entries helped overcome the shortage of civil servants, and the system gradually evolved with regular UPSC recruitment.
- Around 60 posts had already been filled through the lateral entry mode. "Today 40 to 45 [lateral entry recruits] are still working."

Do you know?

- In August 2024, the UPSC withdrew its notification for recruiting 45 officers through lateral entry—10 joint secretaries and 35 directors or deputy secretaries—after facing political backlash.
- Opposition parties criticized the move for bypassing reservations for OBCs, SCs, and STs.

Advantages

- Lateral entrants can **bring domain-specific knowledge** and professional experience, essential in today's complex policymaking environment.
- Private sector **professionals may introduce new ideas**, data-driven strategies, and outcome-based approaches to governance.
- The government **faces a shortage of All India Services officers**, especially at the Central level.
 - ♦ Lateral entry helps fill these gaps.
 - According to a 2023-24 parliamentary panel report on the DoPT, only 442 IAS officers were working with the Union government, against the required strength of 1,469.

Disadvantages

- Lateral entry has faced criticism for **not applying caste-based reservations**, potentially sidelining marginalized groups.
 - ♦ Critics argue that such appointments bypass the DoPT's roster system, which applies reservation to each department individually, not across ministries.
- **Entrants may lack knowledge of governmental procedures** and hierarchies, leading to inefficiencies.
- Cooperation related challenges with existing civil servants.

Way Ahead

- The lateral entry holds promise for modernizing India's administrative machinery but it must be implemented with transparency, fairness, and clear integration mechanisms to ensure long-term success.

Source :IE

GLOBAL DROUGHT OUTLOOK

Context

- The Organisation for **Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** has released its Global Drought Outlook, highlighting the

increasing frequency, and geographical spread of droughts globally.

What is drought?

- Droughts are **periods characterised by a significant hydrological imbalance** in water sources or reservoirs, typically marked by “**drier-than-normal**” weather conditions.
- These periods are primarily driven by low rainfall and can be further **intensified by high temperatures or strong wind**, which accelerate water evaporation, as well as human activities.
- **Classification:**
 - ♦ **Meteorological drought** refers to a prolonged period of low precipitation.
 - ♦ **Agricultural (or ecological) drought** refers to a condition where soil moisture is insufficient to meet the needs of crops and vegetation.
 - ♦ **Hydrological drought** occurs when surface or groundwater water levels drop below average over a prolonged period.

Key Findings

- The global land area affected by drought **doubled between 1900 and 2020**, with **40%** of the planet experiencing increased drought frequency and intensity in recent decades.
- Since 1980, **37%** of global land has experienced significant **soil moisture decline**. Similarly, **groundwater levels are falling** globally, with 62% of monitored aquifers in decline.
- Climate change made the **2022 European drought up to 20 times** more likely and increased the likelihood of the ongoing drought in North America by **42%**.

Causes of Droughts

- **Natural Causes:**
 - ♦ **Climate variability**, such as El Niño and La Niña, affects global weather patterns and can result in prolonged dry spells in some regions.
 - ♦ **Reduced snowfall** and melting glaciers diminish freshwater sources over time.
- **Anthropogenic Causes:**
 - ♦ **Deforestation** and land degradation reduce the soil's ability to retain moisture and disturb the local water cycle.
 - ♦ **Urbanisation** leads to soil sealing, which prevents water infiltration and groundwater recharge.
 - ♦ **Unsustainable agriculture** and over-extraction of groundwater, especially through

inefficient irrigation practices, worsen the drought intensity in some areas.

Impacts of Drought

- **Environmental Consequences:** Droughts severely degrade ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, and grasslands, leading to loss of biodiversity and reduction in plant biomass.
- **Economic Consequences:** Droughts also impact hydropower production, industrial operations, and fluvial trade, reducing efficiency and increasing energy and food insecurity.
 - ♦ The economic costs of droughts are rising globally by **3% to 7.5%** annually.
- **Social Consequences:** They contribute to **food insecurity, migration, water scarcity, and livelihood loss**, especially among marginal and vulnerable communities.
 - ♦ Droughts account for only **6%** of natural disasters but cause **34% of all disaster-related deaths**.

Key Recommendations

- **Investment in Drought Resilience:** Every USD 1 invested in drought prevention yields USD 2 to 3 in benefits, with some resilience projects offering up to ten times the return on investment.
- **Ecosystem and Land Use Management:** Ecosystem restoration improves water retention and soil health. Drought-tolerant crops and adaptive farming help secure food systems.
- **Cross-Sectoral Action:** Include energy, transport, infrastructure, and urban planning in drought resilience strategies.
 - ♦ Irrigation efficiency improvements could cut global water use by 76%.

Measures Taken in India

- **Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP):** Promotes soil and water conservation in drought-prone areas.
- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY):** Aims to enhance irrigation efficiency and ensure “more crop per drop”.
- **National Agricultural Drought Assessment and Monitoring System (NADAMS):** Uses satellite data to monitor drought conditions and aid early warning.
- Promotion of **climate-resilient crops** and **contingency crop planning** is being encouraged under the **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

- UNCCD was **established in 1994** to protect and restore the land and ensure a safer, just, and more sustainable future.
- is the **only legally binding framework** set up to address desertification and the effects of drought.
- There are **197 Parties** to the Convention, including 196 country Parties and the **European Union**.

Source: OECD

THIRD UNITED NATIONS OCEANS CONFERENCE (UNOC)-2025

Context

- Recently, the **third** United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC), held in **Nice, France**, concluded with commitments aimed at **safeguarding the planet's marine ecosystems**.

Background: United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC)

- **1st UNOC (2017):** In New York, Co-hosted by Sweden and Fiji; To support **SDG 14: Life Below Water**.
- **2nd UNOC (2022):** In Lisbon, Co-hosted by Portugal and Kenya; To emphasize the **need for science-based solutions** and innovative partnerships.
- **3rd UNOC (2025):** In Nice, France, and co-hosted by Costa Rica
 - ♦ **Theme:** Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean.

Key Outcomes of the Conference (2025)

- **High Seas Treaty Nears Enforcement:** Fifty-six of the required sixty countries have ratified the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement** (aka High Seas Treaty).
 - ♦ It enables the creation of **marine protected areas (MPAs)** in international waters, regulate marine genetic resources, and mandate environmental impact assessments.
- **Voluntary Commitments and Financial Pledges:** The European Commission **pledged 1 Billion Euro** to support ocean conservation and sustainable fishing.
 - ♦ **French Polynesia** announced plans to establish the **world's largest marine**

protected area, covering its entire exclusive economic zone—about five million square kilometers.

- **Global Political Declaration:** Over 170 countries adopted the **Nice Ocean Action Plan**, a political declaration paired with **more than 800 voluntary commitments**.
 - ♦ These range from youth advocacy to deep-sea ecosystem literacy and capacity-building in marine science.
- **Pushback Against Deep-Sea Mining:** A growing coalition of nations called for a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining, citing its potential to irreversibly damage fragile marine ecosystems.
- **India's Role and Roadmap:** India pledged to ratify the High Seas Treaty and proposed a **10-point roadmap** for sustainable ocean governance. It includes:
 - ♦ Expand Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
 - ♦ Scale Up the Blue Economy
 - ♦ Reduce Marine Pollution
 - ♦ Promote Offshore Renewable Energy
 - ♦ Support the Global Plastics Treaty
 - ♦ Invest in Ocean Science and Technology
 - ♦ Strengthen Coastal Resilience
 - ♦ Ensure Equitable Access to Marine Resources
 - ♦ Pause Deep-Sea Mining
 - ♦ Foster Global Partnerships

About High Seas

- The high seas refer to areas of the ocean that lie **beyond the jurisdiction of any single country** — specifically, **beyond 200 nautical miles** (about 370 kilometers) from a nation's coastline (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea-UNCLOS).
 - ♦ These waters are **considered part of the global commons**.
- The high seas make up **nearly two-thirds of the ocean's surface** and are vital for regulating Earth's climate, supporting marine biodiversity, and sustaining global fisheries.

Importance of Oceans

- **Climate Regulation:** Oceans absorb over 25% of global carbon emissions and generate 50% of the oxygen.
 - ♦ They act as Earth's largest carbon sink and heat buffer, helping stabilize the climate.
- **Food Security:** Oceans provide 15% of the animal protein consumed globally.
 - ♦ In some developing nations, seafood is the primary protein source for over half the population.

- **Livelihoods and Economy:** More than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods.
 - ♦ The ocean economy is valued at \$3–5 trillion annually, supporting industries like fisheries, tourism, and shipping.
- **Biodiversity Reservoir:** Oceans host an immense variety of life—from coral reefs to deep-sea ecosystems that are essential for ecological balance and future scientific discoveries.



Key Concerns

- **Ocean Pollutions:** An estimated 75 to 199 million tonnes of plastic. Each year, 8 to 12 million metric tons more are added.
 - ♦ **Asia largest (81%) contributors** of ocean plastic pollution (largely due to inadequate waste management systems).
 - ♦ About 92% of **microplastics** have been found in 60% of fish consumed by humans annually.
 - ♦ Five major **ocean garbage patches**, with the **Great Pacific Garbage Patch** containing an estimated **1.8 trillion pieces of trash**.
 - ♦ About 14 million metric tons of ocean **garbage rest on the seafloor**.
 - ♦ By 2050, plastic in the **ocean is projected to outweigh all fish** if current trends continue.
 - ♦ Currently, the **ocean's average pH is 8.1** which is about **30% more acidic than in pre-industrial times**.
- **Other Concerns:**
 - ♦ Overfishing, threatening marine species and food chains.
 - ♦ Climate change, causing acidification, sea-level rise, and coral bleaching.
 - ♦ Deep-sea mining, which risks irreversible damage to fragile ecosystems.

Ocean Conservation Efforts

- **Early Foundations (Pre-1970s): International Whaling Commission (1946)**, one of the first global marine conservation agreements.
- **Institutionalization (1970s–1990s):** The US passed the **Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (1972)**, and the **Law of the Sea Convention (1982)** laid the groundwork for international maritime law.
- **Scientific & Global Expansion (2000s–2010s):**
 - ♦ **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):** Countries began designating MPAs to safeguard biodiversity. However, **only about 2.7% of the oceans** were highly protected till 2020.
 - ♦ **Data-Driven Conservation:** Initiatives like **MegaMove** used satellite tracking to identify critical habitats for marine megafauna, helping shape smarter conservation strategies.
- **Modern Era (2020s–Present):**
 - ♦ **High Seas Treaty (2023):** It allows for the creation of MPAs in international waters—covering nearly two-thirds of the ocean.
 - ♦ **30x30 Goal:** At COP15 in 2022, nations committed to protecting 30% of oceans by 2030.
 - ♦ **Indigenous Knowledge Integration:** Pacific Islander traditions are increasingly recognized as vital to conservation, blending ancestral wisdom with modern science.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

MOUNT DENALI

In News

- Sheikh Hasan Khan, mountaineer from Kerala is stranded at 17,000 ft on Mount Denali in North America due to a severe snowstorm.
 - ♦ He is on a mission to complete the Seven Summits Challenge — scaling the highest peaks on each continent — and to honor the Indian Army's Operation Sindoor.

Mount Denali

- The name "Denali" stems from "deenaalee," which is from the Koyukon language traditionally spoken on the north side.
- It is also known as Mount McKinley and it is the **highest peak in North America**.
- It is located near the center of the Alaska Range, with two summits rising above the Denali Fault, in south-central Alaska, U.S.

Source :TH

NONIA REBELLION

Context

- Union Minister for Agriculture paid tributes to freedom fighter Buddhu Nonia at his centenary celebrations in Patna and acknowledged the Nonia community's contributions in **Nonia Rebellion**.

About the Nonia Rebellion

- The Nonias were **traditional salt makers**, and they also had expertise in producing Shora (saltpetre) — an essential ingredient in making gunpowder.
- The Nonia Rebellion refers to a series of uprisings by the Nonia community between **1778 and 1800 in Bihar**, particularly in the districts of **Saran, Vaishali, and Purnia**.
- It was a **grassroots movement** against the British East India Company's exploitative revenue policies, and oppression by local zamindars.

About Buddhu Nonia

- Buddhu Nonia was a freedom fighter from the Nonia community in Bihar.
- He actively **participated in the Salt Satyagraha** movement led by Mahatma Gandhi.
- He began making salt as an act of civil disobedience and was deceitfully arrested and thrown into a boiling salt cauldron—an act that turned him into a martyr of the freedom movement.

Source: PIB

PROPOSED LEGAL METROLOGY (INDIAN STANDARD TIME) RULES

In News

The government will mandate the use of Indian Standard Time (IST) for all legal, commercial, digital, and administrative activities.

Indian Standard Time (IST)

- The Indian Standard Time is calculated from 82°30'E meridian passing through Mirzapur.
 - Therefore, IST is plus 5.30 hours from the GMT ((82°30' x 4) (60 minutes=5 hours 30 minutes).
- Countries select a standard meridian within their territory to define official time, while those with wide east-west spans, like Russia, Canada, and the USA, may adopt multiple time zones.

Proposed Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules

- The Union Consumer Affairs Ministry announced that the proposed **Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules** will make synchronising all legal, administrative, and commercial activities with IST mandatory.
- The initiative aims to provide highly accurate Indian Standard Time (IST) using five Regional Reference Standard Laboratories with atomic clocks and secure protocols like NTP (Network Time Protocol) and PTP (Precision Time Protocol), promoting digital and administrative efficiency under the **'One Nation, One Time' vision**.

Importance

- There is strategic importance of uniform IST usage across sectors like finance, telecom, power, and transport, prohibiting unauthorised time references.
- The move aims to enhance digital security, ensure accurate utility billing, reduce cybercrime risks, and synchronise timekeeping across sectors.
 - Currently, many systems depend on foreign time sources.

Source :TH

PERFORMANCE GRADING INDEX (PGI) 2.0 REPORT

Context

- The **Ministry of Education** released the latest assessment of the **Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0 report for 2023-24**.

About

- The PGI was introduced in **2017**, and the ministry **revamped it as PGI 2.0 in 2021**.
- It is an assessment of school education along six domains** – learning outcome and quality, access, infrastructure and facilities, equity, governance processes, teacher education, and training.
- The latest report, covering the years 2022-23 and 2023-24**, draws data from the National Achievement Survey 2021, the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), and information on the mid-day meal programme (PM-POSHAN).
- PGI grades the districts into ten grades viz., **Highest achievable Grade is Daksh**, which is for Districts **scoring more than 90% of the total points** in that category or overall.
 - The lowest grade in PGI-D is called Akanshi-3** which is for scores upto 10% of the total points.

Scores (% of total points)	Score range	Grade
91% to 100%	941-1000	Daksh
81% to 90%	881-940	Utkarsh
71% to 80%	821-880	Atti-Uttam
61% to 70%	761-820	Uttam
51% to 60%	701-760	Prachesta -1
41% to 50%	641-700	Prachesta -2
31% to 40%	581-640	Prachesta -3
21% to 30%	521-580	Akanshi-1
11% to 20%	461-520	Akanshi-2
Up to 10%	401-460	Akanshi-3

Findings

- The highest scorer was Chandigarh, followed by Punjab, and Delhi.
- Kerala, Gujarat, Odisha, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan also scored in the 581-640 range.
- The state that scored the lowest was Meghalaya (417.9).
 - ♦ Just above it were Arunachal Pradesh (461.4), Mizoram (464.2), Nagaland (468.6), and Bihar (471.9).

Source: IE

BARAK MAGEN

In News

- The Israeli Navy achieved a major defense milestone by successfully intercepting eight Iranian UAVs using the 'Barak Magen' aerial defense system.

Barak Magen

- The Barak Magen system is the naval variant of the **Barak MX family** developed by **Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI)**.
- It integrates advanced radar with vertical missile launchers and multiple interceptor types: MRAD (short/medium range), LRAD (mid/long range), and ER (extended range).



- Barak Magen complements Israel's existing systems (**Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow, plus future laser Iron Beam**), adding a powerful naval tier to national defense.

- It is engineered to provide full-spectrum protection against a variety of modern airborne threats including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), cruise missiles, shore-to-sea projectiles and even certain classes of ballistic munitions.

Source :LM

50 YEARS OF CROCODILE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

Context

- India began its Crocodile Conservation programme in **1975**, and this year marks **50 years of this initiative**.

About

- As per the survey conducted in 1974 (H.R. Bustard), Crocodile populations were **on the brink of extinction**.
- **Scientific conservation efforts** were launched with the **assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**.
- In 1975, three conservation projects were launched in Odisha for as many species - **salt-water crocodiles in Bhitarkanika, gharials in Satkosia and mugger in Similipal**.
 - ♦ **Odisha is uniquely positioned by hosting wild populations** of all three crocodile species.
- **Objective:** To protect their natural habitats and rebuild the population quickly through captive breeding.

Crocodiles Species in India

- **India is home to three main kinds of crocodile species** – the gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), the saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), and the mugger (*Crocodylus palustris*).

Conservation Success

- The **saltwater crocodile population** has recovered to approximately 2,500 individuals in the wild, with Bhitarkanika in Odisha holding the largest share, followed by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Sundarbans in West Bengal.
- The **mugger crocodile**, once severely depleted in numbers, has now reclaimed most of its historical range, with its numbers in the wild estimated at 8,000 to 10,000.
- **India holds nearly 80% of the global wild gharial population**—an estimated 3,000 individuals.

Source: TH

CROCODILES OF INDIA

WILDLIFE SOS



GHARIALS

Gavialis gangeticus

Male gharials are easily distinguished due to the presence of a bulb on their snouts, like earthenware pots called gharas. They are used to vocalise and blow bubbles to attract females.

Habitat: They are found in clear freshwater river systems, congregating at river bends.

Threats: Illegal poaching, egg collection, fishing nets, sand mining, prey base depletion, and habitat loss and degradation.



MUGGER CROCODILE

Crocodylus palustris

Also called marsh crocodile, Mugger Crocodiles are one of the most adaptable crocodilian species in India. With the broadest snout of all, they are keystone species of their habitat.

Habitat: They are found in freshwater habitats including rivers, lakes, marshes, and estuarine.

Threats: Illegal poaching, egg collection, fishing nets, and habitat loss and degradation.

SALTWATER CROCODILE

Crocodylus porosus

The Earth's largest living reptile, saltwater crocodiles have the greatest bite pressure of any animal. Males are much larger than females, weighing even up to 1,000 kilograms!

Habitat: They inhabit coastal brackish mangrove swamps and river deltas.

Threats: Illegal hunting and habitat loss and degradation.



IUCN STATUS



GLOBAL POPULATION

of mature individuals

Gharials	🐊 650
Mugger Crocodiles	🐊🐊 5700-8700
Saltwater Crocodiles	🐊🐊🐊 500,000

FASTAG-BASED ANNUAL PASS

Context

- The Minister of Road Transport and Highways announced a **FASTag-based annual pass priced at Rs 3,000** for “hassle-free-highway travel”.

About

- The FASTag-based passes will be **effective from August 15** and **valid for one year or 200 trips, whichever comes earlier**.
 - Passing through one toll plaza will be counted as one Trip.
- By reducing wait times, easing congestion, and minimizing disputes at toll plazas, the Annual Pass **aims to deliver a faster and smoother travel experience** for private vehicle owners.

FASTag

- FASTag is an **electronic toll collection system** managed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).
- A FASTag sticker is usually pasted on the windscreen of a car.
- It uses **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology** to communicate with scanners installed at toll plazas.
- Once the car crosses a toll plaza, the requisite toll amount is automatically deducted from a bank account or a prepaid wallet linked to the FASTag.

Source: IE

SAHITYA AKADEMI YUVA AND BAL PURASKAR

Context

- The Sahitya Akademi has announced the names of 23 writers for its Yuva Puraskar and 24 for the Bal Puraskar for 2024.

About Sahitya Akademi

- Sahitya Akademi**, India's National Academy of Letters, is the Central institution for literary dialogue, publication and promotion in the country and the only institution that undertakes literary activities in **24 Indian languages**, including English.
- It was inaugurated** by the Government of India on **12 March 1954**.
- Status:** Set up by the Government of India, it functions as an **autonomous organization**, registered as a society on **7 January 1956** under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- Each winner receives:** A casket with an engraved copper plaque and **₹50,000** cash prize.

Source: TH

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